

Today's Readings

2 Timothy 4:1–2

Psalm 96:1–2a, 2b–3, 4–5

Luke 18:1–8

Prepare the Meeting Space

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

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a festive houseplant or bouquet of fresh flowers
- ☐ an 8½" x 11" sheet of paper
- ☐ a postcard, or index card, a business card (if choosing that option)
- ☐ musical instruments for "Pray Until Something Happens"

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"This Little Light of Mine"

(Seeds CD-1, Track #11)

or **"God's Love Is"**

(Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #6)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

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

Always Ask God for Help

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

"So with God and Christ as witnesses, I command you to preach God's message. Do it willingly, even if it isn't the popular thing to do."

(2 TIMOTHY 4:1, 2)

Scripture Background

Today's Gospel is a parable Jesus tells as he and his disciples are headed to Jerusalem together for the last time. He knows the trials that lie ahead for them all, and he knows that prayer will be the key to emerging from those trials spiritually triumphant. So his parable contains an instruction to pray unceasingly, even when it seems that God isn't listening.

Scholar Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) notes that Jesus' parables generally fit a pattern of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation. In the orientation phase, Jesus sets up his story with ordinary, everyday persons and situations familiar to his first-century Jewish audience. In today's parable, it is the plight of a widow—always one with minimal rights and status in ancient Near Eastern societies—and a judge with no particular interest in

her welfare. If she no longer has a husband, father, or son to support her, without the judge's help she very well may end up a beggar in the streets.

The disorientation of Jesus' audience comes when he makes a connection between the heartless judge and the Heavenly Father. Are we supposed to believe that our Father in Heaven, like



the worldly judge, doesn't really care about people's problems and is annoyed by their requests?

Reorientation follows when Jesus explains that God, while similar in authority and power to the human judge of this story, is *not* similar in his level of concern for the weak and the powerless. "He will surely hurry and help them," Jesus concludes.

He adds, however, a mysterious and rueful question: "But when the Son of Man comes, will he find on this earth anyone with faith?" At 2,000-plus years and counting, we keepers of the apostolic tradition still await his return. No matter how long it takes, our time is best spent prayerfully.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

The need for persistence in the spiritual life is the focus of today's liturgy. The key to encouraging persistence in children is giving them tasks with just the right amount of challenge in them. The action, whether mental or physical, should be neither too easy nor too difficult to perform. Such a task is proposed for today's gathering activity. You will use the task to draw a connection, later in the homily, with spiritual persistence.

One tip for encouraging children to persist at something is to put more emphasis on trying than on succeeding. Praise children every time they show a good effort with words like, "Even though you didn't succeed this time, I saw how hard you tried. You get an A for effort!"

Pep talks always help. When children are tempted to give up, remind them of other tasks they have mastered in the past. Say things like, "Remember when you first learned how to tie your shoes? That took many tries, too, didn't it? Then all of a sudden you figured it out! The same can happen with this."

Remind them that some tasks, like learning to play a musical instrument, require setting aside a few minutes every day to practice. Over time, the task gets easier and easier. The same is true for a spiritual task like thanking God for one's blessings every night, which was suggested during last week's liturgy. The more often a person does it, the more natural it becomes.

More About ...

"Pray Until Something Happens"

The song "Pray Until Something Happens" offers an alternative to conclude your homily or the Order of Worship. Go to gospellyricspraise.com/index.php?i=HEAAGC&m=2 for the lyrics. Use the lyrics as a chant with your group.

Shout out a short phrase, then have them shout it back as they tap or shake various homemade instruments to the beat of the phrase. The children can use oatmeal boxes as drums, plastic bottles partially filled with dry beans as maracas, pairs of wooden dowels as rhythm sticks, and two matching pot covers as cymbals.

Or go to YouTube.com and search "Pray Until Something Happens." You can view/play a video of gospel singer Dottie Peoples' version of the song. Invite the children to do some freestyle dancing while you play this selection for them. Remind them that they are dancing for the Lord, just as King David once did.

The Children's Leaflet

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps the children learn about asking God for help, through a prayer, a summary of the Gospel, and a creative activity.

You may distribute the leaflet now, for use during the session, or before the children return to the assembly. If you distribute the leaflet now and time permits, you may wish to read with the children the summary of the Gospel in "The Word of God This Week" after you have read the Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

Leaflet Activity

Being a pest is not usually something we encourage in our families. But this week, the pesky prayer is encouraged. A word search puzzle challenges the children to find words pertaining to today's Gospel.



JUDGE
WIDOW
PRAYER
CARE
LOVE
TRUST
GOD
JESUS
ALWAYS

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

In the worship space, tell the children you want to test how quickly they learn how to catch a piece of paper, with only their thumb and forefinger, when it is dropped in front of them from overhead. This task is more difficult than it sounds, yet it usually can be mastered after a few tries. Let several children have a chance trying to catch the 8½" x 11" sheet of paper. If any child catches it on the first try, see if that child can do the same with the postcard/index card and then the business card. (The task gets more difficult as the size of the paper keeps decreasing.)

After the experiment is over, ask the children if they have ever heard the saying, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." How did the paper experiment prove the saying is true? Then tell the group that the same saying applies to our prayer life, too, and you will say more about this during the homily.

Collect

LEADER: Invite the children to bow their heads.
At the end of each prayer repeat the last three words.

Then pray: Lord Jesus, you taught us to keep on praying and never give up whenever we are in trouble.
Lord, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: Christ Jesus, you told us that God will protect his chosen ones who pray to him day and night.
Christ, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Christ, have mercy.

LEADER: Lord Jesus, you said that God will surely hurry and help us when we ask. Lord, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: In today's First Reading, Saint Paul tells Saint Timothy how to help his fellow Christians keep their faith alive until Jesus comes again.

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-2. Then say,
"The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

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

LEADER: Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.

CHILDREN: Proclaim God's marvelous deeds to all the nations.

LEADER: Read Psalm 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 4-5.

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: In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a story about a widow who will have to live on the streets if a judge doesn't help her win an important case in court. Notice how she convinces him to help her.

The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Luke.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: *Read Luke 18:1–8. Then say,
“The Gospel of the Lord.”*

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Share information from “Scripture Background” about why Jesus told the story found in today’s Gospel. Then remind the children again of the saying, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.” The saying is also true for our prayer life.

When we need something from God, we should pray and pray again until we have an answer. If the answer doesn’t come in the form of the request granted, it will come in the form of peace of mind.

Consider how Jesus suffered in the Garden of Olives. He asked that his Cross be taken away if it was God’s will. It wasn’t, but God did send an angel to comfort him. (See Luke 22:41–43.) Strengthened by God, Jesus was able to go through the hard times ahead and find his reward on the other side of death: Resurrection and everlasting joy and glory.

That’s why “Keep praying until something happens” is good advice. Something will happen, either outside us or inside us.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith and respond to each question with, “Yes, I do believe.”

Do you believe in God the Father, all-loving and almighty, who is eager to help us in times of need?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who came to earth that we might see God’s love and experience God’s help in person?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

LEADER: Do you believe in God, the Holy Spirit, who comes to us from the Father and the Son to teach us how to pray always and never give up?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

LEADER: Do you believe in the holy Catholic Church, God’s chosen ones called to come together in continual faith, prayer, and good works?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Let us pray with confidence to our loving God, who is not like the crooked judge in today’s Gospel, but always stands ready to help us in times of need. Our response to each petition will be, “Hear us, O Lord.”

That our Holy Father and all Church leaders will always use their God-given authority to defend the weak and powerless, we pray.

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That all the judges and juries in our land will always be fair, honest, and loving in their decisions, we pray.

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That the people of our parish will always be constant in prayer and steady in faith, we pray.

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: *Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:*

Heavenly Father, in today’s Gospel your Son taught us to pray always and never lose heart. May your Holy Spirit living within and among us remind us of this important message whenever we are in trouble and need your help. This we ask 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. If you haven’t already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week’s Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.