

Prepare with Prayer

Shout praises to the LORD! The LORD blesses everyone who worships him and gladly obeys his teachings. Their descendants will have great power in the land, because the LORD blesses all who do right.

Psalm 112:1-2

Today's Readings

Isaiah 58:7-10

Psalm 112:4-5, 8ab and 9

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Matthew 5:13-16

Help fill the world with the kindness of Christ.

Scripture Background

Today's passage from Isaiah is part of a larger discussion about fasting. While the practice has its place in true religion, it can never substitute for a much more basic requirement of the Law: supplying the needs of the poor.

This same Old Testament theme is revisited by Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46, where failing to fast doesn't even merit a mention in the Lord's discourse on the Final Judgment. A never-ending problem among the pious, it would seem, is the tendency to think that personal asceticism is equal to, or perhaps even better than, the much more difficult task of working for social justice.

In the Second Reading, St. Paul discusses the challenge of preaching the "mystery" of Christ to the people of his time. The mystery, or revelation, is that the Savior of the world and the God above all gods was crucified.

This defied everything most Jews had come to expect of their messiah, and it certainly didn't make sense to Greeks and Romans accustomed to deities that sometimes inflicted physical suffering but never themselves endured it.

Today's Gospel features Jesus speaking metaphorically about salt and light. Although, technically speaking, salt can never lose its flavor, it can lose its value if mixed with impurities. Then it must be thrown out. So, too, a Christian's value comes from how perfectly he or she extends to others the love of Christ.

In the natural world, even more important than salt is light, which is necessary to life itself. Christians are to cultivate a culture of life, fostering it and protecting it as surely as light draws greenery out of wet earth. Christians together in community need to shine like a city on a hill. A Christian in his or her own individual life needs to shine like a lamp in a house.

Relationship to Children

Children of all ages love guessing games, which can be useful both for introducing new concepts and for reviewing old ones. Today's Gathering activity is a guessing game designed to introduce the theme of the liturgy, "Shine Your Christ-Light," and to acquaint or reacquaint children with five different symbols for Christ: cross, shepherd's crook, crown, butterfly, sun.

Each of these symbols has a long tradition in Christian art and, like the many names for Christ, strong roots in Christian Scripture and doctrine. Each symbol also tells us something about who we are to be if our own call is to fill the world with the kindness of Christ.

By age four, children are able to identify symbols and make basic associations with them. Just as they can be taught that a red light at a crosswalk means "Stop," they can be taught that candles in church or an abstract sun design in a stained-glass window means that Christ is our light.

The simplest way to conduct the Gathering activity is to darken the room, then use a flashlight to "draw" the symbol on a wall or ceiling as the children try to guess what you are drawing. Be sure you test ahead of time

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.

Have a flashlight ready for use during the Gathering activity. Use it to guide the children into a room already darkened by closing the blinds and turning off all the lights. If the room still has too much light for you to draw shapes on a wall or ceiling, simply use your flashlight to draw them in the air in front of you.

Music

Gathering: "Walk in the Light" by Carey Landry. OCP.

Psalm: "Psalm 27: The Lord Is My Light" by David Haas and Marty Haugen. GIA.

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

for the best surface in the room on which to shine the flashlight you intend to use.

If it's possible to use the ceiling, the children will enjoy the opportunity to lie flat on their backs during this activity. Suggest to them that this is a good prayer-posture to use sometimes at home in their bedrooms or in their backyards on warm starry nights. The posture suggests total openness to God.

Another guessing game will be used for the Homily. Be sure to pause often during your pantomime to let children guess what you have just done. Also be sure to practice your performance in advance.

Two alternative forms of the guessing game suggested for the Gathering activity require some advance preparation and a darker room than you need for "drawing" with a flashlight. Be advised, also, that this version works better with some flashlights than with others.

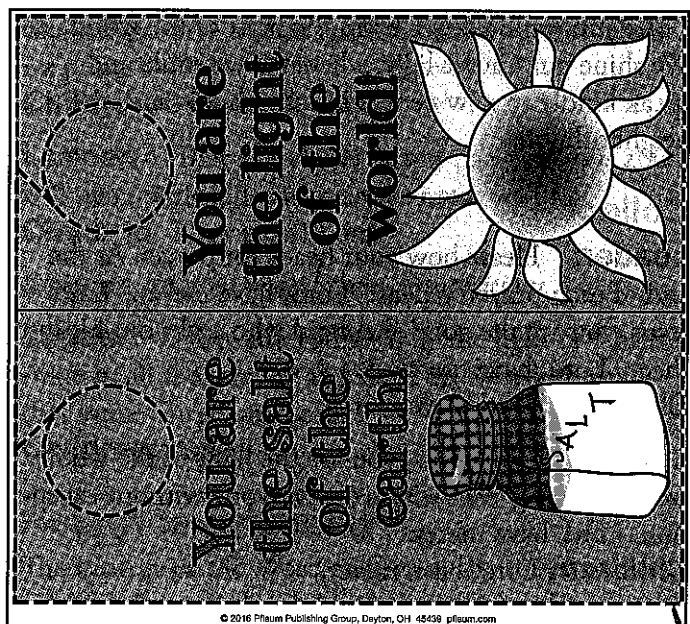
The preparation involves cutting each desired shape (cross, crook, crown, butterfly, sun) out of a piece of black paper larger than the lens of the flashlight, so that the shape appears on the surface where you are casting the light. You will have to experiment in your particular setting to determine what works best, holding the paper very close to the light or some inches away from it.

Another option is to draw outlines of the five shapes on paper disks that fit tightly over the flashlight lens. Then prick holes along the sketched lines so that star-like constellations appear when you shine the flashlight on a surface.

**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.

Children's Leaflet

This week, families work together to bring a special "shine" to their home. The children's activity is to make a door hanging that will remind the family to be "salt of the earth" and "light of the world."



Order of worship

Gathering

Invite the children to sit or lie down in the worship area. Tell them you are using a flashlight for today's Gathering activity because the theme of today's liturgy is "Shine Your Christ-Light!" You will draw symbols of Christ with your light, and the group will try to guess them. For each symbol, share the following ideas:

- The **cross** symbolizes the crucified Christ. He sacrificed his life for us. We shine our Christ-light when we make sacrifices for other people.
- The **crook** symbolizes Jesus the Good Shepherd. We shine our Christ-light when we help sinners return to God through our prayers or good example.
- The **crown** symbolizes Christ the King. In ancient times a king's most important duty was to protect his people. We shine our Christ-light when we refuse to take part in name-calling or even when we wash our hands to stop the spread of germs to others.
- The **butterfly** symbolizes the risen Christ. He came out of his tomb alive the same way a newborn butterfly flies out of its cocoon. We shine our Christ-light when we bring cheer to people who feel hopeless.
- The **sun** symbolizes Christ, the light of the world. We shine our Christ-light whenever we smile and speak kindly to new people in our schools and neighborhoods.

Collect

Leader: Please bow your heads for prayer. At the end of each prayer, repeat, "Lord, have mercy." Lord Jesus, you are the good shepherd who seeks out his lost sheep. Lord, have mercy.

Children: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you are the light of the whole world, shining everywhere on everyone without exception. Lord, have mercy.

Children: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you are our king who saves us from sin and death. Lord, have mercy.

Children: Lord, have mercy.

Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading: Isaiah 58:7-10

Leader: In today's First Reading, Isaiah reminds us to share what we have with others and be kind to others.

At the end of the reading:

Leader: The word of the Lord

Children: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 112:4-5, 8ab and 9

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

Leader: A light rises in the darkness for the upright.

Children: A light rises in the darkness for the upright.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Leader: In today's Second Reading, St. Paul talks about the "mystery of Christ." The mystery is that, in order to save us from sin and death, Christ had to let sinners put *him* to death.

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 5:13-16

Leader: Today's Gospel teaches a simple lesson. Just as salt is salty and light is bright, Christians are Christlike.

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

- Tell the children that you are going to do some pantomimes and they are to guess what you are doing. Using imaginary props, perform these pantomimes:
 - Pick up a salt shaker and shake “salt” onto an open palm; put the shaker back.
 - Touch the “salt” with your finger and pretend to taste it; make a sour face.
 - Dump the handful of salt on the floor; stomp on it.
- After the children guess the first pantomime, do the second:
 - Take a book of matches out of pocket or purse; tear out a match and strike it.
 - Light a “candle”; blow out the match.
 - Place the candle on a shelf high over your head.
- Share these thoughts about today’s Gospel:
 - As Christians we are called to imitate Christ by bringing more of his goodness and kindness into the world.
 - Just as salt makes everyday food taste better, we are called to make daily life better for others.
 - Just as light makes a room safer and cozier for everyone in it, we are called to make life safer and cozier for others.

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, who sent his Son to be the light of the world?

Children: I do.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who shared his light and love with everyone?

Children: I do.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who today fills the Church with the light and love of Christ?

Children: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leader: Let us pray for the needs of all God’s children. Our response to each petition will be, “Hear us, O Lord.”

Leader: That the power of God’s Spirit will light the prayer and work of our Holy Father, Pope _____, and all Church leaders, we pray.

Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Leader: That people who live in the darkness of war and poverty will be rescued by the light of Christ, we pray.

Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Leader: That everybody in our parish who is able will share with those who are in need, we pray.

Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Invite the children to add their own petitions.

Leader: Heavenly Father, may the light of Christ shine in all that we say and do. 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.