

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
12 November 2017
Matthew 25:1-13

Catechist Background

As we near the end of the liturgical year, we hear the first of three gospel passages dealing with the end times (eschatology). The first Christians expected Jesus' return immediately, and when this did not happen many of them began to wonder if they had been mistaken about Jesus' identity as the Messiah. Parables like today's reminded them of Jesus' promise to return, although we do not know when.

In common with many ancient groups, marriage for ancient Jews was primarily about strengthening family ties, not about our modern understanding of romantic love. The future father-in-laws (who were often already related as cousins or brothers) would agree to the betrothal of their children and to the 'bride price'. This arrangement was binding and could not be broken off without an official divorce. The groom would go to his father-in-law's house on the day of the wedding to collect his bride. There, last minute haggling over the details of the arrangement could be entered into. The groom would bring his bride to his family home for the wedding feast; they would be met by 'bridesmaids' (girl relatives) on the way as part of the ceremonial festivities.

Today's bridesmaids all fall asleep. It is not the lack of vigilance that is being admonished, but the lack of preparedness. The five who were ready to follow into the feast were welcomed, whereas the five who were busy buying oil at midnight (a peculiar time for shopping in the first century) were left out.

We Say Sorry

Leader: You are our Teacher, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You lead us with love, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You show us how to live, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

God, protect us from all types of harm and give us the ability to do your work in our world. Amen.

Gospel Intro

It may be helpful to show the children a picture of a first century lamp before reading the gospel so they understand that it is quite different from the lamps we have in our homes today.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- Who does the bridegroom represent in the story?
- Some of the bridesmaids were busy when the groom passed by—what were they doing?
- When Jesus calls us to join him by doing good in our lives, what should we always be ready to do?

Response

Stand sideways to the children and instruct them to clap their hands when your hands cross—not before, not after, but just exactly when they cross. Put one of your hands pointing straight up and the other one pointing toward the floor and bring them past each other (so the hand that was originally up is now down, and vice versa). After a few standard tries, make it trickier by moving your hands slower, faster, or following twice quickly in a row. Jesus asks us to be prepared—we may not get everything exactly correct in trying to follow Jesus, but we must be watchful to see how we can share God's love with others in all situations, and always ready to joyfully accept Jesus' invitation.

We Believe

Relating to the creed what you have shared with the children, ask this series of questions and invite the children to reply, 'I do.'

- Do you believe in God the Father who has created every good thing?
- Do you believe in Jesus, the bridegroom, who has come to bring us to the wedding feast of eternal life?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, prompting us to follow Jesus?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying, 'Jesus challenges us to be ready to share God's life with others and so we also now pray...'

Leader: We pray for missionaries who spread the knowledge of Jesus in places and to people who do not know of Jesus' love. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for leaders of countries, that they may always be ready to use their positions of leadership do the right thing. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people who are missing loved ones, especially loved ones who have died, that they may be reassured that they are wrapped in your love. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for members of our community who are ill. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, help us to keep ready to join in your mission to bring your love to all. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

