### LSW

children

**Social justice**

*This is an important part of being Catholic and a key lesson in the faith of the Church. In my experience, almost all facilitators for children’s Liturgy of the Word and most of the children attending are in the middle class, though I know there are many who are not. And yet the Church of Jesus is called to be the Church of the Poor. We need to reconcile the material wealth of the Church and of Catholics worldwide to the mission to and of the poor to which we are called.*

*If I ask children whether they are poor, there is usually a slight hesitation before some muttering of no – “I am not sure but, yeah, I guess I am not”. If I then ask them whether they are rich, there will be an instant no – “No way I am rich.” When I tell them that 99% of the world’s children consider them as rich and dream being like them, you see their eyes widen in disbelief.*

*Yet, this is true and we need to explain to the children where the poor among us are. There are rubbish heaps in some countries that do not smell because all the food have been picked clean, with nothing left to rot – and the task of picking these rubbish often falls to children. While child labour has declined world wide, there are still some 160 million child labourers, half of them involved in hazardous work.*

*I cried because I had no shoes, then I met a man with no feet*

*- an old Persian saying*

*I have no truck with those who say that we should not frighten the children with such facts. Poverty and suffering are real and we should not desensitize children to it, more so when it is our Christian anointing as king that calls us to serve the poor.*

*Pope Francis took on the name of St Francis of Assisi, the son of a rich cloth merchant who gave away everything he had to love Jesus in the poor. He calls us to minister to the poor among us, and where possible, face to face as St Francis did with lepers.*

*Talk to the children how we can minister to the poor. It is more than just giving them money that we have left over. What do we give if it was Jesus in front of us? If Jesus was that tramp who turned up at our table in the restaurant?*

Year C

#### Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Images**

Identifying with people who suffer

**Points to note**

This is a difficult reading to do. The story is a very dark one with very graphic illustrations that may sometimes scare children. We will have to do it with moderation of the less palatable scenes for the children.

Then there are the concepts that we want to get across. It is easy to say that the rich will suffer in the afterlife while the poor will enjoy an easier afterlife but this is not the intended message. As we have seen in last week’s reading, being rich in itself is not going to get you into hell but making a master out of money will. This week’s reading takes it one step further: being indifferent to those who are suffering will also get you into hell rather fast.

Another image to avoid is that we can get into heaven by suffering in this life. The Beatitudes make it clear that we can get into heaven by suffering only if we are suffering for Jesus.

**Liturgy**

Acclamation before the Gospel

Alleluia! Alleluia!

The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice, says the Lord

I know them and they follow me.

Alleluia!

Gospel

The Lord be with you.

*All:*  And with your spirit.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St Luke

*All:*  Glory to you O Lord

(Lk 16: 19-31)

Jesus said to the Pharisees. “There was a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen and feast magnificently everyday. And at his gate there lay a poor man called Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to fill himself with the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table. Dogs even came and licked his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to heaven. The rich man also died and was buried.

“In his torment in Hades he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off with Lazarus at his side. So he cried out, ‘Father Abraham, pity me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in pain in these flames.’ ‘My son,’ Abraham replied, ‘remember that during your life good things came your way, just as bad things came the way of Lazarus. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony. But that is not all: between us and you a great gulf has been set up to stop anyone who wants to, from crossing from our side to yours, and to stop anyone from crossing from your side to ours.’

The rich man replied, ‘Father, I beg you then to send Lazarus to my father’s house, since I have five brothers, to give them warning so that they do not come to this place of torment too.’ ‘They have Moses and the prophets,’ said Abraham, ‘let them listen to them.’ ‘Ah no, father Abraham,‘ said the rich man, ‘but if someone comes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ Then Abraham said to him, ‘If they will not listen either to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead.’ “

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**Dialogue**

Go back into the story and discuss Lazarus’ condition. Just beware not to turn off any child but the objective is to identify what suffering is. Some children may have very simplistic or self-centred views about suffering but be gentle with them.

Can we see who in the world are suffering today? *There are sufferings at various levels. People who are destitute or fleeing from war may be suffering like Lazarus. But there are also people who suffer because they have lost loved ones in accidents and the like. And the old lady on welfare next door getting upset because she has lost her purse is also suffering. Or the friend in school who just got taunted online.*

What should we do with the people who are suffering? Ignore them? *Explain that this was what got the rich man into hell. Be sensitive with the word ‘hell’ as some parents have taught their children that it is a swear word: it is not the word but the context in which you say it that makes it a swear word.*

*List all the good things we could do including material help, emotional support, praying for them, etc. You may want to discuss with the older ones that if you do these things because you think that it will get you to heaven, you probably won’t get there. You have to do these things with sincerity, because you want to do them, not because it is a chore you have to do to get you to heaven.*

Discuss why Lazarus got to heaven. Was it because he suffered? Was it because he was poor? Or was it that he was so destitute that he had no friends and no other help to turn to that he could only turn to God and became God’s friend. *God love people like that. Remember that no man can serve two masters. God wants us to rely on him and him alone and nothing else.*