

St. Joseph's *Children's Liturgy of the Word*

November 2023 (Year A)



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St. Joseph is the patron saint of the family, and the family is the “domestic Church.” These sheets were developed to support my parish of St. Joseph in Great Malvern, Worcestershire, but they are now used by parishes and schools not just in the UK, but some are sent to contacts abroad as well. As always, feedback and suggestions are most welcome.

Sunday Mass is the cornerstone of our week; These resources are designed to be used in a family setting or in Children's Liturgy of the Word at Mass, or in the classroom. Please make them your own and feel free to pass them on for free.

Helping young people to grow in love with Jesus Christ

This is the last month of the Church's year, and the readings begin to look forward to the “End Times”. It is an opportunity to help children understand that our faith is not only about “being good” (although that comes into it) but it's about a relationship with Jesus Christ Our Lord, who leads us to His Father in glory, by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. There is often a Pelagian current in children's religious formation, leading them to think that they earn Our Lord's favour. So, if a child responds that Jesus wants them to “be good,” try to take them one step further, by either answering *Yes, to show Jesus how much we love Him*, or *Yes, because the Holy Spirit helps us to show our love for Jesus when we are “good.”* As Advent is coming, on the final page is the circle of the liturgical year I shared last year – my computer skills are a bit rough and ready, so if you want a more polished version there are plenty online, but do choose one that focuses on Christ. If anyone is up to creating a better version for me, I'd be delighted and will credit you!

There are Four Dimensions of our Faith, and the activities all reflect one or more of each of these dimensions.

Professing the faith (speaking about it and learning the faith)

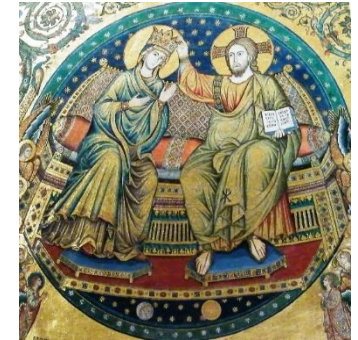
Celebrating our faith in the liturgy and the sacraments

C17 Tabernacle, Basilica of St. Ambrose © Carol Ann Harnett



Living the faith in Christ (making choices by the grace of Jesus Christ)

A prayer-filled life where the Our Father takes centre stage



The liturgical year concludes with the celebration of Christ the Universal King. What is more evidence of His glorious kingship than this mosaic of Him crowning His mother with His own crown.

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Gospel for 31st Sunday Year A

5th November 2023

Matthew 23:1-12

Addressing the people and his disciples Jesus said, 'The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do what they tell you and listen to what they say; but do not be guided by what they do: since they do not practise what they preach. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them? Not they! Everything they do is done to attract attention, like wearing broader phylacteries and longer tassels, like wanting to take the place of honour at banquets and the front seats in the synagogues, being greeted obsequiously in the market squares and having people call them Rabbi.

'You, however, must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since you have only one master, and you are all brothers. You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor must you allow yourselves to be called teachers, for you have only one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted.'

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*

Children's liturgy of the word for this week

Discussion on the Gospel

Often, we find "rabbi" translated as "teacher, but it more accurately translates as "my great one". This means that this passage concludes with a reminder that the Father is the Great One and all our religious practices are to be directed at drawing closer to Him, rather than because of looking holy or pious.

Q: Jesus is again talking to the religious leaders, those who were supposed to be setting an example to others. However, he said that what they teach is important, but their example is not good. What does Jesus say that the scribes and Pharisees do? (A: Tie up heavy burdens and place them on other people's shoulders.)

Q: What is a burden? (A: Something that is hard to carry.)

Q: As well as being something that is heavy to carry a burden, is also something that is hard to do. What are the hard things we have to do? (A: Open.)

Q: Who can help us to do these hard things? (A: The Holy Spirit.)

Q: Jesus then tells people not to call anyone "Rabbi". Often "Rabbi" is translated as "teacher" but in fact it actually means "My great one". Who does Jesus say is the real Rabbi? (A: God the Father.)

Q: The Father is the real Great One because He doesn't just tell us what to do, but He sends someone to help us. Who does the Father send to us? (A: The Holy Spirit.)

Q: Jesus says that He is the Main Teacher and that we must listen to Him. What are some of the things that Jesus asks us to do? (Open – not just "be kind" but lead children to consider all four dimensions of the faith; learning about our faith and telling other people about our faith, come to Mass/pay attention in Mass, praying, reading the Bible etc.)

Q: Let's think about these things that Jesus asks us to do. When do we see Him doing these things in the Gospels? (A: Open – see some examples on the next page.)

Jesus shows us how to live as well as tells us how to live. Let's finish by silently asking Jesus to help us to do as He says, by His grace. (Or finish by inviting children to say spontaneous prayers if they are used to this.)

Some of the things Jesus says to do, and examples of when He did these things:

Blessed are the meek (Mt. 5:5,) – *Jesus accepted did not fight back when He was arrested (Mt. 26:54).*

Blessed are the merciful (Mt. 5:7) – *Jesus forgave those who were sinners (Mk. 2:5).*

Do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself (Mt. 6:34) – *Jesus told Martha not to worry (Lk. 10:38-42) and He hinted that He did not worry about here He was to sleep at night (Mt. 8:20).*

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? (Mt. 7:3-5) – *Jesus ate with "sinners" and converted them by love rather than by criticism (e.g. Mt. 9:9-13).*

Love your neighbour as yourself (Mt. 22:37-39) – *Jesus showed great love to all He met, regardless of who they were and what they had done (e.g. Lk. 8:2).*

If someone strikes you on the cheek, turn the other to him also (Mt. 5:38) *Jesus did not retaliate when He was beaten before He was crucified.*

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you (Lk. 6:27) – *Jesus always loved everyone He met, including those who hated Him e.g. in His trial where He did not answer back.*

Do to others as you would have them do to you (Lk. 6:31) – *again we always see Jesus treating other people in the most respectful of ways.*

Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing (Lk. 23:34) – *Jesus said this on the Cross as He was dying. Jesus shows us that whatever the situation we must ask Him for the grace to forgive.*

Love one another as I have loved you (Jn. 13:35) – *Jesus showed love to everyone, regardless of who they were, e.g. those He healed and raised f, the dead.*

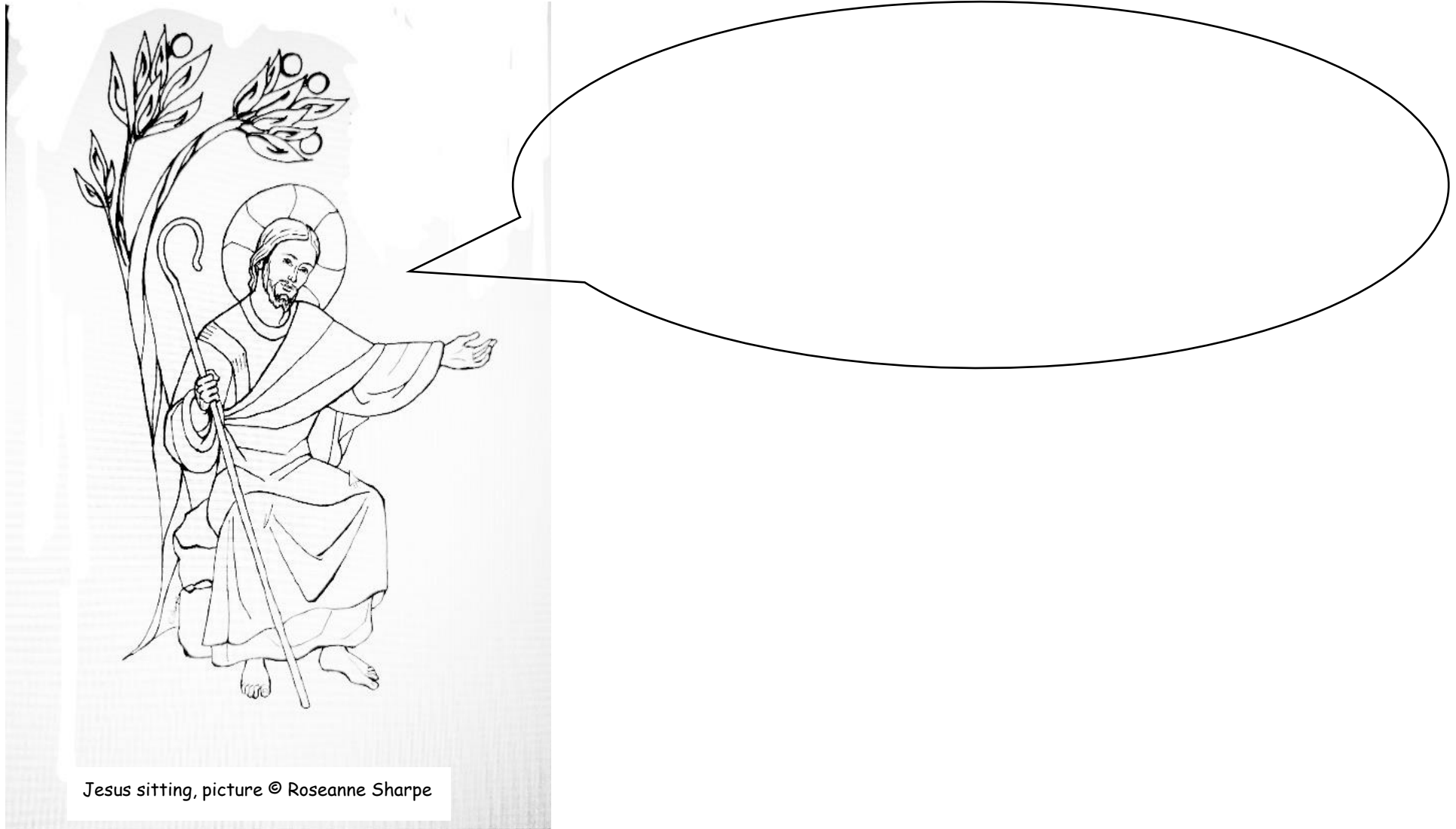
Do not be anxious about what you shall eat/your body/your clothes... (Lk. 12:22) – *Jesus was never anxious about where He was or whether or not there would be food. One day His disciples went to get food and He was too busy helping the Samaritan woman to understand the Father's love for her (Jn. 4:31).*

Ask and it will be given to you, knock and you will find – *Jesus is referring to being persistent in prayer as He was in many examples in the Gospels, (e.g. Lk. 11:1).*

Pick up his cross and follow me (Mt. 16:24-26) – *Jesus never said that following Him would be easy and it wasn't easy for Him either.*

Jesus wants us to listen to Him and copy Him. Draw a picture of yourself sitting down listening to Jesus, and in the speech bubble, write something that He might be saying. ...

(You may need to write in the bubble for the smallest children)



Jesus sitting, picture © Roseanne Sharpe

Children's liturgy of the word for this week



Gospel for 27th Sunday Year A

12th November 2023

Matthew 25:1-13

Jesus told this parable to his disciples: 'The kingdom of heaven will be like this: Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were sensible: the foolish ones did take their lamps, but they brought no oil, whereas the sensible ones took flasks of oil as well as their lamps. The bridegroom was late, and they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight there was a cry, "The bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him." At this, all those bridesmaids woke up and trimmed their lamps, and the foolish ones said to the sensible ones, "Give us some of your oil: our lamps are going out." But they replied, "There may not be enough for us and for you; you had better go to those who sell it and buy some for yourselves." They had gone off to buy it when the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding hall and the door was closed. The other bridesmaids arrived later. "Lord, Lord," they said "open the door for us." But he replied, "I tell you solemnly, I do not know you." So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour.'

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Discussion on the Gospel

This parable is about getting ready for Jesus' second coming, but as adults we can also consider how we can make the best use of Advent as a time of waiting and preparation for the celebration of Christmas. If you have access to an oil lamp, this will show the children what was actually used in His parable and the need to fill it with oil.



Q: What did the sensible bridesmaids do? (A: Bring spare oil for their lamps.)

Q: What did the foolish ones not do? (A: Bring any spare oil.)

Q: What happened when the bridegroom arrived? (A: The bridesmaids woke up and got their lamps ready, but the foolish ones' lamps had gone out, so they asked the wise ones for some of their oil.)

Q: What were the sensible bridesmaids able to do? (A: Those with lamps lit were allowed in but those without oil were sent to go and get some.)

Q: The bridegroom stands for Jesus, and he is telling us to be prepared for His second coming. What does Jesus' "second coming" mean? (A: It means that at the end of time Jesus will come back to earth in glory.)

Q: Whenever oil is referred to in a parable, we can think of the sacraments.

What are sacraments? (A: They are moments when Jesus gives us His special grace and strength, and changes us to be more like Him.)

Q: Which sacraments use oil? (A: Baptism, Confirmation, Sacrament of the sick, Holy Orders)

Q: How do the sacraments help us to be ready for Jesus? (A: They give us grace which is the strength of the Holy Spirit so that we can live as Jesus knows is best for us.)

Q: It's advent in a few weeks' time – what can we do at home to get ready to celebrate for Jesus' coming at Christmas? (A: Open – but maybe have a few suggestions up your sleeves, e.g. making/putting up a crib scene at home.)

Let's finish by asking the Holy Spirit to help us always to be ready for Jesus!

Imagine that you are an oil lamp that needs to keep burning with love for Jesus. What can you fill your lamp with to keep your faith burning? Either draw a line or copy the things that will help you love Jesus more. One has been done for you. (Be careful, there's a couple of trick ones!)

Coming into the church to pray quietly at times.

Reading Bible stories

Making the Sign of the Cross when I pass a Catholic church

Praying the Our Father

Praying the Rosary

Helping at home

Helping at school when I am asked to

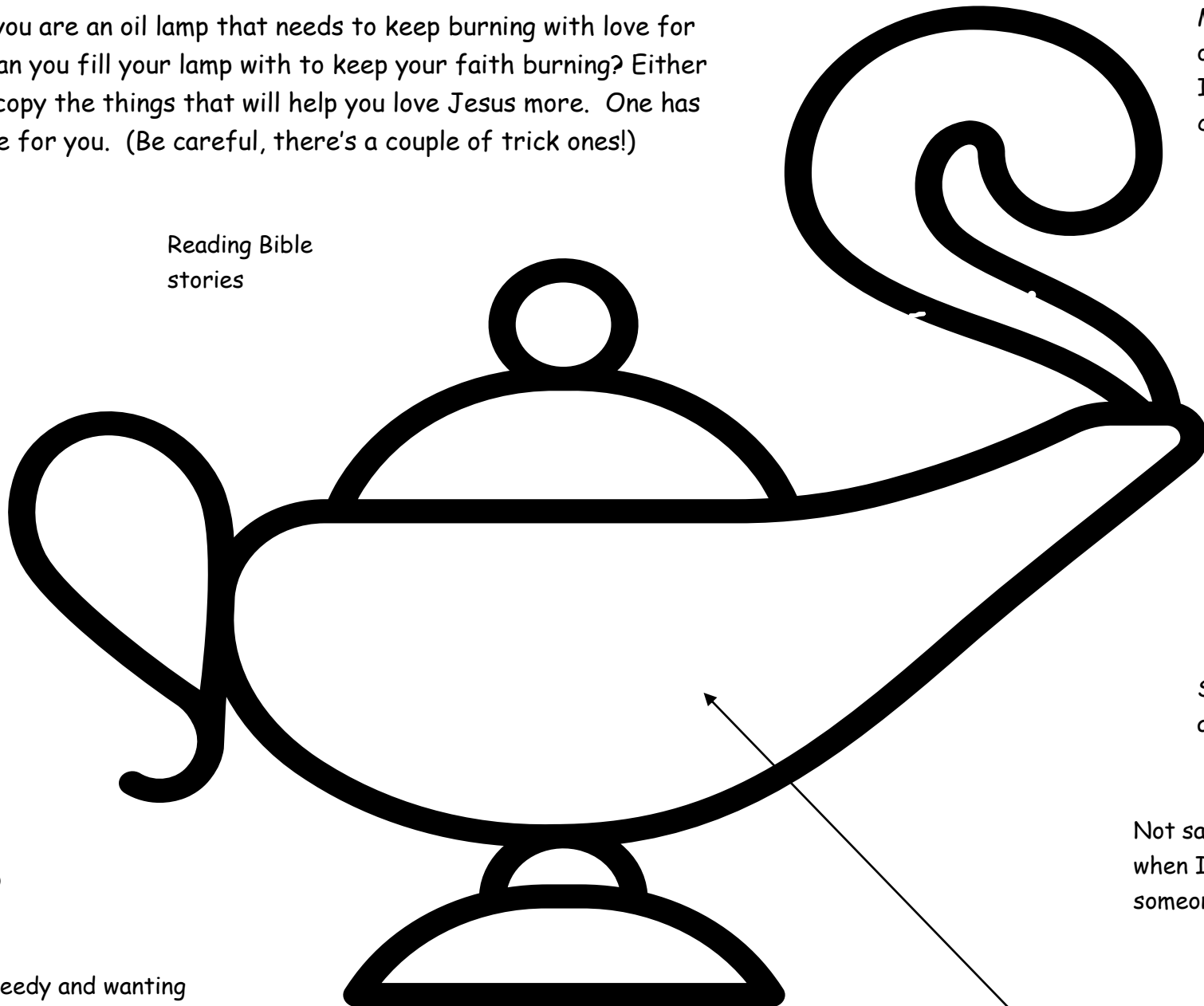
Saying my prayers at bedtime

Asking the Holy Spirit to help me what I have to do

Not saying sorry when I hurt someone

Being greedy and wanting everything for myself

Joining in with the prayers at Mass



Children's liturgy of the word for this week



Gospel for 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time Year A

19th November 2023

Matthew 25:14-15,19-21

Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples:
‘The kingdom of Heaven is like a man on his way abroad who summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to a third one; each in proportion to his ability. Then he set out.
‘The man who had received the five talents promptly went and traded with them and made five more. The man who had received two made two more in the same way. But the man who had received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.
‘Now a long time after, the master of those servants came back and went through his accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents came forward bringing five more. “Sir,” he said “you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made.”
‘His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master’s happiness.”

The Gospel of the Lord:

R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion on the Gospel

One way to emphasise that our talents is to prepare some cards with talents written on them and then when the Church say that they have been given these talents, you can give them the card with that talent on it to remind them to practice that talent.

Q: What is Jesus talking about? (A: The Kingdom of Heaven.)

Jesus talking about how God helps us to get to heaven. Jesus tells this story to show that when we use the gifts and talents that God gives us wisely then they will grow and get better.

Q: What did the man with the 5 talents do? (A: Traded them and made 5 more.)

Q: What about the man with 2 talents? (A: He did the same, making 2 more.)

Q: What about the man with 1 talent? (A: He buried it in the ground.)

Q: Why was the man cross with the man who buried his 1 talent? (A: Because he did not use it either for himself or for anyone else.)

Q: Today we think of “talents” as something that we are good at. God gives us each different talents. What talents have we each been given by God? (A: Open.)

Q: When we practice our talents we are like the men who doubled their talents as they made them work. How do we get better at using our talents? (A: We have to practice – may be give examples of people practicing their talents, e.g. sport, music, the arts, but also say that we have to practice at being kind and generous.)

Q: How can we use our talents to help other people? (A: Open.)

Q: How does God help us to use our talents? (A: The grace of the Holy Spirit helps us.)

Q: What are we going to do today when we get home to practice the talents we have been given by God? (A: Open.)

Let's finish by asking the Holy Spirit to help us to always practice our talents so that they get better and better.

Children's liturgy of the word for this week



Gospel for the Solemnity of Christ the King Year A

26th November 2023

Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus said to his disciples: 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. 'Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me." Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty or a stranger or naked or visit you in prison?" And the King will answer, "In so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me."

'Next he will say to those on his left hand, "Go away from me. For I was hungry and thirsty you never gave me food or anything to drink; you never made me welcome; you never clothed me, and you never visited me when I was sick or in prison. In so far as you neglected to do this to the least of my people, you neglected to do it to me."

The Gospel of the Lord: R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion on the Gospel

This is the last Sunday of the Church's year, the Solemnity of Christ the King. Normally this date is celebrated as "Youth Sunday" so you may have various exciting youth orientated activities going on. The message of the Gospel though is important – it's not that we earn heaven by serving the poor, but our love of Jesus Christ leads us to serve the poor and the disadvantaged, because it's in them that we see the face of Christ.

Q: Who will be coming in glory? (A: The Son of Man, i.e. Jesus. Jesus used this title for Himself because it showed that He came for everybody – all mankind (humanity) and not just for the Jews.)

Q: How else does Jesus describe Himself? (A: As a King.)

Q: Jesus is the King of the Universe. That means that He is not king of any particular country, but the king of the world and the whole universe. He is telling this parable (story) to show us that He's not a king like King Charles or a president, but He's a king who loves and knows every single human being. Let's think about how He explains this.

Q: Who does Jesus say has been blessed by God the Father? (A: Those who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty fed the naked etc.)

Q: What is the link between doing these things and loving Jesus? (? (A: Jesus says that whatever we do to other people we do to Him.)

Q: How can we show Jesus how much we love Him? (A: We can be kind to other people, especially the disadvantaged.)

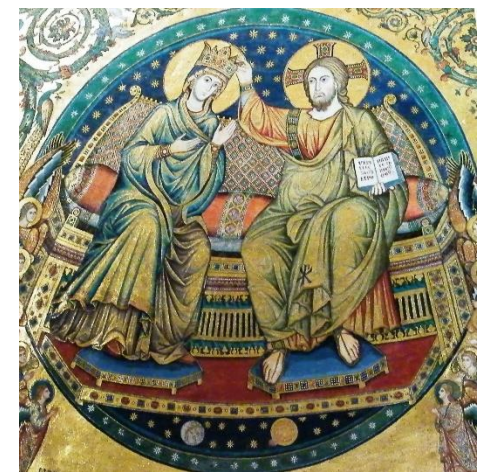
Q: Let's think about a time when you have helped or were kind to another person... what did you do to help them? (A: Open.)

Q: So when we are nice and kind and generous to other people, we are showing Jesus how much we love Him. What does Jesus say will happen if we are not loving to other people? (A: He will send us away.)

So, Jesus's kingdom is where people show love and respect for everyone and by the grace of the Holy Spirit, treat everyone else as if they were Jesus Himself.



Jesus's mother Mary showed her love for the Father when she agreed to become the mother of Jesus. She travelled with Jesus in his teaching ministry and served the Apostles when He ascended into heaven and in the early Church. Here she is in heaven and Jesus is crowning her with His crown. As you colour in this picture, maybe ask her to help you to love Jesus more and more and show that love by helping other people.



Mosaic apse in St. Mary Major, Rome
© Carol Ann Harnett 2012.

In preparation for Advent....

It's great to engage the children with making a wheel of the liturgical year. Either use this template or look online for one. Do Make sure that any you choose is Christ-centred.

How to make this Liturgical Year wheel:

1. It would be a good idea to print this on card for stability
2. Cut out the circle and the arrow below
3. Punch a hole in the bottom of the arrow and in the centre of the wheel
4. Place the arrow on the wheel so that it points to Advent.

