



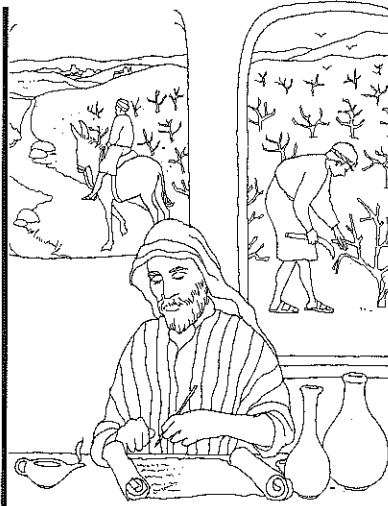
26TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

RESPONSE: Psalm 15

We will live with you,
O God;
we will live forever.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

“Change your lives
and believe in me.”
Alleluia, alleluia!



EVALUATION

We are providing this brief evaluation form for use after you have celebrated this Sunday's liturgy with the children.

Notes for future reference:

What went well?

What needs improvement?

LITURGICAL SEASON BACKGROUND

During the closing weeks of Ordinary Time, we explore the way life is in the kingdom of God. Last week we heard the parable of the generous vine grower. Today we hear the story of the two sons, one who promised to obey his father but did not, and the other who said he would not do what his father asked but, upon reflection, did what his father had asked. Next Sunday we will hear another parable, about the vineyard owner who sent his servants and then his son to collect his share of the harvest from the workers. But the workers decided to keep all of the harvest and killed the servants and the owner's son. Jesus concludes the parable by observing that the kingdom of God will be taken from those who do evil and be given to those who do what is right.

These readings continue to fill out a picture of how just and merciful is the reign of God. Such images give us models to follow as we put our lives into order. This is what Ordinary Time, the time after Pentecost, is about — the church at work in the vineyard of life, bringing about the new order of creation, guided by the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND

Both readings today speak of God's mercy and the importance of changing our lives, not only to say we will follow God's way but also to do what God wants. Ezekiel brings to the attention of the Israelites a relatively new notion that it is not just the larger community that is guilty of sin and, therefore, rightfully punishable; individuals, too, stand under the judgment of God. Nevertheless, God is always ready to forgive rather than punish. God not only wants us to change but also provides us with opportunities to change. The Gospel parable further illustrates the point.

In Jesus' time, some of the religious leaders spoke glowingly about God's love and mercy, about helping the poor and widowed. But Jesus saw that they were not practicing what they preached. They shunned the poor and did not welcome them in the synagogues. These leaders believed that God embraced them with love, as was evidenced by their wealth. Jesus challenged their integrity, confronted them to change their lives, and to be just and compassionate.

Our children will readily relate to this parable. They are usually good at detecting phonies, someone who says one thing but does another. They will also welcome hearing of God's readiness to forgive us when we have a change of heart.

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A

LITURGICAL ENVIRONMENT

The environment for Ordinary Time is simple, featuring a candle, a plant or group of plants, and perhaps some incense. The liturgical color of the season is green. You might display the SUNDAY Scripture Poster which, this week is an illustration of the Gospel, showing the father who asked his two sons to work in the vineyard. The poster could be sent home with a different family each week to color for the next celebration. The book of God's word, displayed facing the assembly, is the focal point of the gathering space.

CENTERING / PROCESSIONAL SONG

You might use the same centering/gathering song for several Sundays during this season. Suggestions:

- "Psalm 103: The Lord Is Kind and Merciful" (*Vol. 1 Sing God A Simple Song* #39, Treehaus Communications). Children can sing the refrain with the following gestures:

The Lord is kind . . . (*Cross hands over heart.*)
. . . and merciful. (*Extend hands outward in a gesture of giving. Repeat gestures when line is repeated.*)
Slow to anger, (*Cross right hand over heart.*)
rich in kindness, (*Cross left hand over heart.*)
the Lord is kind and merciful. (*Extend hands outward again in a gesture of giving.*)

- "Somebody's Knockin' at Your Door" (*Vol. 1 Sing God A Simple Song* #15, Treehaus Communications). Children can sing the refrain. A fitting gesture might be to mime knocking at a door each time that phrase is repeated.
- "Psalm 98: All the Ends of the Earth" (*Vol. 2 Sing God A Simple Song*, #11, Treehaus Communications). You may wish to follow the gestures suggested in *Sing God A Simple Song*.

FIRST READING *Ezekiel 18:25-28*

The reader may be either a child or an adult; in either case, the person should know ahead of time in order to prepare carefully. This text might be read with a tone that is strong and kindly but not forced.

PSALM RESPONSE

The psalm is not only a response to the first reading; rather, "responsorial" is descriptive of the way the psalm is prayed, with the children responding to the cantor or leader. You might use the same psalm through several Sundays. *Suggestions:*

- "Psalm 15: We Will Live With You, O God" Walker, SUNDAY Book of Readings/Lectionary Adapted for Children and SUNDAY Weekly Leader's Guide, Year A, page 116, Treehaus Communications; Music for Children's Liturgy of the Word, Cycle A, Treehaus Communications/ O.C.P. Publications).
- "Psalm 95: If Today You Hear God's Voice" (*Vol. 1 Sing God A Simple Song*, #37, Treehaus Communications). You might follow the gestures as recommended in *Sing God a Simple Song*.
- Psalm 95: If You Hear the Voice of God" (*Vol. 2 Sing God A Simple Song*, #35, Treehaus Communications). You might follow the gestures suggested in *Sing God A Simple Song*.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Suggestions:

- "Change Your Lives" (Walker, SUNDAY Book of Readings/Lectionary Adapted for Children and SUNDAY Weekly Leader's Guide, Year A, page 116, Treehaus Communications; Music for Children's Liturgy of the Word, Cycle A, Treehaus Communications/O.C.P. Publications).
- "Halle, Halle, Halle" (Caribbean, *Vol. 1 Sing God A Simple Song*, #43, Treehaus Communications).
- "Praise His Name" (*Vol. 2 Sing God A Simple Song*, #38, Treehaus Communications).

GOSPEL *Matthew 21:28-32*

Usually the presider reads the Gospel. This text offers a particularly good opportunity to involve the children in the story, as it is a kind of riddle, in which Jesus asks his listeners their opinion about the two sons. You might read the text with particular attention to the dialog between the father and the sons, giving the story dramatic emphasis through the dialogue.

HOMILY OUTLINE

See the *SUNDAY Weekly Leader Guide, Year A*, pages 116 and 117, for "Focus of the Readings" and "Reflecting on the Readings With Children." When reflecting on the scriptures with children we take our cues from the children's responses. In so doing, you might use some of the questions below to enrich their appreciation of God's word.

WE LISTEN TO GOD SPEAK

- What might the children in the assembly hear God saying to them in today's readings?
- How might you engage the children in the biblical experience with open-ended questions?

Examples for this week's readings:

Concerning the first reading

- What does this reading tell you about who God is?
- How do you think Ezekiel felt about what God said?
- What do you think it was like for the people to hear what God said to them?

Concerning the Gospel:

- What do you think Jesus wanted the people to know about God from this parable?
- How do you feel about the son who said he would work but did not? About the son who said he would not work but, later, did?
- What do you think changed the two sons' minds?
- If you were the father, how would you have felt toward your sons?
- How do you think the leaders of the people responded to this story?

WE REFLECT ON THE REIGN OF GOD

- How can you invite the children to look out of the biblical experience at their lives today?
- How can you use the biblical imagery of today's readings to explore with children their experience of God's presence in our lives today?

Examples for this week's readings

Concerning the first reading

- How do you feel about what God said? What is it like for you to know that if you are sorry for doing something wrong, God will forgive you?
- How have you seen the way God might punish people who do what is not right?
- In what ways has God been fair with you?
- What is it like for you to change your ways for the better?

Concerning the Gospel:

- When might you have been like the two sons in the story?
- When might you have not done what was right when you had said that you would do it? What was that like for you?
- When might you have said you were going to do what was right but then did not do it? What was that like for you?
- What is it like for you to change from doing something wrong to doing what is right?
- When might others have said they were going to do something for you, but then did not? What was that like for you? How do you feel about such a person?
- How might you feel about others who said they would not do something for you, but then changed their mind and did it? How do you feel about such a person?
- How do you look upon people who do not do what is right?



□ WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

- How might you attune yourself to encourage the children's own creative responses to God's word?
- How might the Spirit be moving the children to respond to God's word in praise and thanksgiving?

Examples for this week's readings:

Concerning the first reading:

- What can we do to be more aware of doing what is wrong? What can we do to change?
- How can we show our gratitude and joy for God's mercy?

Concerning the Gospel:

- What can you do to help you keep promises you make at home, in school?
- What do you think God would want us to do if someone breaks a promise to us?
- What can you do if you have broken a promise you have made to God?
- The church promises to help the poor and needy. How can you help to live up to that promise?
- How can you be a more trustworthy and faithful person?

CREED

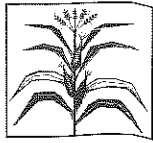
Invite the children to profess their faith by creedal statements that echo the readings. Reflect on what the readings say about God as Creator, Jesus as Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit as the Giver of Life. Express these statements so that the children can give their assent to them. This week's readings, for example, offer these options:

- God, who is always fair and merciful to those who try to do what is right.
- Jesus, who shows us that we can change our hearts, do what is right, and be forgiven; shows us how actions can speak louder than words;
- Holy Spirit, who helps us to see when we are not following God's way, to change our hearts, and to be true to what God asks of us.

PRAYERS OF FAITHFUL

The proclamation of the word leads us to change our lives and express our gratitude in the celebration of the Eucharist. After the children have offered their prayers and concerns, you might also offer petitions based on the scripture texts. See notes for the 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time for guidelines on preparing petitions. In formulating the prayers, you might draw from the verbs or "action words" and biblical images in this week's readings. For example: *turn away, sorry, change, do what is right, saved, "I will go and work," "believe and change your lives."*

NOTE: Arrange to have the Sunday Scripture Leaflets given to the children as they are leaving Mass. Encourage the children and parents to use these leaflets through the week to continue reflecting prayerfully on God's Word. In addition, emphasize the use of the Light of the World, Our Family Spiritual Life Journal, pages 112 and 113, (Treehaus Communications, Inc.) as a way of assisting the family's deeper reflection on God's word at home.



Liturgy of the Word

September 25, 2011

CENTERING / PROCESSIONAL SONG

• "Psalm 98: All the Ends of the Earth" (Vol. 2 Sing God A Simple Song, #11, Treehaus Communications).

Substitutions/Additional Notes:

OPENING PRAYER

Presider: O God, you are always kind and merciful. You are always ready to forgive us when we return to you. May your Holy Spirit guide us in your way and lead us back to you when we stray. We want to serve you as Jesus did, now and forever. In the name of Jesus we pray.

All: Amen.

Substitutions/Additional Notes:

FIRST READING *Ezekiel 18:25-28*

Today's Reader: _____

Presider: Today the prophet Ezekiel tells us what God says about how we can be saved.

PSALM RESPONSE

Presider or Song Leader: Let us sing of God's mercy and how we can be saved and live forever.

Substitutions/Additional Notes:

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

• "Change Your Lives and Believe In Me," (Walker, SUNDAY Book of Readings/Lectionary Adapted for Children and SUNDAY Weekly Leader Guide, Year A, page 116, Treehaus Communications; Music for Children's Liturgy of the Word, Cycle A, Treehaus Communications/ O.C.P. Publications).

Substitutions/Additional Notes:

GOSPEL *Matthew 21:28-32*

Today's Reader: _____

Preliminary Comments: Jesus asks us, in a story, an important question about what happens when we change our minds and our hearts.

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A



HOMILY

Focal Points: God wants us to know that when we do what is not right and then return to God in sorrow, God will forgive us. The parable of Jesus illustrates the point that when we change our lives, God is always ready to have mercy on us. Moreover, what we do reveals whether or not we are really honest about following God's way.

Outline:

CREED

Presider: Let us proclaim our faith in God who is always merciful and kind.

• Do you believe in God, who wants us to change our hearts and do what is right?

All: Yes, we believe! *Or:* Yes, we believe in God, who . . .

• Do you believe in Jesus, who came to teach us how God is always ready to forgive us.

All: Yes, we believe! *Or:* Yes, we believe in Jesus, who . . .

• Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us to change our hearts when we have turned away from God.

All: Yes, we believe! *Or:* Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, who . . .

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Presider: Our God is always patient and merciful. So do we offer our prayers to God with grateful hearts. (After the children have offered their prayers, you might also add petitions based on today's scripture texts. For example:)

+ May the leaders of all nations not only speak the truth but also do what is right; we pray.

All: God of mercy, hear our prayer.

+ May the people in our churches not only speak of God's merciful love but also treat one another with love and mercy; we pray.

All: God of mercy, hear our prayer.

+ May we be caring of one another in our families and neighborhoods not only in what we say but also in what we do; we pray.

All: God of mercy, hear our prayer.

Substitutions/Additional Notes:

CLOSING PRAYER

Presider: God, help us to practice what we preach, to speak the truth and do what is right. And when we say we will follow your way, then do what we want, guide us back to you. As we gather at your Table, may your Sacred Food unite us with the body of your Son, Jesus, so that we act lovingly toward one another, especially the poor. We pray in the name of Jesus.

All: Amen.

Substitutions/Additional Notes:

NOTE: Arrange to have the *Sunday Scripture Leaflets* given to the children as they are leaving Mass. Encourage the children and parents to use these leaflets and the *Light of the World, Our Family Spiritual Life Journal* throughout the week.



CENTERING / PROCESSIONAL SONG

• "Psalm 98: All the Ends of the Earth" (Vol. 2 Sing God A Simple Song, #11, Treehaus Communications).

Substitutions/Additional Notes:

OPENING PRAYER

Presider: O God, you are always kind and merciful. You are always ready to forgive us when we return to you. May your Holy Spirit guide us in your way and lead us back to you when we stray. We want to serve you as Jesus did, now and forever. In the name of Jesus we pray.

All: Amen.

Substitutions/Additional Notes:

FIRST READING Ezekiel 18:25-28

Today's Reader: _____

Presider: Today the prophet Ezekiel tells us what God says about how we can be saved.

PSALM RESPONSE

Presider or Song Leader: Let us sing of God's mercy and how we can be saved and live forever.

Substitutions/Additional Notes:

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

• "Change Your Lives and Believe In Me," (Walker, SUNDAY Book of Readings/Lectionary Adapted for Children and SUNDAY Weekly Leader Guide, Year A, page 116, Treehaus Communications; Music for Children's Liturgy of the Word, Cycle A, Treehaus Communications/ O.C.P. Publications).

Substitutions/Additional Notes:

GOSPEL Matthew 21:28-32

Today's Reader: _____

Preliminary Comments: Jesus asks us, in a story, an important question about what happens when we change our minds and our hearts.

Liturgy Celebration for September 25, 2011 • 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A

**TWENTY-SIXTH
SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME
YEAR A**

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God,
you are always true to us
and keep your promises.
Forgive us
when we do wrong;
help us to see our faults,
and make us quick
to carry out your commands.
We pray this prayer to you
through Jesus, your Son,
who lives with you,
forever and ever.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Both readings focus on the mercy of God for sinners. In their earlier history, the Israelites tended to think almost exclusively in communal terms: communal guilt, communal punishment. Here Ezekiel presents the corrective to that extreme: individual responsibility for individual sin. The truth is in the balance of the two. The major focus, however, when seen with our Gospel reading, is that God always allows the freedom and opportunity to change.

The Gospel presents this in parable form. It is the story of each of us. Sometimes we say yes, and we don't act. Sometimes we rebel and say no—but later have a change of heart and act! God is primarily interested in our final option! God does not hold past sin against us. God hopes and waits for our obedient response.

FIRST READING: *Ezekiel 18:25-28*

This is a reading from the prophet Ezekiel.

Our God says:

“This is how I am:
when people turn away from me and sin,
they are punished for it.
But when people are sorry for their sins,
change their lives, and do what is right,
they are not punished; they are saved.”

The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSE: *Psalms 15*

RESPONSE:

We will live with you, O God, we will live for - ev - er.

VERSES:

1. When we do speak what is right.
2. When we speak the truth.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

“Change your lives and be - lieve in me, “Al - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!”

GOSPEL: *Matthew 21:28-32*

This is a reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

Jesus said to the chief priests
and the leaders of the people,

“I’m going to tell you a story,
and you tell me what you think about it.

“There was a man who had two sons.

“One day he said to one of them,

‘Son, I want you to go out
and work in the vineyard today.’

“The boy said, ‘No, I won’t go.’

“But, later, the boy was sorry
that he had said ‘no’ to his father,
and so he did go.

“The father then said to his other son,

‘Son, I want you to go out
and work in the field today.’

“The second son said,

‘Yes, father, I will go and work.’

“But he did not go.

“Now tell me, Jesus asked,
which boy did what the father
wanted him to do, the first son or the second?”

The leaders answered,

“The first son.”

Jesus said to them,

“I’m telling you the truth.

People you look down on as sinners
are going to enter the reign of God before you.

Because, when John the Baptist came
and preached the truth,
you didn’t believe him.

But the people you look down on as sinners
believed him and changed their lives.

And even after you saw that they believed
and changed their lives,
you still didn’t believe and change your lives.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS
WITH CHILDREN:

What does the Gospel say to you
today?

After the Gospel, help the children
to see that it is how we act that is
important. Sometimes we don’t want
to act like Jesus—like the first son in
the story. But after we think about
it, we know we want to. Jesus was
telling this story to some people who
were like the second son. They *said*
they would do what God wanted, but
they didn’t do it. When God sent
John the Baptist to preach to them,
they wouldn’t listen to him. Instead
of listening for God’s Word, they were
busy judging other people. But Jesus
told them that it isn’t enough to say
something. What’s important is that
we really do what God wants.

It’s hard to escape a “moral”
attitude with these readings. We
don’t want to moralize with the
children. But we do need to help
them see that there are certain
things God wants us to do. They
should understand from the Gospel
reading that, as good daughters and
sons of God, we don’t always respond
immediately in the best way, but that
we can always do better. God always
loves us. What Jesus criticized was
the attitude of the chief priests and
leaders—they thought they were
better than others. Jesus praises
those who were sinners but believed
in him and changed their lives.

You may wish to have three
children participate in the reading, as
narrator and the two sons. Even this
little touch may help the children
enter more into the story.