

Liturgy of the Word with Children
First Sunday of Advent, Year B
3 December 2023
Mark 13:33-37

Catechist Background

Today's Gospel passage comes near the end of Jesus earthly life, not long before his crucifixion. The obvious theme is 'Keep Awake' (mentioned four times in the short reading)!

The first-century concept of servanthood is one we find difficult to understand in our modern world. Servants were bound to their master; they could not simply leave and find work elsewhere. However, the servitude they experienced was different to that experienced in the transatlantic slave trade; servants were part of the family in a sense. Good masters treated all in their household well, and everyone was expected to fulfil their duties faithfully. The master in this parable expects to be welcomed with enthusiasm and even loved by his household.

Setting the Scene

If you have a separate Advent Wreath for Children's Liturgy of the Word and if conditions permit, light the first candle for the duration of Children's Liturgy.

We Say Sorry

Leader: You came into the world in history, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You come to us in your Word to make us strong, Christ have mercy. **All: Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: You have asked us to remain ready until you come again, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

We Pray (1)

Dear God, help us to follow Jesus' example by doing good things. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel Mark 13:33-37

Pre-Response

Before discussing the Gospel reading, ask the children to see if they can complete the following challenge: for the rest of Children's Liturgy, every time they hear the word 'Jesus,' they should clap twice. (Only twice!) Have a quick practice by saying 'Jesus' (clap-clap).

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- What is it like to wait for something that you know will happen, but you don't know exactly when it is going to happen?
- What were the servants in today's Gospel expected to be doing when their master returned? If they knew when the master of the household was returning, do you think they might have thought about having a little rest and doing their work nearer the time?

- What are we expected to be doing when Jesus returns?
- What things might distract us from being always ready for Jesus?
- Do you think Jesus wants his followers to be ready with happy hearts or with grumbling hearts?

Response (follow-up)

How did the children find the challenge you set? Was it easy or difficult? Did it get easier as time went on? Would it have been easier or more difficult to remember by yourself? The leader should be able to draw out that having others who were trying to follow the challenge would make it easier - and maybe that having people who were trying to be distracting might make it harder! Emphasise that we need to be ready for Jesus' return, not by clapping, but by how we live our lives. Finish by allowing everyone to cheerfully shout 'JESUS' (clap-clap) three times.

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 as we heard about him in today's Gospel?
- And, do you believe in his son, Jesus Christ, who came to tell us what God is like?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who inspires us with ideas to help us to understand?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying, 'Jesus asked us to look after the world and so we now pray...'

Leader: We pray that during Advent all in our Church may be a light to help people to be ready for the coming of the Son of God. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for the whole world, that everyone may be prepared to welcome God in their lives. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for all those who have died, and their loved ones who miss them. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for anyone we know who is suffering from any kind of illness. May we help them in any way we can. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, help us to fill the world with your love in preparation for your coming. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

