

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year C
22 December 2024
Luke 1:39-44

Catechist Background

Finally, the focus of this Sunday is looking at the lead-up to Jesus' coming in history at the first humble Christmas.

Elizabeth and Zechariah's house would have been a four-day walk from Mary's - an adventurous and fairly dangerous trip for a young, unmarried and pregnant woman. She probably travelled there as part of a caravan of pilgrims or with other travellers for protection on her journey.

It is possible that Mary was sent there by her parents or that she wanted to go so she could get some peace whilst the news of her pregnancy spread in Nazareth.

Even before they were born, John the Baptist and Jesus shared a close connection through the Holy Spirit; Jesus was conceived by the power of the Spirit, and the Spirit prompted John to leap for joy, acknowledging the presence of the Lord. The Holy Spirit also filled Elizabeth as she greeted Mary.

Setting the Scene

In the previous week, children were asked to do one thing to help others in need, like John the Baptist asked those who came to him. As the Children's Liturgy begins, you could ask who remembers what they thought they would do during the week. Did they meet their challenge?

We Say Sorry

Leader: You come to us in light, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You bring us out of the shadows, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You send us to share your love, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

We Pray (1)

Lord, your son came to earth when Mary first listened and then said 'yes.' Help us today to hear you and to say 'yes' to you. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Luke 1:39-44

Reflecting on the Gospel reading with Children

- Before the scene of this gospel story took place, two of the characters said 'Yes!' to God - who were they? How do you think their faces looked when they said 'Yes' to God?
- If God asked you to do something, how do you think your face would look?
- God *does* ask us to do things: what are some of the things God asks us to do with our lives? (You may be able to link their answers to the challenges they took on at last week's Liturgy.)
- If you were Elizabeth and you knew Mary's baby would be more important than your baby would be, how do you think your face would look?
- (Point out that Elizabeth's response doesn't show any envy or jealousy, and we should follow her example of being happy for others.)
- Who helped John and Elizabeth to understand who Mary's child *really* was?
- The Holy Spirit also can help us to do the things that God asks of us, especially when they seem difficult.

Response

- On a large A1/flipchart sized piece of paper, draw a giant smiley face.
- If space permits, have all children gather around on a table or on the floor to draw 'happy things that God has given them.'
- If you have a large number of children, use several pages of smiley faces. Examples might include family, pets, nature, friends, etc.
- The posters could be used as you later process back in to the main body of the church.
- Finish with a great big 'leap for joy,' taking care not to disturb anyone at Mass in the church.

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 of all people?
- Do you believe in Jesus, the Son of God and Mary?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helped Mary, Elizabeth and John and still helps us today?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying, 'Dear God, help us to remember that doing what you want should be joyful, as we pray...'

Leader: We pray for missionaries who teach people about Jesus in far-off and sometimes dangerous places. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for prime ministers and presidents and other leaders, that they use their power to make the world more full of peace and more full of joy. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for all families in the world, especially those who are expecting babies to be born soon. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for us and those we know to recognise the times when we might be the answer to somebody else's prayers. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Thank you for always hearing our prayers. Help us to trust that you always want what is best for us.

All: Amen.

