

Children's liturgy – Fifth Sunday of Lent (Year B)

Preparing the worship space

Colour: purple

Props: seeds, potting soil, plant pots or yoghurt pots to plant the seeds in, coloured card.

Song suggestions: Unless a grain of wheat shall fall (748, Laudate),
The Servant King (749, Laudate)

Welcome: Jesus today uses the image of a grain of wheat to talk about what is in store for him – death and resurrection. He says that one single grain of wheat can produce a rich harvest. Let's think some more about this today.

Opening prayer: God of life, we pray that all the seeds that we plant may bear much fruit, so that none of your people go hungry. Amen.

First reading (optional): Jeremiah 31:31-34

Psalm: Psalm 50:3-4, 12-15 R. 12

Gospel acclamation: *all say or sing the acclamation. For Lent we use an acclamation that doesn't use the word 'Alleluia'. We suggest: Praise to you O Christ, king of eternal glory.*

Gospel: John 12:20-33

Some Greeks were among those who had gone to Jerusalem to worship during the festival. They went to Philip (he was from Bethsaida in Galilee) and said, "Sir, we want to see Jesus."

Philip went and told Andrew, and the two of them went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has now come for the Son of Man to receive great glory. I am telling you the truth: a grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains. Those who love their own life will lose it; those who hate their own life in this world will keep it for life eternal. Whoever wants to serve me must follow me, so that my servant will be with me where I am. And my Father will honour anyone who serves me.

"Now my heart is troubled—and what shall I say? Shall I say, 'Father, do not let this hour come upon me'? But that is why I came—so that I might go through this hour of suffering. Father, bring glory to your name!"

Then a voice spoke from heaven, "I have brought glory to it, and I will do so again."

The crowd standing there heard the voice, and some of them said it was thunder, while others said, "An angel spoke to him!"

But Jesus said to them, "It was not for my sake that this voice spoke, but for yours. Now is the time for this world to be judged; now the ruler of this world will be overthrown. When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me." (In saying this he indicated the kind of death he was going to suffer.)

(Gospel passage taken from Good News Translation® and used with permission, see details below)*

Gospel reflection: What do you remember from that reading?

Jesus says that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single grain. But if it dies then it will give a rich harvest.

What do you think Jesus means by that? Jesus is using this image to explain that he must die on the cross so that he can rise again and so people will believe he is the Son of God.

What happens to a seed when you plant it? The seed dies as it grows into a plant.

Wheat is an important thing to grow because it is used in lots of foods. Can you name some foods that wheat is used in? How about if I tell you that wheat is used to make flour? What can you make with flour?

One single seed can grow lots of food. Think about how tiny an apple seed is inside your apple, which you can plant and grow into an apple tree that will produce lots of other apples. Can you think of some other foods that can be grown from a single seed?

You may not be very used to growing things, but about a quarter of all people in the world live from farming. For them, planting and growing seeds is a matter of life and death.

If their food doesn't grow well, their families will be hungry. The people listening to Jesus would have known all about what that means, as many of them would have grown their own food.

An organisation called CAFOD works with farmers in many poor countries so that they can use the best seeds to grow on their land. CAFOD's local trainers give the farmers good advice on how to grow strong plants even when the weather is too dry - or too wet.

Jesus had to die so that he could rise again. Through his death and resurrection he gave us all new life. And he calls us all to follow him, in all that we do.

Just like a seed, our actions, even if we do just one little thing, can also grow into something big. Especially if we join together with others. For example if I want to make the world a fairer place, on my own I am easy to ignore. But if all of us come together and get our friends and our families to join in too, we are much harder to ignore!

What will you do this week to make a difference to someone else?

Intercessions: We believe in Jesus the Son of God who died and rose again and so we pray together:

We pray for world leaders: that God may guide them to make decisions which help those who are most in need. Lord, in your mercy...

We pray for our parish, family and friends: that we may take steps to change our own lives and the lives of our brothers and sisters around the world. Lord, in your mercy...

We pray for the poorest people in our world: that the seeds they plant may give a rich harvest so that everyone has enough to eat. Lord, in your mercy...

For more children's liturgy resources and illustrations see cafod.org.uk/childrensliturgy

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Closing prayer: Christ Jesus, fill us with your love and mercy and show us how to make a difference to the lives of our brothers and sisters around the world. Amen.

Activity suggestions

Invite the children to colour in the accompanying illustration.

Plant seeds with the children for them to look after to watch how they grow.

Do a mime. Get them to curl up tightly into a ball and pretend to be seeds – as you talk about rain and sunshine they start to grow until they are tall trees bearing fruit.

On flower-shaped pieces of card, copy the prayer below, based on the life of Archbishop Oscar Romero. Say it with the children and encourage them to say it together with their family during the next week.

This is what we are about:
We plant seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.

Remind the children to tell their grown ups all that they have heard and thought about in the liturgy today. Encourage them to count how many things they eat this week that started off as a seed and when doing so to think about the story that they have heard today.

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