

## Liturgy of the Word with Children

### Easter Season, Year A

### General Information

#### Catechist Background

With a historical emphasis on Lent and fasting, it is sometimes missed that Easter does last for just one weekend, but is a season of fifty days of feasting, ending with Pentecost!

#### Setting the Scene

White is the colour for Easter because in liturgical terms, white means 'Jesus is here'. During significant festivals of our Lord, white is often mixed with gold or bright yellow. You might wish to incorporate that colour into a centrepiece.

#### We Say Sorry

In some parishes, Children's Liturgy of the Word begins before the Introductory Rite has finished. If you have been in the main body of the church for the Penitential Rite, there is no need to repeat it in Children's Liturgy.

#### Gloria

If you have been in the main body of the church for the Gloria, there is no need to repeat it in Children's Liturgy.

#### We Pray (1)

The Opening Prayer expresses the theme of the day's readings. If you have been in the main body of the church for the Opening Prayer, there is no need to repeat it in the Children's Liturgy.

#### Gospel Acclamation

'Alleluia' (a Hebrew word meaning, 'Praise the Lord!') is back as the normal Gospel acclamation sung during the Easter Season. For the Gospel Acclamation you might like to have a look at:

- *Music for Children's Liturgy of the Word* by Christopher Walker (Oregon Catholic Press);
- 'Halle, Halle, Halle' by John Bell (Wild Goose Publications), contained in *Laudate*, no. 178;
- Some of the Gospel Acclamations used at your parish mass if suitable;
- Try writing your own words using tunes familiar to children (see suggestions in *The Complete Children's Liturgy* by Katie Thompson (Kevin Mayhew publishers))

#### Gospel

This year is year 'A,' and most of the Gospel readings for Sunday Mass this year come from the Gospel of Matthew. Textual clues lead scripture scholars to think that Matthew's Gospel was aimed at Jewish Christians. He is particularly intent on proving Jesus' messianic credentials through the fulfilment of prophetic writings, and affirming Jesus' link to Israel's glorious past.

However, during the Easter Season, many of the Gospel readings come from the Gospel of John. This Gospel is a highly stylised piece of writing containing strong symbols to show that Jesus is the messianic Son of God. There are far fewer examples of Jesus' parables than in the other three Gospels. Miracles (or 'signs') are frequently followed by a developed theological explanation. This leads scripture scholars to conclude that John's Gospel was written after the others, after the first Christians had had time to reflect on and more fully understand the meanings of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Finally, John's Gospel is highly critical of the Sadducees and Pharisees whom he refers to as 'the Jews,' and he highlights how women were involved in Jesus' life and ministry.

#### Reflecting on the Reading with Children

Questions are given as suggestions of how to draw out salient points of the Gospel story with the children. Children may need to be guided back on track, but it is helpful insofar as it is possible, to let them explore ideas and thoughts of their own.

## Response

An activity is suggested for each of the Sundays, although it may need to be adapted due to your space, size of group, etc. Sometimes very small children will need more help doing a particular activity. Responding to the Gospel in a child-appropriate way helps solidify the particular message of the Sunday's Gospel and plan how they will live it out in their own situations.

## We Believe

If your Children's Liturgy of the Word rejoins the main body of the church for the Creed, there is no need to go through its counterpart in question-form here.

## We Pray (2)

If your Children's Liturgy of the Word rejoins the main body of the church for the Prayers of the Faithful ('Bidding Prayers'), there is no need to incorporate them into Children's Liturgy.

'All liturgy is prayer and it is right that a liturgy of the word with children should end with a time of intercession. The prayer may arise from the children's reflection but it is always concerned with the needs of the whole Church and the world. It is important to remember that the petitions are invitations to pray not the prayers themselves, so a short phrase that invites the children to pray is better than a long or detailed list of concerns. This model of intercession is easily learned by children.'

*(Liturgy of the Word with Children – Guidelines –Commentary ¶17)*

