

## Prepare with Prayer

*Only God gives inward peace, and I depend on him. God alone is the mighty rock that keeps me safe, and his is the fortress where I feel secure.*

Psalm 62:5-6

### Today's Readings

Isaiah 49:14-15

Psalm 62:1-2, 7-8abc

Matthew 6:24-34

*Signs of God's care are all around us.*

## Scripture Background

Today's passage from Isaiah is directed at a completely defeated people. Once charged with pronouncing Israel's doom, Isaiah now is told to assure them that their crimes have not separated them from God forever.

Because the most indestructible form of human love is probably a mother's for her child, Isaiah assures Israel that God's love for them is like that—and more.

Near the other end of the spectrum is the intended audience of today's Gospel: people living comfortable lives. What most endangers their faith is not an incapacitating despair but a numbing materialism. Wealth, even in small quantities, can act like a drug that induces a temporary high along with a growing, insatiable yen for more.

Don't get caught in this trap, Jesus warns. Trust God to satisfy your deepest spiritual longings, and let the carefree birds of the air and flowers of the fields model how to live in the material world. You will never be rich enough, anyway, to clothe and feed yourself more gloriously than God does the least of these birds and flowers.

When Jesus says in verse 33, "But more than anything else, put God's work first," he is talking about glorifying God with acts of justice. Children of the kingdom do not concern themselves with chasing after ever greater quantities of personal wealth, rather they extend helping hands to those unable to acquire enough for their own most basic needs.

Please note, while most Scripture scholars see a lesson in social justice as the heart of today's Gospel reading, that does not mean that Jesus' discourse might not also be comforting for those "worry-warts" who trust in God but know they need to trust more. This same discourse in Luke's Gospel is followed by a section that begins, "My little group of disciples, don't be afraid!" (Luke 12:32)

## Relationship to Children

On the strength of their own inner resources and the guidance they receive from caring, well-informed adults, children usually outgrow their fears. For young Catholics in particular, that growth can be accelerated through learning to see God as a faithful, caring parent and God's creation as a home that is mostly safe and friendly.

From ages two to six, children tend to fear imaginary things, such as ghosts and monsters. At night they fear what might be hiding under their beds or in their closets. Day or night, anything or anyone strange or new can incite fear, too, such as the nighttime sounds in a new neighborhood or a person with a disfigured face. By age seven, children develop fears with a firmer basis in reality. They worry about making friends in a new setting, getting behind in school, or getting a shot at the doctor's office.

Some of the same techniques for working through anger also help children deal with a chronic fear. It helps to talk things out with a trusted adult or even with an imaginary friend. Our faith, of course, tells us it helps to talk with God. It helps to disperse with physical exercise the adrenaline that worry can generate. Artistic and musical expression and, for older

## 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, and, if you wish, a photo of flying birds or a bird figurine.

If choosing the Alternate Gathering Activity, have the natural objects ready for your indoors nature walk.

children, writing with paper and pen all are ways of cutting one's fear down to size. Instead of staying inside and eating up the child emotionally, the fear is exorcised—cast out.

If gripped with fear by something immediate, such as a scary storm, a child can use his imagination to defeat the fear. She can imagine herself flying in the arms of her guardian angel far above the danger, or he can keep repeating, mantra-like, a short prayer. Calming words can be found in the Hail Mary and the opening verse of Psalm 23: "You, Lord, are my shepherd. I will never be in need."

## Music

**Gathering:** "Prayer of Peace" by David Haas. GIA.


**Psalm:** "Rest in God Alone (Psalm 62)" by Curtis Stephan. OCP.

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

## Alternate Gathering Activity: Indoors Nature Walk

Bring inside some natural objects (rock, feather, seedpod, fallen leaf, etc.) and place them at various locations around the room or building. Lead children on a walk from object to object, stopping and pausing at each to comment on how each item tells us something wonderful about God: the rock, the firmness of God's loyalty to us; the feather, the "light touch" of God's mercy; the seedpod, the way God is always bursting with life and pouring it into our souls; the fallen leaf, the way God draws beauty even out of death, etc. This will obviously take some advance planning on your part.

If you prefer, you can post around the room scenic pictures obtained from a wall calendar or a magazine such as the *National Geographic*. In this case, too, prepare a commentary that helps children see in new ways God's creative power and love.



**Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;



Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

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**O divine Master, grant that I may not seek so much to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.**

For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

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St. Francis of Assisi wrote a beautiful prayer about how to "always act like your Father in heaven." To make your own copy of this prayer, cut on the dotted lines, fold on the solid line, and tape or staple the edges together. Use your St. Francis prayer card with your morning or night prayers every day.

\**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

Lead the children in a liturgical movement to accompany the David Haas song "Prayer of Peace." You can view a music video of the song at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw0gMW6gk0w>. The first half of the movement will feature footwork, and the second half, hand-and-arm motions. Verse 1 goes like this:

*Peace before us... two slow steps forward  
peace behind us... two slow steps backward  
peace under our feet... walk in place to the song's rhythm*

*Peace within us... arms across breast  
peace over us... arms arched overhead, fingertips touching  
let all around us be peace... arms gradually lowered until  
hands outstretched in a prayer gesture*

Repeat the same motions with the other verses.

## Collect

**Leader:** Please bow your heads for prayer. At the end of each prayer, repeat, "Lord, have mercy." Lord Jesus, you are a mighty rock that keeps us safe and gives us peace. Lord, have mercy.

**Children:** Lord, have mercy.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, you are a fortress where we are secure. Lord, have mercy.

**Children:** Lord, have mercy.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, you are our place of safety. Lord, have mercy.

**Children:** Lord, have mercy.

*Light the candle and begin the First Reading.*

## First Reading: Isaiah 49:14-15

**Leader:** In today's First Reading, the prophet Isaiah reminds us that nothing can make God stop caring for us.

At the end of the reading:

**Leader:** The word of the Lord

**Children:** Thanks be to God.

## Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 62:1-2, 7-8ab

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

**Leader:** Rest in God alone, my soul.

**Children:** Rest in God alone, my soul.

## 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 6:24-34

**Leader:** In today's Gospel, Jesus encourages us to learn a lesson about God's faithfulness by looking at how well God cares for his creation.

**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:

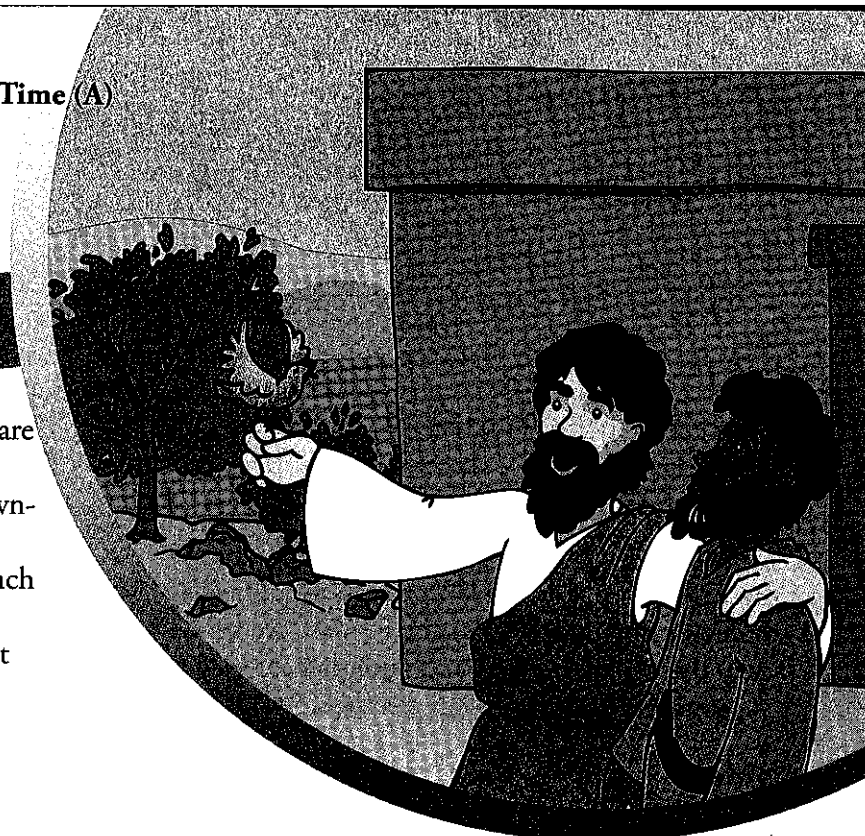
**Leader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**Children:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

## Homily

Using ideas from Relationship to Children and the following outline, discuss with the group the subject of fear.

- As Jesus said, some people worry about the food they are to eat or the clothes they are to wear. What are some worries or fears you have?
- Jesus gave us one way to calm our fears, and that is to look at the signs of God's love that are all around us.
  - People who worry about food should see that God's birds don't go hungry.
  - People who worry about clothes should see how beautifully God's flowers are dressed.
- Seeing in creation the signs of God's care and talking to God in prayer, then, is one way to conquer fear. You can call this "praying it away."



• There are other things you can do, too, when you are afraid.

- Talk it out: besides talking to God, talk to a grown-up, an older sister, etc.
- Work it off: exercise, dance, run, ride a bike, punch a pillow, etc.
- Play it out: draw your fear, make up a song about it, write a poem about it, etc.

Conclude by summing up the four ways to conquer fear: pray it away, talk it out, work it off, play it out.

## 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, our creator in heaven who watches over all his creation?

**Children:** I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who lived in God's creation and saw signs of God's fatherly and motherly love all around him?

**Children:** I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who is our helper and guide whenever we are afraid?

**Children:** I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in the holy catholic Church, the family of God founded by Christ and strengthened and united by the Holy Spirit?

**Children:** I do.

## Prayer of the Faithful

**Leader:** As children of a heavenly Father who knows all our needs, let us pray to him with trusting confidence. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord."

**Leader:** That Pope \_\_\_\_\_ and all Church leaders will care for their people as a good mother cares for her children, we pray.

**Children:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Leader:** That leaders of nations will hear the cry of the poor in their midst and find ways to provide them with food, clothing, and shelter, we pray.

**Children:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Leader:** That the people of our parish and community will care for one another as God cares for all of creation, we pray.

**Children:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Leader:** That all of us will grow in our trust for God, especially when we feel worried or afraid, we pray.

**Children:** Hear us, O Lord.

*Invite the children to add their own petitions.*

**Leader:** Heavenly Father, you know better than we ourselves know what is best for us. Thank you for listening to our prayers and caring for us always. May you be praised forever, through 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.