

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Third Sunday of Advent, Year C
15 December 2024
Luke 3:10-18

Catechist Background

In this Gospel passage, we find a flavour of Luke's insistence on compassion. First, John the Baptist exhorts his listeners to share with the poor. Then he exhibits a relatively mild attitude toward tax collectors and soldiers, two groups of people who would have been seen by most of their fellow Jews as collaborators with the occupying pagan (i.e., non-Jewish) Romans. These tax collectors and soldiers are instructed to be fair, rather than to give up their professions. The reason for this compassion is found in the next part of the Gospel: compared with Jesus, even the radical John the Baptist is lower than the lowest of the lowest of slaves, i.e., those who have the task of loosening the sandal strap of their master (and then usually washing their dirty feet).

This candle lit on the Advent wreath this week is rose (pink), not purple – this is really just a lighter form of purple but it is significant. This marks a change in the feel of Advent as we pass the mid-point and start getting closer to Christmas. In medieval western Christianity, Christians used to fast for the first half of Advent, up to the Third Sunday and then the second half would be less penitential. This Third Sunday also marks the point at which the readings in Mass dwell less on the prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament and instead concentrate more on the events immediately before Jesus' birth (the calling of John the Baptist and the Annunciation).

We Say Sorry

Leader: Lord Jesus, you came to bring peace.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You come to us in your Word to make us strong, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You will come in glory with salvation for your people, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

We Pray (1)

Lord, as we look forward to Jesus' birthday, take away any sadness in our hearts that keeps us from feeling the joy and hope of Christ's presence. Amen.

Gospel Introduction

As this Gospel reading follows chronologically from last week's Gospel reading, ask the children what they remember from last week. Pay close attention to John the Baptist, as he is the central figure again this week. You may need to remind them of some details if they have forgotten.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

Reflecting on the Gospel reading with Children

- Ask who in the room is good at, for example, jumping.
- Then ask who is good at jumping compared with a kangaroo. (Or a grasshopper or a flea, who can jump many times their own body height.)
- Compared to these animals, the best human jumper isn't very talented.
- When compared with God's goodness, even the holiest people, like John the Baptist, aren't very holy. John didn't brag about what a good person he was.

- John DID encourage and challenge people to live their lives in ways which were more like the kind of lives God wanted them to live. What did he ask people to do?
- Ask the children what they think John would ask children to do if they had been standing there with him next to the River Jordan.

Response

- Explain that you will ask everyone to give themselves a challenge for the week ahead to live how John the Baptist asked the people to live.
- Ask for examples of what children might do (for example sharing their toys or sweets, praying for people in need. If your parish has links with any particular charitable works, this could be a good time to highlight it.)
- Pass an unlit candle or a picture/small statue of someone 'in need' and invite the children to say aloud what they are going to do this week to help others.

We Believe

Relating the Creed to what you have shared with the children, ask these questions and invite the children to reply, 'I do!'

- Do you believe in God the Father who created the world and all the people in it?
- Do you believe in God the Son, Jesus, who shows us how to care for those in need?
- Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit who will help us to treat others the way we should?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying, 'God, we know your goodness is beyond what we can imagine. Help us to be good like you as we pray...

Leader: We pray for leaders in the Church, that they may speak out bravely in your name, like John the Baptist. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray that the Lord may look after the whole world, especially those who are the victims of other people's greediness. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for those who know they need to be better people, but don't know what to do about it. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for those near to us that may be in need. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, we know that behaving the way you want us to behave will bring us the most happiness. Thank you for knowing what is best for us.

All: Amen.

