

**Liturgy of the Word with Children**  
**Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A**  
**9 July 2023**  
**Matthew 11:25-30**

### **Catechist Background**

Understanding the ancient cultural attitudes toward children and childhood give the first verses of today's gospel greater impact. Childhood survival rates were poor, and until they reached the age of maturity, children were viewed as the same as slaves. They were powerless in society. Contrastingly, the Pharisees in Jesus' day competed to meticulously follow the 613 laws of the Torah. The 'yoke' imposed by rabbis on themselves and their followers could often disintegrate into one-upmanship, whereby individuals competed to show how holy they were by how correctly they followed the laws. Jesus warns against such egotism by reminding us that the weakest in society were able to understand God's will better than some of those very publicly learned figures who missed the point of the Law entirely.

### **Setting the Scene**

For the activity described below, you will need something heavy to drag, like a box or laundry basket of books, attached to a rope or a skipping rope. You may wish to cover some of the books with paper and write words like 'forgiveness' and 'generosity' on them (see below in the 'Response' section for an explanation).

### **We Say Sorry**

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

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: You show us how to be generous, Christ have mercy.

**All: Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: You are always ready to show forgiveness, Lord have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

### **Gloria**

### **We Pray (1)**

Jesus, you raise us up and offer us happiness. Help us to follow you in all we do.  
Amen.

### **Gospel Acclamation**

**Gospel:** Matthew 11:25-30

### **Reflecting on the Reading with Children**

- Why does God give us rules to follow?
- How many Commandments were given to Moses on Mount Sinai? How many rules were given to the Jews in the Old Testament altogether?
- Some of those rules were easier to follow than others. 'Don't boil a kid goat in its mother's milk' is pretty straightforward. Lots of people argued about what counted as doing 'work' on the Sabbath. Is helping to grow vegetables 'work?' What if I really LIKE gardening?

## Response

Acknowledge that people still have arguments like this today. Sometimes following the way God wants us to live will be a bit difficult, but we should all be helping each other along, instead of making it more difficult, or pointing out and laughing at others when they get it wrong.

Jesus doesn't say that there is no burden in following him. We don't always WANT to be forgiving or generous, but it will make us happier to do that than to be angry and greedy all the time. Choose one child to come out and try to pull the heavy box (representing Jesus' yoke for us). Ask another child to help the first child pull it. Which was easier? Jesus helps us to carry our burdens, and when we help other people, we are becoming more like Jesus.

Allow other children to demonstrate pulling the burden if you have time.

## 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 created the world to be a paradise?
- Do you believe in Jesus, come to earth to bring us back to God?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who guides us today?

## We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying,  
'As Jesus lightens our burdens we want to lighten others, and so we now pray...'

Leader: We pray for Christians around the world, that we may all make each other's lives easier. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray that all people everywhere may know the happiness that comes from you. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for people who are in prison or separated from people they love for any other reason. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for anybody we know who is ill. Lord in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, help us to brighten up the day of everyone we meet. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

