

## Today's Readings

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6–7, 10–13a  
 Psalm 23:1–3a, 3b–4, 5b–6c  
 Ephesians 5:1–2, 8–10  
 John 9:1, 6–12, 35–38

## Prepare the Meeting Space

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

- a Lectionary
- a battery-operated candle
- a cactus or dried-flower arrangement

Have the following ready for the Gathering and the Homily:

- a recorded Gathering song and music player
- adhesive-backed name tags (one for each child)
- crayons or markers
- a wadded-up sheet of newspaper to serve as a lightweight ball

## Suggested Music

See page 64 for more information.

### GATHERING:

**"God Loves Me"** (*Seeds VOL-2, Track #15*) or **"Saying Yes"** (*Promise & Good News VOL-1, Track #17*)

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

**"Glory and Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ"** (*Promise & Good News VOL-2, Track #23*)

# Jesus Cures the Man Who Was Blind

## 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

*Your kindness and love will always be with me each day of my life, and I will live forever in your house, Lord.*

(PSALM 23:6)

## Scripture Background

All three of today's readings remind us of God choosing each of us, solemnized in the Sacrament of Baptism and ratified when we live up to its requirements.

In the First Reading, God sends his prophet to anoint a new king for Israel. Samuel's mission is necessary because the current king, Saul, has willfully disregarded a specific command concerning the conduct of Israel's war against the Amalekites. The story of the shepherd boy's anointing is told to emphasize the point that God's unconventional choice is totally his own and not that of any human being.

Just as David was an unlikely choice among his many strong and attractive brothers, so also was the blind man of today's Gospel, in the context of his time and place, an unlikely choice for two of God's finest blessings: freedom from physical blindness and the ability to see with the eyes of faith. The notion then prevalent among the pious was that anyone born blind was paying for the sins of his parents, if not his own. With God's justice, therefore, no righteous person should interfere.

Those in Palestine who had already rejected Jesus, especially on account of his miracles worked on the Sabbath, remained totally unmoved by this latest cure of his. Yet the Pharisees and scribes, above all others, should have recognized the One sent by God after all the hours they had spent studying the Law and the prophets! Perhaps their devotion, ironically, had made them too proud to accept a Messiah like



Jesus—one who loved the poor and the sick and welcomed them all into his kingdom, rather than simply accepting their pariah status at face value.

In this Gospel, then, we see for the second time today God choosing as his very own someone whom others have overlooked or rejected. Once again divine wisdom has trumped human wisdom.

## CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

In place of the usual discussion-driven homily, a game will be used to reinforce the theme of today's liturgy.

To play the suggested game, ask the children to stand in a circle. Taking in hand a lightweight ball, stand in the middle of the circle. Explain that you are going to call someone by name, then throw the ball straight up. The person named should step into the circle and try to catch the ball as it comes back down. After the child retrieves the ball and returns it to you, you will ask the child a simple nonsense question, such as, "Can you un-ring a bell?" to which the child will answer, "No, you can't." Then call out, "This is *(child's name)*, and what can we tell *(child's name)* about God?" The children will all chant back, "*(child's name)*, one thing God will never do is un-choose you!" Keep playing successive rounds of the game until all have had a chance to catch the ball and hear God's promise chanted to them. Here are some nonsense questions you can use:

- Can you un-sing a song?
- Can you un-bake a cake?
- Can you un-throw a ball?
- Can you un-fry an egg?
- Can you un-pick a flower?
- Can you un-drink a soda?
- Can you un-read a book?
- Can you un-tell a secret?
- Can you un-rip a paper?
- Can you un-light a fire?
- Can you un-blow a bubble?
- Can you un-lick an ice cream cone?

## More About ...

### **Laetare Means "Rejoice"**

For an intriguing glance into times past, an article entitled "Religion: Laetare Sunday" was printed in *Time* magazine on March 15, 1937. It detailed customs the Church once followed in connection with the Fourth Sunday of Lent, then called "Laetare Sunday" or "Rose Sunday." For instance, on that day, rose-colored coverings replaced the purple ones that had been draped over all the church's interior statues. The idea behind Laetare Sunday was to pause during our Lenten observances to recall that we are, above all, sharers in Christ's victory over sin and death.

The Church continues to mark the Fourth Sunday of Lent with readings of a decidedly hopeful tone and with the color rose reflected in the liturgical environment. Today's stories of David's anointing and the blind man's cure remind us of God's choice of each one of us in Baptism—unlikely by the world's standards and wholly undeserved, yet always worth celebrating.

## THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The leaflet for this week helps children learn about looking with love towards others through a prayer, a summary of the Gospel, and a creative activity.

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

Families are encouraged to have a scavenger hunt to explore the different ways people “see.” The children exercise their ability to “see” things that aren’t readily apparent. The solution to the activity is shown here for your convenience.

heart  
dove  
cross  
fish  
lamb  
flower  
sun



## THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

### Gathering

Gather the children around a table or on a floor space where you have placed blank name tags and crayons or markers. Ask who doesn't know how to write yet. For each child who raises a hand, assign an older child to be his or her “pen pal.”

Then, tell the children to write their names very large on their name tags, so that you can read each name from a distance. (Pen pals will write on the younger children's name tags.) Next, tell the children that they may decorate their name tags any way they wish as you play a recording of the Gathering song. They should raise their hands when they are ready for you to pick up their finished work.

After the song is finished and all the name tags are collected, tell the children you are going to call them forward one at a time to give each one a blessing and to place the name tag on his or her shirt. After you “tag” each child, trace a cross on his or her forehead and solemnly proclaim, “\_\_\_, God has chosen you to be his very own.”

Conclude by telling the children that today's readings are about people in the Bible whom God chose to

be his very own. One was a shepherd boy of ancient times named David, and the other was a man born blind in the time of Christ.

### Collect

**LEADER:** Invite the children to close their eyes and bow their heads for prayer. We will keep a moment of silence as we talk to God in our hearts. Let's think about the times in the past week when we have not acted like children who belong to God but have committed sin instead. *(Pause for silence.)*

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, because you belong to the Father and we belong to you, we are called to become like you: good, honest, and truthful. Forgive us our sins and help us grow in your love, that through our words and deeds you may be praised forever and ever.

**CHILDREN:** Amen.

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

### First Reading

**LEADER:** Our First Reading tells about the time God sent his prophet to Bethlehem to anoint a new king for Israel. Pay attention to how God's choice surprises Samuel.

*Read 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a.  
Then say, “The word of the Lord.”*

**CHILDREN:** Thanks be to God.

### Responsorial Psalm

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

**LEADER:** The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

**CHILDREN:** The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

**LEADER:** *Read Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5b-6c.*

### Second Reading

**LEADER:** Do you know what it means to “take after” your dad or mom? It means that you look or act a lot like Mom or Dad. In our Second Reading, Saint

Paul reminds us that we all should take after God, because God is our Father.

*Read Ephesians 5:1-2, 8-10.*

### **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, we will hear about a blind man chosen by Jesus to receive two special favors: a cure for his blindness and the good news that Jesus is the Lord.

The Lord be with you.

**CHILDREN:** And with your Spirit.

**LEADER:** A reading from the Gospel of John.

**CHILDREN:** † Glory to you, O Lord.

**LEADER:** *Read John 9:1, 6-12, 35-38. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."*

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

### **Homily**

First, repeat the main idea of today's liturgy: just as God chose David to be king and Jesus chose the blind man to be his disciple, so has God chosen each of us to be his child—and it is a forever choice that God will never take back. That is why we speak of Baptism as a sacrament that changes us forever.

Then, tell the children that you are going to play a little game that celebrates God's forever choice of us, and follow the instructions given in Children's Connections.

### **Profession of Faith**

**LEADER:** Please stand for the Profession of Faith and respond to each question with, "I do."

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, who chose us to be his very own when we were baptized?

**CHILDREN:** I do.

**LEADER:** Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who came that we might have fullness of life in body and soul?

**CHILDREN:** I do.

**LEADER:** Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who descended on us when we were baptized and to this very day helps us see with the eyes of faith?

**CHILDREN:** I do.

### **Prayer of the Faithful**

**LEADER:** Knowing that we are specially blessed by God our Father, let us pray for blessings upon our brothers and sisters throughout the world. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord."

That our Holy Father, the Pope, and all Church leaders will be refreshed by God's grace during these days of Lent, we pray.

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

**LEADER:** That all the wealthy and healthy people of the world will help the poor and sick as Jesus did, we pray.

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

**LEADER:** That all of us here will live up to our calling to be God's children, we pray.

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

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

Loving God, thank you for choosing us to be your very own. Lead us along right paths until we are all together again in Heaven, rejoicing in your love 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. 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.