

Prepare with Prayer

*I praise you, LORD! With my own mouth,
I tell others the laws that you have
spoken. Your word is a lamp that
gives light wherever I walk.
Your laws are fair, and I
have given my word
to respect them all.*

Psalm 119:12a,
13, 105-106

Today's Readings

Sirach 15:15-20
Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 33-34
1 Corinthians 2:6-10
Matthew 5:23-24

.....
God lets you choose between good and evil.

Scripture Background

Today's reading from the Book of Sirach addresses an old question: If God has foreknowledge of someone's sin, does that mean God causes the sin? Answering with an emphatic "no," Sirach speaks of the mystery of free will, God's irrevocable gift to all human beings.

Less than two centuries later, the author of the Letter of James will repeat Sirach's assertion when he writes, "Don't blame God when you are tempted! God cannot be tempted by evil, and he doesn't use evil to tempt others" (1:13).

To understand the Second Reading, recall that St. Paul is writing to the Corinthians because of a disturbing divisiveness that has arisen among them. Some scholars speculate that perhaps a subgroup identifying itself as disciples of Apollo believed themselves to be in possession of a superior knowledge of Christ that, in turn, made them superior to other Christians.

Paul insists, however, that among the baptized there is no secret or special knowledge shared only by a few. The wisdom of the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all.

The excerpt from Matthew's Gospel is part of a larger discourse about every Christian's duty to prevent anger from escalating into words and deeds of hate. While Jesus' insistence on the highest of standards in the practice of neighborly love has startled audiences from his day to ours, his teaching nonetheless remains well in line with traditional Jewish thought.

Many of the prophets who preceded him had written that there can be no true worship of God without ethical treatment of one's fellow human beings. By Jesus' day, however, disillusionment with temple worship in general had begun to creep into the thinking of some Jews, especially those who lived a separate, secluded life at Qumran.

After the Resurrection, any Jewish Christians who felt unwelcome at the temple in Jerusalem probably shared the same disillusionment.

Relationship to Children

Children are hardwired to explore the world with their own five senses, and they love learning through hands-on experiences. Today's Gathering activity teaches a spiritual lesson through the use of a few simple material objects. The lesson is that there are good and bad choices in the spiritual world just as there are good and bad choices in the natural world. Rules matter.

Usually starting at about age four, children are able to understand rules and feel compunction when they break them. From the ages of four to six they are eager to please the adults in their world and can understand simple explanations for the rules given them: "Don't tell lies because then people won't believe you even when you tell the truth. Remember the story of the boy who cried 'Wolf!'"

Beginning at age six, children become more aware of social groups, and develop the desire to fit in and belong to them. They begin to understand that others have rights, and they can grasp explanations such as, "Make sure you take only your fair share; otherwise the last person in line might not get any."

This Week's Preparation

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth place a lectionary, a candle, a festive houseplant or bouquet of fresh flowers.

On a separate table positioned so children can gather around it, place the following items (or similar ones): a small piece of candy and an onion (tasting); an alarm clock and a music player (hearing); a lit candle and a bowl of water (touching); a bottle of perfume and a box of mothballs (smelling); a scenic picture and a picture of a dump (seeing); for a photo of a dump, Google "city dump image" and print one of the options.

Six- and seven-year-olds also respond well to praise from grown-ups, so their sense of right and wrong grows when noticed and praised for their good moral choices. By age eight or nine, though, children start testing their limits and sometimes challenge the authority of adults. This could happen during today's Gathering activity.

If an older child deliberately gives an unlikely answer as a joke, don't make anything of it. Simply say, "I can see that you're joking," and repeat the question to another child likely to give a serious answer. Remain firm with older children and stay on task with the matter at hand to keep control of the group's discussion.

Music

Gathering: "Simple Gifts - Shaker Traditional" by Stephen Petrunak. GIA.

Psalm: "Psalm 119: Happy Are Those Who Follow" by Rory Cooney. GIA.

Gospel Acclamation: "Alleluia" by Steve Angrisano. From the CD *With One Voice*. Pflaum.

Behavior and discipline

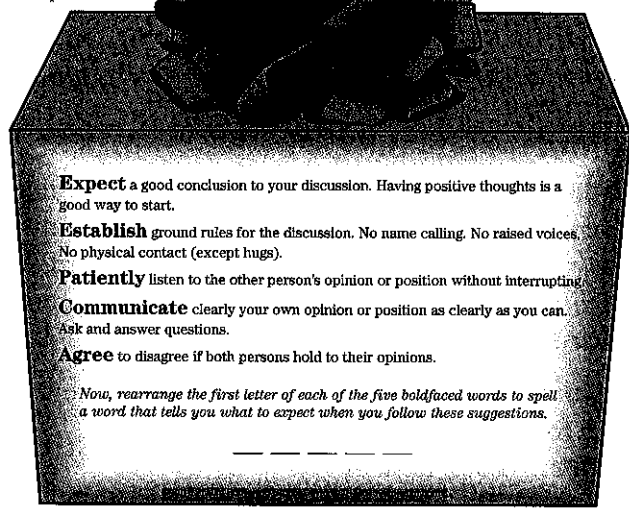
The website parenting.com publishes information as valuable for teachers and youth leaders as it is for parents.

- While timeouts may show little ones that bad behavior has consequences, there are deeper lessons young children need to learn about right and wrong. Margaret Renkl discusses them in "Teaching Your Child Right From Wrong" at parenting.com/article/Toddler/Behavior/Teaching-Your-Child-Right-From-Wrong
- Backing down from a warning or employing an unpersuasive one, losing your patience, doing something you told children not to do: these things can happen to any adult who works with children. Amanda May helps you fine-tune your disciplining methods with "8 Discipline Mistakes Parents Make" at parenting.com/article/Toddler/Behavior/8-Discipline-Mistakes-Parents-Make/1
- When you correct a child, sometimes your body language contradicts your words. Avoid three common traps by reading "Body Language Lessons" at parenting.com/article/Toddler/Behavior/Body-Language-Lessons
- How can your own behavior spark better behavior in children? See parenting.com/article/Toddler/Behavior/easy-ways-to-get-child-to-behave

Children's Leaflet

Peace within the family is the emphasis of this week's family activity. Children learn five good rules to follow when in conflict with another.

Follow these five suggestions when trying to settle a difference or conflict between you and another person.



Expect a good conclusion to your discussion. Having positive thoughts is a good way to start.

Establish ground rules for the discussion. No name calling. No raised voices. No physical contact (except hugs).

Patiently listen to the other person's opinion or position without interrupting.

Communicate clearly your own opinion or position as clearly as you can. Ask and answer questions.

Agree to disagree if both persons hold to their opinions.

Now, rearrange the first letter of each of the five boldfaced words to spell a word that tells you what to expect when you follow these suggestions.

**Children Celebrate!* follows the readings from the *Lectionary for Masses with Children* (©1992, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.) The readings in the children's lectionary sometimes differ from those in the adult lectionary used at Mass. See page 11, Fall 2016 Leader's Guide.

Order of worship

Gathering

Gather the children around the table with the paired objects, and tell them not to touch anything. Ask a different volunteer to answer each of the following sets of questions:

- (Point to water and candle flame.) If you had to spend the whole day with your hand in one of these, which would you choose? Why?
- (Point to alarm clock and music player.) If you had to sit listening to one of these two sounds for an entire hour, which one would you choose? Why? (Play the two sounds.)
- (Point to perfume and mothballs.) If you had to wear clothes scented with one of these, which would you choose? Why? (Let children smell the items.)
- (Point to onion and candy.) If you could eat one of these right now, which would you choose? Why?
- (Point to two pictures.) If you had to choose one of these to hang on your bedroom wall, which one would you choose? Why?

After the Q-and-A session, note that it was quite easy to tell which was the better choice in each instance. Our five senses give us valuable information every day. They tell us which experiences to go for and which ones to avoid. Today's Scripture readings are going to tell us that choosing between right and wrong is easy, too.

Collect

Leader: Please bow your heads for prayer. At the end of each prayer, repeat, "Lord, have mercy." Lord Jesus, you always did the will of your Father. Lord, have mercy.

Children: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: Lord Jesus, nothing could change your loyalty to your Father. Lord, have mercy.

Children: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: Lord Jesus, how immense is your wisdom! Lord, have mercy.

Children: Lord, have mercy.

Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading: Sirach 15:15-20

Leader: In today's First Reading, Sirach talks about right and wrong and the freedom we have to choose between them.

At the end of the reading:

Leader: The word of the Lord

Children: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 33-34

The Psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning the Psalm, sing or announce the response.

Leader: Happy are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Children: Happy are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Leader: In today's Second Reading, St. Paul explains that the Holy Spirit gives us the wisdom we need to make good decisions.

At the end of the reading:

Leader: The word of the Lord

Children: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel: Matthew 5:23-24

Leader: In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us something a little surprising. He says that God doesn't want our worship on Sundays if we aren't trying to keep peace with our neighbors on all the other days of the week.

Leader: The Lord be with you.

Children: And with your spirit.

Leader: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

Children: † Glory to you, O Lord.



At the end of the reading:

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

Children: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

- Ask the children about some good choices they have already made today. Here are some possibilities:
 - waking up and dressing for Mass without protesting or poking around
 - doing any assigned chores, like feeding the dog or clearing dirty breakfast dishes
 - avoiding fights with siblings on the way to church
 - behaving well during Mass instead of talking or fidgeting.
- Point out ways the children's good choices in small things already have made the day better, both for themselves and for others. Remind them that God is proud of them for their good choices.
- Acknowledge that sometimes good choices are hard to make. Illustrate this with a story from your own childhood, and tell how the choice you made helped or hurt others and yourself.
- Advise the children to pray to the Holy Spirit for wisdom whenever they need to make a hard choice.

Profession of Faith

Leader: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, "I do." Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, whose plans for you are more than eyes have seen or ears have heard?

Children: I do.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who teaches us to choose life over death and goodness over evil?

Children: I do.

Leader: Do you believe in God's Holy Spirit, who shows you everything, even what is deep in the mind of God?

Children: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leader: As Spirit-filled members of the Church founded by Christ, let us pray. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord."

Leader: That the Holy Spirit will enlighten and guide the pope and all bishops, priests, and Church leaders around the world, we pray.

Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Leader: That leaders of all the world's nations will choose goodness and life for their people, we pray.

Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Leader: That we will grow in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and make good choices in our everyday lives, we pray.

Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Invite the children to add their own petitions.

Leader: Heavenly Father, thank you for sending us Jesus to be our light. Today and always, may his light shine in all that we say and do, so that the world will become a brighter place just because we are in it. This we ask through that same Christ our Lord.

Children: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. Remind them to take a leaflet home and share it with their families.