

Children's liturgy – Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

Preparation of the worship space

Colour: green

Song suggestions: Freely, freely (849, Laudate)
O Lord all the world belongs to you (847, Laudate)

Welcome: Today Jesus talks about forgiveness – about how God is always ready to forgive us if we say sorry. And about how we should try to forgive others if they say sorry to us. Let's think a bit more about this today.

Opening prayer: Merciful God, we are truly sorry for the things that we have done wrong. Forgive us and help us to try to forgive others as your son Jesus teaches us. Amen.

First reading (optional): Ecclesiasticus 27:30-28:7

Psalms: Psalm 102:1-4, 9-12. R. v.8

Gospel acclamation: everyone stands and sings the acclamation together. Suggestions include: 'Halle, halle, halle' (Caribbean) from 'Sing With the World', Alison Adam & John Bell; 'Alleluia' (Zimbabwe), Abraham Maraire Publications, WCC & GIA; 'Celtic Alleluia' (traditional); 'Alleluia! Raise the Gospel' from 'Go Before Us', Bernadette Farrell, OCP Publications.

Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

Gospel reflection: What do you remember from today's reading?

Peter asks Jesus how many times he should forgive someone. What does Jesus answer?

Jesus says that Peter should forgive someone not just seven times, but 77 times.

That's a lot isn't it! Do you think Jesus wants us to count how many times we forgive someone? What happens if we forgive them more than 77 times?

Jesus chose 77 because it was a really big number – he is saying to Peter that there should be no end to our forgiveness, just like there is no end to God's forgiveness. If someone is truly sorry and tries to change then we should try to find it in our hearts to forgive them.

Then Jesus tells Peter a story to show what he means. Can you remember what happens in the story?

A servant owes the king lots of money and cannot pay it back. So the king decides to punish him. But the servant asks the king to be patient and he will pay back all the money he owes. What does the king say?

The king agrees to be patient. How do you think the servant felt when he heard this? But when the servant meets someone else who owes him money, what does he do?

Even though the second servant says he will pay he is shown no mercy. The first servant has him thrown into prison.

What does the king say when he hears about this? The king is very cross and punishes the first servant. For him it is just as important that the servant changes his ways and tries to become a better person, as it is that he said sorry.

Who do you think the king in this story is meant to be? And who is the first servant?

The king is God – who is always ready to be patient, merciful and forgiving with us if we ask, and if we try to change our ways.

The servant is like us – we sometimes find it hard to change our ways, to stop doing what we know is wrong and also to be forgiving when someone says sorry and promises not to do it again.

Can you think of a time when you have been forgiven? How did you feel?

Can you think of a time when someone has said sorry and said that they would not do it again, and you found it hard to forgive? Why was it hard? How did you feel?

Can you think of a time when someone has said sorry and tried to change and you did forgive them? How did you feel then?

How can we help other people to see that what they are doing is wrong and that they need to make a change?

This week let's try our best to make a change in the way we treat other people, to say sorry when we have done something wrong, and to forgive and help others make a change in the way they behave.

Intercessions *You may want to ask the children to offer their own prayers or you can use the suggestions below.*

We join together now in prayer to God who loves and forgives us:

We pray for the Church throughout the world: that it may be a living example of God's love and forgiveness for all. Lord, in your mercy....

We pray for our parish, family and friends: that we may do our best to treat each other better and to say sorry when we have done something wrong. Lord, in your mercy...

We pray for our parish, family and friends: that we may try to help others to see that they need to make a change, so that they no longer hurt others and the world becomes a better place for all to live. Lord, in your mercy...

Closing prayer: God of love, you forgive us when we go wrong. Encourage us to try again to be better and helps us to share your forgiveness with others. Guide us to do what is right and to make this world a fairer place for all who live in it. Amen.

Activity suggestions

Ask the children to colour in the accompanying illustration and to write or draw on the back what they will do the next time someone asks them for forgiveness.

Ask the children to get into pairs and to act out a scenario where one of them does something wrong. How will the others react? And what will they do when the first child asks them for forgiveness?

Ask the children to think about something that they have done wrong. How can they make a change so that in the future they can try to be better? Ask them to say sorry to God quietly in their hearts and to say sorry to the other person out loud in the coming week.

Ask the children to look out for things that they know are wrong in the coming week. Ask them to see if they can find a way to change the situation, so that the world is better for all people to live.

Ask the children to go home and share all that they have heard and thought about today. Ask them to do their best in the coming week to make a change to the way they treat other people, to say sorry when they have done something wrong, and to forgive others and to help them make a change for the better.