

Children's Liturgy of the Word

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A

Theme: Follow Jesus, Even When It Is Hard

Gospel: Matthew 16:21–27

Main Message

Jesus tells us that following Him will sometimes cost us something. He asks us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him. The Cross is not the end: Jesus suffered, died and rose again. When we choose Christ instead of always choosing ourselves, He leads us to true life.

1. Welcome and Gathering

(Gather the children calmly.)

Leader:

Good morning, everyone.

Today Jesus says something which sounds difficult:

“Take up your cross and follow me.”

What do you think He means?

Does Jesus mean that everyone must carry a large wooden cross around all day?

No.

Jesus is teaching us that following Him sometimes means doing what is right even when it is difficult.

Sometimes telling the truth is difficult.

Sometimes forgiving is difficult.

Sometimes obeying is difficult.

Sometimes praying is difficult.

But Jesus never asks us to go anywhere He has not gone first.

He carried the Cross before us.

Let us begin with the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus,
thank You for calling us to follow You.

Help us to listen to Your word.
Give us courage when doing what is right is difficult.
Teach us to carry our crosses patiently
and to trust that You are always with us.

Amen.

2. Opening Conversation

Ask:

- Have you ever had to do something good that you did not feel like doing?
- Is it always easy to tell the truth?
- Is it easy to forgive someone who has hurt you?
- Is it always easy to obey?
- What do we usually want when something is difficult?

Allow answers.

Then say:

We often want the easiest way.

But today Jesus teaches us that the easiest choice is not always the best choice.

Sometimes love requires sacrifice.

3. Gospel – Simplified

Jesus began to tell His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem.

There He would suffer.

He would be killed.

But on the third day He would rise again.

Peter did not like hearing this.

He took Jesus aside and said:

“Lord, this must never happen to You!”

But Jesus told Peter that he was thinking in a human way rather than God’s way.

Then Jesus said to His disciples:

“If anyone wants to follow Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

What will it profit someone to gain the whole world and lose his soul?”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Children:

Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Reflection

Peter Wanted the Easy Way

Peter loved Jesus.

That is why he was upset when Jesus spoke about suffering.

Peter wanted Jesus to be safe.

He wanted Jesus to become King without the Cross.

But Jesus knew that He had come to save us from sin.

The Cross was not an accident.

Jesus freely accepted it because He loved His Father and because He loved us.

Peter wanted an easier road.

Jesus showed him the true road.

Built-in Activity 1 – Easy or Right?

Say:

I will give you two choices.

Tell me which one is easier and which one is right.

You break something.

Is it easier to hide it or admit what happened?

Someone annoys you.

Is it easier to shout at them or forgive them?

Your parents ask you to help.

Is it easier to complain or help cheerfully?

You see someone alone.

Is it easier to ignore them or include them?

Then explain:

The right choice is not always the easiest choice.

Following Jesus means choosing what is good because we love Him.

“Take Up Your Cross”

Jesus says:

“Take up your cross and follow me.”

A cross is something difficult which God allows us to carry faithfully.

Perhaps someone is ill.

Perhaps we have to be patient with someone.

Perhaps school is difficult.

Perhaps we are worried.

Perhaps we have a duty we do not enjoy.

Jesus does not tell us to complain about every difficulty.

He asks us to bring it to Him.

We can say:

“Jesus, help me carry this with You.”

Built-in Activity 2 – What Can Be a Cross?

Ask:

Could these sometimes feel like a cross?

Being patient with a difficult person?

Yes.

Doing homework when you would rather play?

Yes.

Being ill?

Yes.

Forgiving someone?

Yes.

Getting your own way all the time?

No.

Doing something wrong because it is easier?

No.

Explain:

A cross is not simply anything we dislike.

It is a difficulty we accept faithfully while trying to follow God.

Jesus Went First

Jesus never says:

“Carry your cross while I watch.”

He says:

“Follow Me.”

He went first.

Jesus was misunderstood.

Jesus was rejected.

Jesus was mocked.

Jesus carried the Cross.

Jesus died.

And then He rose again.

The Cross was not the end.

That is why Christians put crucifixes in our churches and homes.

The Cross reminds us how much Jesus loves us.

It also reminds us that suffering and death do not have the final word.

Built-in Activity 3 – Follow the Leader

Ask the children to stand.

Leader takes a few simple steps.

Children follow.

Say:

If I turn left, follow me.

If I turn right, follow me.

If I stop, stop.

Then explain:

To follow someone means going where they go.

Jesus says:

“Follow Me.”

That means listening to Him and trying to live as He teaches us.

Sometimes that road is difficult.

But He always goes before us.

Jeremiah Could Not Keep Quiet

In the First Reading, the prophet Jeremiah is having a very difficult time.

God has asked him to speak the truth.

But people laugh at him.

They insult him.

Jeremiah becomes tired of it.

He thinks:

“I will stop speaking about God.”

But then he says that God’s word is like:

“a burning fire shut up in my bones.”

He cannot keep it inside.

Jeremiah discovers that being faithful to God may sometimes cost us something.

But God’s truth is too important to abandon.

Built-in Activity 4 – Fire in My Heart

Ask everyone to place a hand over their heart.

Leader:

God’s word is—

Children:

True!

Leader:

God’s word is—

Children:

Good!

Leader:

God’s word gives—

Children:

Life!

Leader:

I will—

Children:

Listen to God!

Explain:

Jeremiah loved God's word so much that he could not simply throw it away when things became difficult.

A Living Sacrifice

Saint Paul says something unusual in the Second Reading:

“Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.”

What does that mean?

At first it sounds strange.

Saint Paul means that our whole life can become an offering to God.

Our hands can serve Him.

Our mouths can speak kindly.

Our eyes can look at good things.

Our ears can listen.

Our feet can take us to Mass.

Our whole life can say:

“God, I belong to You.”

Built-in Activity 5 – My Body Can Serve God

Ask the children to copy the actions.

Hands:

What can my hands do for God?

Help.

Share.

Pray.

Mouth:

What can my mouth do for God?

Tell the truth.

Pray.

Speak kindly.

Feet:

Where can my feet take me?

To Mass.

To help someone.

To visit someone.

Heart:

Whom should I love?

God and my neighbour.

Then say together:

“Lord, my whole life belongs to You.”

Do Not Be Conformed to This World

Saint Paul also says:

“Do not be conformed to this world.”

That means we should not simply copy everyone around us.

Sometimes people may say:

“Everybody does it.”

But that does not make something right.

If everybody tells lies, lying is still wrong.

If everybody is unkind, unkindness is still wrong.

If everybody forgets God, God is still God.

Christians ask a better question:

“What does Jesus want me to do?”

Built-in Activity 6 – Everyone Else Is Doing It

Read each situation.

The children answer:

“I will follow Jesus.”

Everyone else is being unkind to someone.

I will follow Jesus.

Friends tell you to lie.

I will follow Jesus.

Nobody else wants to pray.

I will follow Jesus.

Someone is being left out.

I will follow Jesus.

People laugh because you go to Mass.

I will follow Jesus.

Explain:

Being a Christian sometimes means having the courage not to copy everyone else.

What Is Your Soul Worth?

Jesus asks:

“What will it profit someone to gain the whole world and lose his soul?”

Imagine having every toy you wanted.

Every game.

Every sweet.

A huge house.

Lots of money.

Everything.

Would any of those things be worth losing Heaven for?

No.

Your soul is more valuable than all the things in the world.

God created you for eternal life.

Jesus died to save you.

That tells us how precious one soul is.

Built-in Activity 7 – Which Matters More?

Ask:

Which matters more?

A new toy or friendship with Jesus?

Friendship with Jesus.

Lots of money or Heaven?

Heaven.

Being popular or doing what is right?

Doing what is right.

Getting our own way or following Jesus?

Following Jesus.

Explain:

Good things in this world are gifts from God.

But nothing in this world is worth losing our friendship with Him.

Losing and Finding

Jesus says something which sounds like a puzzle:

“Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

He means that when we stop making everything about ourselves, we discover something better.

Think of someone sharing their sweets.

They give something away.

But they gain friendship and joy.

Think of a parent caring for a child.

They give their time.

But their love grows.

Think of Jesus on the Cross.

He gives His life.

And through His sacrifice, salvation comes to the world.

Christian love gives.

And strangely, by giving, it becomes richer.

Living the Gospel This Week

This week, I will:

- Make the Sign of the Cross carefully.
 - Pray when something is difficult.
 - Tell the truth even when it costs me.
 - Forgive someone instead of holding a grudge.
 - Help at home without complaining.
 - Refuse to copy something I know is wrong.
 - Remember that my soul is worth more than the whole world.
 - Say: **“Jesus, help me follow You.”**
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Quiet Prayer

Ask the children to close their eyes and become still.

Leader:

Think quietly about something you sometimes find difficult.

You do not need to tell anyone.

Now imagine placing it beside the Cross of Jesus.

Say quietly in your heart:

“Jesus, help me carry this with You.”

Pause.

Lord Jesus,
You carried the Cross because You love us.

Sometimes following You is difficult.

Give us courage.

Help us not always to choose the easiest way.

Teach us to choose what is true and good.

Keep us close to You
and lead us safely to the joy of Heaven.

Amen.

Children's Intercessions

Leader:

Jesus calls us to take up our cross and follow Him. Trusting in His love, let us pray to God our Father.

For the Church throughout the world:
that she may courageously teach the truth of Christ and never be afraid to follow Him along the way of the Cross.

Lord, hear us.

For Pope Leo, Bishop Patrick, priests and deacons:
that God may give them courage to preach His word faithfully and lead His people to Christ.

Lord, hear us.

For Christians who are laughed at or persecuted because of their faith:
that, like Jeremiah, they may remain strong and never be ashamed of God's word.

Lord, hear us.

For children who are sick, worried, lonely or carrying difficult crosses:
that they may know that Jesus is close to them and will help them.

Lord, hear us.

For our families:
that we may be patient with one another, forgive quickly and help each other carry our difficulties.

Lord, hear us.

For each of us:
that we may have courage to choose what is right, even when everyone around us chooses differently.

Lord, hear us.

For those who have died:
that, having completed their earthly journey, they may share in the joy of Christ's Resurrection.

Lord, hear us.

Let us ask the prayers of Our Lady, who stood faithfully beside the Cross of Jesus.

Hail Mary...

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,
You call us to follow You.

Give us courage when the road is difficult.

Help us to deny ourselves,
to carry our crosses patiently
and to remain faithful to You.

Renew our minds,
keep our souls in Your grace,
and lead us through the Cross
to the joy of the Resurrection.

Amen.

Sending Back

Today Jesus told us:

“Take up your cross and follow me.”

Following Jesus will not always be easy.

Jeremiah found that telling the truth was difficult.

Saint Paul tells us not simply to copy the world.

Jesus Himself carried the Cross.

But the Cross did not have the final word.

Jesus rose again.

As you return to Mass, look at the crucifix.

Remember:

Jesus has already walked the road before us.

When something is difficult this week, pray:

“Jesus, help me carry this with You.”

Let us return quietly to Mass.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Additional Optional Activities

1. Easy Way or Jesus' Way?

Read two choices.

Children point one way for **Easy Way** and another for **Jesus' Way**.

Someone breaks your toy.

Shout at them — or forgive them?

You make a mistake.

Hide it — or tell the truth?

Someone is lonely.

Ignore them — or include them?

It is time for Mass.

Complain — or go gladly?

Explain:

Jesus' way is not always the easiest.

But it is always the best.

2. Carry the Cross

Use a light wooden or cardboard cross.

Allow each child briefly to hold it.

Ask:

What are some crosses children may carry?

Examples:

- Illness.
- Worry.
- School difficulties.
- Family problems.
- Having to be patient.
- Missing someone.
- Doing the right thing when friends disagree.

After each answer say together:

“Jesus, help us carry our cross.”

3. The Value of a Soul

Show some coins or pictures of valuable things.

Ask:

What is more valuable than all this?

Children:

My soul!

Explain:

Jesus says the whole world is not worth losing our soul.

God made us for Heaven.

4. Living Sacrifice

Call out a part of the body.

Children suggest how it can serve God.

Hands: Help.

Mouth: Pray and speak kindly.

Eyes: Look at good things.

Ears: Listen to God and others.

Feet: Go to Mass and help people.

Heart: Love God.

Finish:

“Lord, everything I have belongs to You.”

5. Copy or Follow?

Leader performs simple movements.

Children copy.

Then stop.

Explain:

Copying is easy.

But Christians must be careful whom they copy.

Ask:

Who should we follow above everyone else?

Children:

Jesus!

6. Do Not Conform

Read different situations.

Children stand for choices which follow Christ and crouch for choices which simply follow the crowd.

- Everyone prays together.
- Friends decide to bully someone.
- Everyone tells the truth.
- Friends encourage you to cheat.
- People help someone who is hurt.
- Someone says Sunday Mass does not matter.
- A friend asks you to forgive.

Explain:

Christians do not ask, “What is everybody doing?”

We ask:

“What does Jesus want?”

7. Fire in the Bones

Rub hands together slowly.

Then faster.

Say:

Jeremiah said God’s word felt like a fire inside him.

Ask:

What truths from God should we never be ashamed of?

Examples:

- God made us.
 - Jesus is the Son of God.
 - Jesus died and rose again.
 - The commandments are good.
 - Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist.
 - Heaven is real.
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8. Follow Me

Create a simple path around the room.

Place signs along it:

PRAY

OBEY

FORGIVE

TELL THE TRUTH

HELP

TRUST

Children follow the path.

At each sign everyone says:

“Jesus, I will follow You.”

9. What Would You Choose?

Ask:

A million pounds or Heaven?

Being popular or being holy?

Winning an argument or forgiving?

Doing whatever I want or doing God’s will?

The whole world or my soul?

Explain:

Jesus says nothing is worth losing our soul.

10. Cross and Resurrection

Place a cross at one side of the room and the word **RESURRECTION** at the other.

Walk from one to the other.

Explain:

Jesus went through the Cross to the Resurrection.

Christians never look at the Cross without remembering Easter.

The Cross is difficult.

But it is not the end.

11. Finish the Sentence

Leader:

When something is difficult—

Children:

Jesus is with me.

Leader:

When everyone else chooses wrong—

Children:

I will follow Jesus.

Leader:

When I have a cross—

Children:

Jesus will help me.

Leader:

My soul is worth—

Children:

More than the whole world!

Leader:

Jesus says—

Children:

Follow Me!

12. Memory Verses

Repeat together three times:

“Take up your cross and follow me.”

Then:

“Do not be conformed to this world.”

Then:

“What will it profit someone to gain the whole world and lose his soul?”

Finish with:

“Jesus, I will follow You.”

13. This Week’s Challenge

Pray each morning.

Make the Sign of the Cross carefully.

Help at home without complaining.

Forgive someone.

Tell the truth even when it is difficult.

Refuse to join in something wrong.

Look at a crucifix and thank Jesus for loving me.

Pray: “Jesus, help me follow You.”

14. Draw the Gospel

Ask the children to draw:

- Jesus speaking to Peter.
- A cross.
- A road leading towards Jesus.
- Children following Him.

Add the words:

“Take up your cross and follow me.”

15. Final Memory Line

Repeat together:

“Jesus carried the Cross for me. I will follow Him, even when it is hard.”