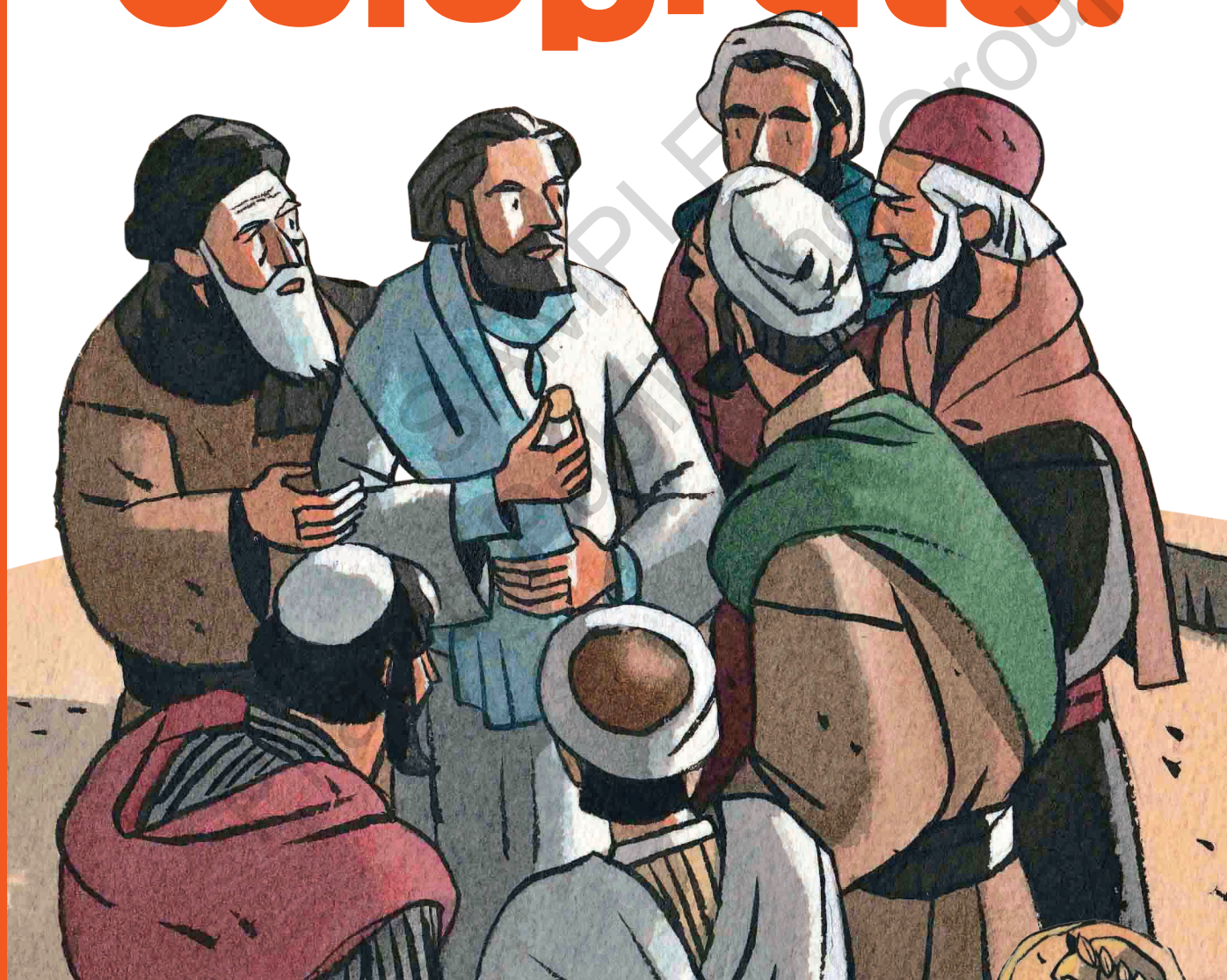


NEW! WEEKLY GOSPEL
REFLECTION VIDEOS

Leader's Guide

LITURGY OF THE WORD WITH CHILDREN

Children Celebrate!



Fall 2023 (Year A)

AUGUST 27, 2023 | TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
through **NOVEMBER 19, 2023** | THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

LEADER'S GUIDE

Fall 2023

YEAR A

August 27, 2023

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

through

November 19, 2023

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Pflaum Publishing Group

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Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

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Additional Resources at Pflaum.com

Sunday Readings

For your convenience, each Sunday's Lectionary readings for the Liturgy of the Word with Children can be downloaded from pflaum.com. It's as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Go to **pflaum.com/readings** for a list of Sunday readings (updated at the end of each month).
2. Click on the date you want. That Sunday's readings will open in a PDF.
3. Print or download the file.

For more about the Sunday Readings, see the Introduction to this Leader's Guide.

Weekly Gospel Reflection Videos!

Available to subscribers of *Children Celebrate!*

Visit **<http://bit.ly/40Jt8iO>** for weekly Gospel Reflection videos. These videos can be used within your Children's Liturgy of the Word program, or shared with parents and families to view at home.

Children Celebrate! Director's Manual

For an easy-to-follow Director's Manual, go to **pflaum.com/liturgy-of-the-word** and click on "Bonus Resources" and then "Program Directors." There you will find a manual that outlines practical steps for establishing a program, recruiting and training volunteers, and creating the proper environment and liturgical flow.

In addition, you will learn how to most effectively incorporate *Children Celebrate!* materials into your program. Additional resources are also suggested.

Children Celebrate! Children's Liturgy of the Word – MP3 Album

With joyful melodies, call-and-response segments, and child-friendly lyrics, John Burland's inviting liturgical pieces are perfect for Children's Liturgy of the Word programs. For example, "Go Now and Listen to God's Word" can be sung as children are dismissed from the assembly, and "Yes, Lord, I Believe" is a jubilant option for singing the Creed, helping little ones to profess their faith.

Visit **giamusic.com** and search "Children Celebrate" to order.

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This Issue's Themes

DATE	SUNDAY	THEME
August 27, 2023	21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Jesus Is the Messiah
September 3, 2023	22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Give Every Day to God
September 10, 2023	23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Jesus Calls Us to Help Others
September 17, 2023	24TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	God Wants Us to Show Mercy
September 24, 2023	25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	God's Ways Are Not Our Ways
October 1, 2023	26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Walk in the Lord's Ways
October 8, 2023	27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	God Has High Hopes for His People
October 15, 2023	28TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Come to the Lord's Banquet
October 22, 2023	29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	We Are Called to Be Good Citizens
October 29, 2023	30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Jesus Teaches About Love
November 5, 2023	31ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	God Wants Only the Best for Us
November 12, 2023	32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Jesus Says Be Ready for Him
November 19, 2023	33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	God Wants Us to Do Our Best

Using *Children Celebrate!*

Children Celebrate! is a complete step-by-step resource for celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with Children. The two components of *Children Celebrate!* are this Leader's Guide and the Children's Leaflets, a book of tear-out, take-home sheets.

LEADER'S GUIDE *(each week has two parts)*

I. Preparation provides the leader with information about the week's Scripture readings and how they relate to children today. Its elements are the following:

- **Today's Readings** cites the exact Scripture readings you will be using that day. (Remember, these readings do not always match the readings chosen for the adults. See more about the

readings on page 6.) A theme sets the tone of that day's liturgy.

- **Prepare with Prayer** helps center you on the task at hand, which is not only helping children hear and understand God's Word but also hearing and understanding God's Word **through** the children.
- **Scripture Background** helps you understand the readings and prepare to break open the Word.
- **Prepare the Meeting Space** gives you suggestions for enhancing the environment for that day's celebration. Review this section a few days before the liturgy.

- **Suggested Music** provides suggestions for appropriate songs during the liturgy. Information on where to find each piece of suggested music is on page 62.
- **Children's Connections** explains each week's theme and Scripture message as it applies to children today.
- **More About...** provides Church teaching about a topic that is related to this week's liturgy.
- **Using the Children's Leaflet** provides brief background information about the take-home sheet.
- **Activity** provides a reproduction of the take-home sheet. Solutions to puzzles are shown as needed.

II. The Liturgy of the Word is a ready-made liturgy specifically written for that week's readings and theme. Its elements are the following:

- **Gathering** helps the children settle into their places. Playing appropriate background music or singing a song provides a transition into an attitude of prayer.
- **Collect** sets the tone for the worship experience.
- **Focus Statements** for each of the readings help you give the children a key idea to listen for and to help them better understand the theme of the readings.
- **Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation** provide liturgically appropriate responses for the children to use.
- **Homily** gives you starter ideas for interesting, creative, and relevant reflections on the Gospel.
- **Profession of Faith** is a simple and interactive declaration of what we believe as Catholics.
- **Prayer of the Faithful** are the prayers for the needs of the world, the Church, and the community. These are often a common first step for children into spontaneous prayer and can be powerful moments for children.

- **Return to Assembly** provides the leader with a cue to prepare the children to rejoin the main assembly and to remind them to take home a Children's Leaflet.

CHILDREN'S LEAFLETS (each leaflet is two-sided)

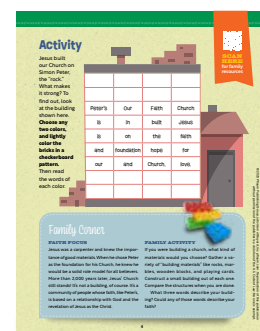
Front Side

- **Today's Readings** gives the Scripture citations for that Sunday's liturgy.
- **We Pray** is a short prayer for children based on the week's theme.
- **The Word of God This Week** is a summary of the day's Gospel story.



Back Side

- **Activity** provides an entertaining way to reinforce the Gospel message.
- **Faith Focus** highlights how the Gospel message can pertain to the family.
- **Family Activity** provides practical suggestions to families on how to put the Gospel into action at home.



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION VIDEOS

- **How to access the videos:** Visit pflaum.com/fall2023 to view the videos for this quarter (loaded monthly).
- **What's included?** Each weekly video includes a Gospel Reflection, Saint Spotlight, Closing Prayer, and Reflection Question.
- **Promote:** Share these videos with those assisting with Children's Liturgy of the Word for use during your program, as well as with parents and families.

Introduction

What Is Liturgy of the Word with Children?

Liturgy of the Word with Children is a worship experience geared especially for children. It mirrors the worship experience of the larger community, with a style that is engaging and interactive. Jesus himself recognized that children have a pure spirituality, and he made them the primary spiritual model for all believers.

Liturgy of the Word with Children is not formal religious education, nor is it intended to be a substitute for attendance at religious education sessions. Rather, it should be considered a partner to religious education programs. Both are important for a child's spiritual development, just as continuing faith formation and growth in spirituality are important for adults.

The Word of God has a message that is as relevant and fitting for children as it is for adults. The children, however, often fail to hear the message simply because the adult vocabulary is beyond their comprehension. Liturgy of the Word with Children offers an experience for the children to hear Scripture in words they understand and to share their own understanding of God's Word.

Celebrating the Liturgy of the Word in this way is an empowering experience, giving children a foundation for understanding and appreciating Scripture. Over several years, the children not only become comfortable with hearing and discussing God's Word but also gain an understanding of and appreciation for their liturgical heritage as Catholics.

When and How Do the Children Leave the Assembly?

The celebration of the Liturgy of the Word with Children follows the same structure as the Liturgy of the Word for the entire assembly. In fact, it begins with the Introductory Rites, which are celebrated in the large assembly, where the children are seated with their families.

After the Introductory Rites, the presider invites any children wishing to participate to join the leader and proceed to the worship space set aside for them. They return after the Prayer of the Faithful to celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist with the entire community.

What About the Readings?

The readings in the children's Lectionary sometimes differ from those used in the adult Lectionary. When planning liturgies to be used with children, the Church allows some flexibility in the number and choice of readings on Sundays and feast days.

According to the *Directory for Masses with Children*, "If three or even two readings appointed on Sundays or weekdays can be understood by children only with difficulty, it is permissible to read two or only one of them, but the reading of the Gospel should never be omitted" (Chapter III, No. 42). In addition, because of the difficulty some children may have in understanding certain verses, it is sometimes possible to omit one or another verse from the reading. (For a complete reading of the directives regarding selection of readings, see the *Directory for Masses with Children*, Chapter III, Nos. 41–47.)

In *Children Celebrate!* we follow the readings from the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*, which is approved for use in all dioceses of the United States by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. We determine themes and make suggestions for each Sunday's liturgy based on these readings. For this reason, it is important that you check each week's citations as listed in this Leader's Guide before finalizing your plans for that Sunday's celebration.

Preview the Readings

If you do not have access to a children's Lectionary while you prepare your liturgy, you have three other options for previewing the readings for each Sunday.

- 1** Go to our website (pflaum.com/readings), click on the date you need, and print or download the readings.
- 2** The *Lectionary for Masses with Children* uses readings from the Old Testament and Book of Psalms. A select number of the refrains for the Responsorial Psalms are taken from the *Contemporary English Version* © 1991 by the American Bible Society. Readings from the New Testament are taken from the *Contemporary English Version, Bible for Today's Family: New Testament* © 1991 by the American Bible Society. The CEV can be purchased at stores and at americanbible.org.
- 3** Go to americanbible.org. Scroll over BIBLE RESOURCES. Scroll down and click on BIBLE SEARCH. Under the search box, click on Search Options. Select CEV Contemporary English Version (US Version). Enter the book, chapter, and verses that you need, such as Luke 15:11–32.

Where Do I Begin?

Your first step to prepare a Sunday session should be to pray for guidance. “Prepare with Prayer” opens each week's background material. It will help you begin to focus your mind and open your heart to God's message. Remain in prayer as long as you like.

Read the Scripture and background material in their entirety. Although the story may be familiar, you may see it with new eyes when challenged to lead a reflection on it. The background material will give you an idea of the social and historical context behind the Scripture.

Gather and write down your thoughts for the reflection. Look at them and meditate on them for a

while. Certain themes or ideas will come through. Create an outline for your reflection based on these ideas.

Be sure to read through the Prepare the Meeting Space and The Liturgy of the Word sections well in advance so that you are not taken by surprise by any preparations you should have made or items you will need on hand. Allow plenty of time to set up and prepare before the session.

What Else Should I Know?

LITURGICAL COLORS

This edition of *Children Celebrate!* covers Pentecost Sunday through the Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time. For Pentecost Sunday, the liturgical color is red, representing fire, a symbol of the Holy Spirit. We celebrate the Most Holy Trinity and the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) with the color white or gold. Green is the color for Ordinary Time to indicate this period for growing in faith. Use the liturgical colors on the table where you place the Lectionary or in other elements you use in your worship area.

MOVEMENT

Introduce movement wherever you feel it could be appropriate in the liturgy. Young muscles cry out to be used often, and this physical need causes the restlessness that some adults find irritating. Even the simple act of lifting their arms in prayer or carrying some small object to the front of the room can give children a refreshing but orderly break from being in one position for too long.

Trust Yourself

Finally, remember that *Children Celebrate!* is a complete resource that you can trust to be liturgically sound while also being creative. Nevertheless, you are the leader and you must be comfortable with what you want to do each week. Feel free to use (and trust) your own ideas as well.

There is no limit to what God can work through each of us. Your time with these children will have God's blessing and will be immeasurably fruitful. Enjoy!

Today's Readings

Romans 11:33–36
Psalm 138:1–2a, 2bc
and 3, 6 and 8cde
Matthew 16:13–205

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a potted plant or vase of fresh flowers

For use during the Homily, have available:

- ☐ a rock
- ☐ a set of keys
- ☐ a picture of the current pope, if possible

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"I Am the Way" (Seeds CD-2, Track #19) or **"Upon This Rock"** (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #21)

PSALM:

"On the Day I Am Called" (Rory Cooney. OCP)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

Jesus Is the Messiah

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

*You have looked deep
into my heart, Lord,
and you know all about me.
You know when I am resting
or when I am working,
and from heaven
you discover my thoughts.*

PSALM 139:1-2

Scripture Background

Today's First Reading is a hymn of praise capping a lofty philosophical explanation of God's eternal plan to save Jew and Gentile alike. The hymn asserts that such a wonderful plan could only have come from a God infinite in wisdom.

The Gospel celebrates another work of God's wisdom: a Church destined to last to the end of time. The Church endures partly because of its unity around apostolic authority residing in the pope and bishops. Catholics regard the pope as the legitimate heir of specific responsibilities first assigned to Peter the Apostle.

When Jesus asked who people said he was, the question was so easy that any apostle could readily answer it. But when Jesus asked the apostles who they thought he was, all fell silent except Peter. Peter alone saw that Jesus was not just another prophet in a long line of prophets, but someone totally singular in history—he long-awaited Messiah.

Jesus' subsequent praise of Peter included three distinct assertions:



1. Peter knew the truth neither because he'd diligently sought it, nor because he'd been told it by someone else. Rather, his insight came as a direct gift from God.
2. This gift made him strong enough to become the foundation of the Church to be born of the Holy Spirit.
3. Peter would have the final authority in the Church on earth. It would be his unique task to preserve the purity of Christ's message and the unity of his Church.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

It is sad when Catholics grow up and say, "I see no difference between the Catholic Church and other churches." They have failed to grasp the uniqueness of the Catholic identity. If they haven't been unusually resistant to learning about their faith, this means that somehow, along the way, their parents and teachers have failed them.

Today's Gospel offers a good opportunity to help children claim one of the distinguishing features of their Catholic faith — the unique role that Catholics believe the pope has in the Church founded by Jesus.

Certainly it is not necessary for children to know all the finer points of the papacy, such as the difference between *ex cathedra* pronouncements and other papal statements; the manner in which the pope, as bishop of Rome, shares authority with other Catholic bishops; and so on. It is sufficient simply that children see the pope as Peter's successor and Peter as an apostle unique among the Twelve for his special leadership role.

In other areas of study, children routinely learn to identify and classify. They learn what makes creatures fish or fowl, mammals or reptiles. They learn what makes numbers odd or even, rational or irrational. How much more important that they learn what makes them Catholic!

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps children learn that Jesus chose Saint Peter to lead the Church,

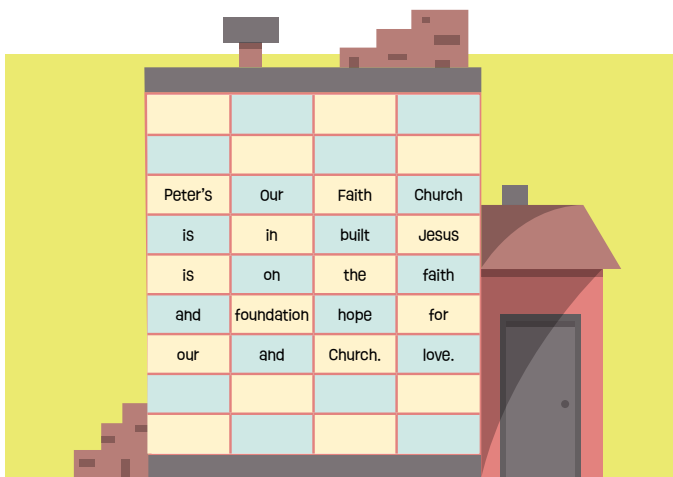
through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork about Jesus and ask the children what Jesus is doing in the picture.

More About ...

The Pope

- "The Pope ... 'is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful' " (#882).
- " 'The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head' " (#883).
- " 'The college of bishops exercises power over the universal Church in a solemn manner in an ecumenical council' " (#884). But a council has authority only if confirmed or recognized by the pope.
- " 'This college, in so far as it is composed of many members, is the expression of the variety and universality of the People of God; and of the unity of the flock of Christ, in so far as it is assembled under one head' " (#885).
- Each bishop has a special responsibility to care for the people of his diocese, the poor, those who are persecuted for their faith, and those who serve as missionaries around the world. (See #886.)



Leaflet Activity

A building game is suggested for families this week to emphasize the importance of a good foundation of faith. The children's activity further emphasizes this same message.

Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: Who can tell me the name of someone who is wise? [Wait for a few answers.] As wise as these people are, there is someone else who is still wiser. That person is God, and today's First Reading reminds us that anyone on earth who is wise received that wisdom as a gift from God.

At the end of the reading:

LEADER: The word of the Lord.

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

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

LEADER: Lord, your love is eternal.

CHILDREN: Lord, your love is eternal.

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

LEADER: Can anyone tell me who Jesus is? [Wait for a few answers.] Today's Gospel is about the apostle who was first to understand that Jesus was the Messiah sent from heaven. Listen carefully to hear which apostle it was.

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.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

GATHERING

Lead the children in singing the traditional spiritual, "When the Saints Go Marching In." Clap in time and, if you wish, have the children follow you as you march around the room. For the second and third verses sing, "Oh, when the Lord...builds up his Church," and "Oh, when the keys...unlock God's door."

Collect

LEADER: Please be seated for prayer. Your response today is: "The Church will last forever." Jesus built his Church on rock. The Church will last forever.

CHILDREN: The Church will last forever.

LEADER: That rock was Saint Peter the Apostle. The Church will last forever.

CHILDREN: The Church will last forever.

LEADER: We are the Church and we stand on solid rock. The Church will last forever.

CHILDREN: The Church will last forever.

LEADER: Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we are your Church, and you are our builder. You have made us strong to last long. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

CHILDREN: Amen.

Homily

- Pick up the rock and ask, "If you were building a house, would you build it on rock like this? Why?" Explain that Jesus built his Church on the one apostle who had the most wisdom and faith, which was the foundation needed for the Church to last forever.
- Pick up the keys and say, "Jesus gave Peter the keys of the kingdom. What do keys do?" [unlock doors and gates] "In our world today, who usually has keys?" [people in charge of things] Explain that after Jesus went to Heaven, Peter was left in charge of Jesus' Church on earth. Peter was the Church's first pope.
- Now point to the picture of the current pope and say, "Here is our pope today. He continues Peter's work. Do you know his name?"

Note that we respect our pope and pray for him at every liturgy because Jesus respected Peter, the first pope, and often prayed for him, too.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand as we profess our faith, just as Peter did the day Jesus asked his apostles who they thought he was. Please respond to the questions with, "I do." Do you believe that God, the Father, is the living God from whom all good things come?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God?

CHILDREN: I do.

LEADER: Do you believe that Jesus sent his Spirit to his Church, to make it holy and to keep it strong?

CHILDREN: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Jesus promised to keep his Church strong for all time. We are that Church, and we are made strong in faith by Jesus himself. Therefore let us pray with confidence to God our Father. Your response to each petition will be, "O God, hear our prayer."

LEADER: For our Holy Father, the pope, and all the

leaders and teachers of our Church, that their faith will be strong like Saint Peter's, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: O God, hear our prayer.

LEADER: For the people of our parish, that we will keep alive the faith handed down to us by Saint Peter and the Apostles, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: O God, hear our prayer.

LEADER: For the people of our town (city, county), that any who are far from God will turn to Jesus and see that he is the Messiah, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: O God, hear our prayer.

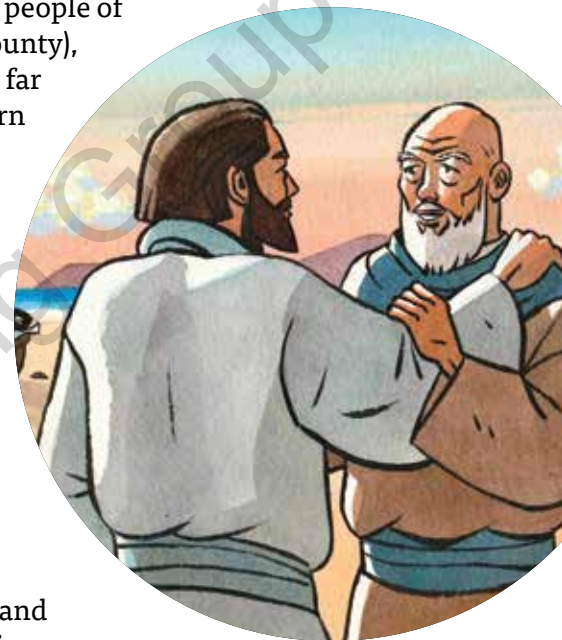
Invite the children to add their own petitions.

LEADER: Lord God, all wisdom and goodness come from you. Thank you for making us strong and unified in the faith that you handed down to us through Peter and the Apostles. May you be praised forever and ever.

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. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.



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