

Teaching Guide

Isaiah 62.1-5; Corinthians 12.4-11; John 2.1-11

OVERVIEW

Gospel Theme: Jesus is good news.

The word *Gospel* means *good news*. Jesus sent by the Father to live with us as one of us is good news. Jesus, who gave his life for us, is good news. Jesus, who sends us the Spirit to be with us always, is the best of news. The Sundays of Ordinary Time, which we begin this week, show us Jesus beginning his mission of showing us how much God loves us and how we can respond to that love. This Sunday Jesus goes to a wedding and expresses through the sign of a miracle the fullness of life he is bringing. Christians have always seen in this miracle a blessing on the love of a man and a woman and the family they create. *Promise* celebrates the children's own growing ability to love.

Doctrinal Concept: Catechesis links human experience to the revealed word of God, helping people ascribe Christian meaning to their own existence. Catechesis helps them relate the Christian message to the most profound questions in life: the existence of God, the destiny of the human person, the origin and end of history, the truth about good and evil, the meaning of suffering and death (*National Directory for Catechesis* #29.A). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #470, 547-48, 962.

Materials: Colored pencils or crayons.

SHARING LIFE STORIES

GATHER AND SING Gather the children in a circle, standing. Play "Jesus Loves the Little Children" from the *Promise* music CD. Let the children sing along until they are comfortable with both words and melody.

OPENING PRAYER Children sit in their places in the circle and listen quietly as you pray this prayer, or one of your own making. They respond "Amen."

Loving God, we are here to learn about your Son, Jesus. Jesus came to our world to tell us how much you love us. Thank you for sending him. Help us learn today ways we can be like him.

Objective: The children will explore ways they make a difference to their families and friends.

STORY: Michael Goes to a Wedding (page 4) Ask the children if they have ever been to a wedding. What do they remember? *Being part of the wedding as a ring-bearer or flower girl, or as the son or daughter of the person getting married.* Give each child a chance to speak, then say that you know a story about a boy who was part of a wedding.

Distribute *Promise*. Ask the children to put their copies with the cover face down so the rebus story on the back is showing. Identify each of the illustrations at the top of the

page. Some children will be reading the words under the pictures; others will simply guess. Explain that in a rebus story, pictures take the place of some of the words. Be sure they can tell you what words each picture will replace.

Read the story together, giving each child a chance to say one or more of the rebus picture-words. When you have finished ask the questions. Conclude by letting the children read the story aloud together in pairs.

CREATIVE MOVEMENT Pretend that the Gospel area is the front of the church where the bride and groom will meet. Assign roles, as many as you need for each child to have one. You can be the priest waiting in the Gospel area. Michael with the rings leads the procession, followed by bridesmaids who each pair off with a groomsman to form a circle around you. Finally the bride and groom. This is pretend so boys and girls can take any part. When all the children are in the circle, motion for them to sit. Tell them you know a story about a wedding Jesus went to with his mother and some of his friends.

LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

COVER ACTIVITY Ask children to look at the cover of *Promise*. Prepare for the Gospel by reading aloud the text and following the directions to find the people and things that make up this story.

Objective: The children will recognize that Jesus is both human and divine.

GOSPEL STORYTELLING: The Wedding Feast at Cana *Jesus, his mother, Mary, and Jesus' friends were invited to a wedding in a town named Cana. Many other people were invited, too. The guests had a big meal together. Mary noticed the wine was all gone. She said to Jesus, "The bride and groom have run out of wine." Jesus said, "That is not our problem." But Mary told the waiter, "Do whatever Jesus tells you." Jesus told the waiters to fill six big jars with water. Then Jesus said, "Take the water to the man in charge of the catering." The man in charge tasted the water, which had become wine. The man said to the bride and groom, "Usually people serve the best wine at the beginning of a party, but you have saved the best wine until now." This is the first time Jesus did something special like this to show his love for people.*

Distribute *Promise* and ask the children to look at the cover again. Have them point out the people in the story and review its details with you. The children will be intrigued with how Jesus did the miracle. Point out to them the point of the story is that Jesus blessed people's gathering.

CREATIVE DRAMA Have the whole group participate as one in this re-enactment of the Cana story. This will take the pressure off children who don't like the spotlight. Have all the

children show with their bodies and faces—

- how Jesus and Mary and their friends felt at the wedding,
- how the bride and groom felt when the wine ran out,
- how Mary felt when she saw the bride and groom looking sad,
- how Jesus felt when Mary asked him to help,
- how everyone at the wedding felt when Jesus made more wine.

Summarize by saying that Jesus did this special miracle as a way to show people God loved them and that God wanted them to listen to Jesus. Return to the work area, show the children how to open their copies of *Promise* so the two wedding stories are side by side, and have them retell the Gospel story to a partner. Conclude by saying they can tell both wedding stories to their families at home.

BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Objective: The children will complete activities showing how both Jesus and each of them are good news.

ACTIVITY: Jesus is good news. I am good news, too.

This page has four activities. If most of your class are readers, you may wish to let them complete the page on their own. If the children might have difficulty following directions, complete the activities one by one as a group.

Color the Stars The word *Gospel* is the theme for this lesson. The book with Jesus' stories in it is called the Gospel, because the stories are good news for us. Direct the children to color the spaces with stars to find the word. They may also color the spaces with dots if they wish.

Matching Water Jars Have the children count the water jars. Ask if they remember from the Gospel story how many jars of water Jesus changed into wine. *Six*. Have them find the six jars that are alike and color them purple.

Letter Trail The children need to be very careful about following the direction for this activity, or they will never know what the secret sentence is. Demonstrate for them how to count to three and highlight or circle that letter. The first letter is already highlighted. When they have highlighted all the letters they place them one by one in the letter boxes to make a sentence. The sentence is "I can act in loving ways."

Follow the Dots When the children have completed this activity ask whom the girl is writing to and why.

CLOSING PRAYER Gather in a prayer circle. Ask the children what the girl in the follow-the-dot activity was writing. *A thank-you note.* Conclude *Promise* class today by thanking God for the people who make a difference in our lives. After each child mentions a person, the whole group responds, "Thank you, God." Sing the opening song to conclude.

EXTENDING ACTIVITY: NOAH'S ARK This coloring activity has one of each pair of animals in plain sight and the other hidden. Enlarge the drawing when you duplicate it for the children.



OVERVIEW

Gospel Theme: Jesus is good news.

Sunday's Gospel tells the story of Jesus' first public ministry in the synagogue of his home town, Nazareth. *Promise* helps the children recognize that Jesus is a real person who grew up in a neighborhood just as they are doing. This lesson builds on the theme of Jesus and us as good news.

Doctrinal Concept: Catechesis will also be centered on Christ if the Gospels occupy a pivotal place within it. They "are our principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, our Savior." They transmit the life, message, and saving actions of Jesus Christ and express the teaching that was proposed to the first Christian communities. Catechesis must be centered in the Gospels, because Jesus Christ is their center (*National Directory for Catechesis* #25.a). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #124-27, 134, 470, 483, 531.

Materials: Scissors, pennies, markers for game.

SHARING LIFE STORIES

GATHER AND SING Gather the children in the open area. Stand together in a circle holding hands. Sing the following song to the tune of "London Bridge." All circle right on the first two lines.

Do you know who lives next door?

lives next door, lives next door?

(Now all circle left.)

Do you know who lives next door?

That's my neighbor! (Stop and point to center of circle.)

Yes, I know who lives next door,

lives next door, lives next door.

Yes, I know who lives next door.

I'm their neighbor! (Stop and point to self.)

OPENING PRAYER Ask the children to sit at their place in the singing circle and listen as you pray the opening prayer. They respond "Amen."

Loving God, thank you for our neighbors. Our neighbors care for each other, help each other, pray together, and play together. Please bless all our neighbors. Bless our own families, too. Bless this Promise class as we learn ways to be loving and caring like Jesus.

Objective: The children will thank God for their neighborhoods.

STORY: Patrick's Neighborhood Settle down in the story circle. Ask the children to listen carefully. They will find out about neighbors in two very different places.

Patrick Cullen lives in Calgary, Canada. His favorite cousin, Christopher, lives in Florida. One day Patrick's mom called Christopher's mom. When they finished talking, Patrick got to talk to Christopher. "What did you do today?" Patrick asked Christopher. "We had fun!" Christopher said. "It was clean-up day in our neighborhood. Dad mowed lawns for people. Mom and her friends had a garage sale in our garage. I got to paint a fence for Mrs. Lopez. Robbie and Abby planted flowers on the street corners and in the park. We get to water them so they will grow."

"I wish I could paint a fence," said Patrick. "It was fun," said Christopher. "Afterwards we had a big picnic with hot dogs and s'mores and lots of ice cream. I got a prize for making a poster about keeping our neighborhood clean. They hung my poster in our community center."

"That's cool," said Patrick. After he hung up the phone Patrick told his mom about the neighborhood party in Florida. "Can we have a party like that?" Patrick asked. "Sure," said his mom. "We'll have a winter party with snow instead of flowers."

So Patrick's neighborhood had the First Annual Winter Fix-up Clean-up Day. The moms and dads shoveled sidewalks for older people. They shoveled away the big piles of snow on the street corners. The big kids chopped up the ice that was making sidewalks slippery and picked up paper that had blown into the snowy yards. The children shook heavy snow from tree branches and bushes. They filled the bird feeders and hung little balls of suet for the cardinals to eat. Each family made a snowman for the snowman contest. When all the work was finished everyone gathered in the community center for cocoa and marshmallows. Anita McKeown played the piano and everyone sang snow songs. Patrick's family won first prize for their snowman. When Patrick went to bed that night, his mom said, "I am proud of you, Patrick. You helped make our neighborhood a happy, caring place to live. Tomorrow we will call Florida and you can tell Christopher about our neighborhood."

Discuss how the two neighborhoods are alike and different. *They are alike in wanting to help each other make their neighborhood a nice place. They are different in the kinds of things they did.* Use the following creative drama suggestions to help children explore these differences in a fun way.

CREATIVE DRAMA Divide your group in two. One group is from Florida. The other group is from Canada. Let each group tell what their weather is like. *Florida is warm, with sunshine, grass, and flowers. Canada is cold in the winter and has lots of snow.* Recall what each group did as part of their neighborhood day. Have the Canada group sit in a group as the Florida group pantomimes the activities they did—painting, mowing, clipping around trees, having a garage

sale, planting flowers, watering them. Then the Canada group pantomimes shoveling snow, chipping ice off sidewalks, picking up paper trash, filling bird feeders, making snowmen. Conclude by singing the neighborhood song with which you began class. Vary it by having the children one by one jump in the middle of the circle on “That’s my neighbor!”

LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

Objective: The children will recognize that Jesus lived in a real neighborhood.

COVER ACTIVITY: Jesus has a neighborhood.

Distribute *Promise*. Have the children look at the cover photos and identify the scenes from Jesus’ neighborhood. *Lake Galilee is only a few miles from Nazareth, where Jesus grew up. Nazareth is built on the side of a hill so that the good land in the valley can be used for crops and grazing. Women today still carry burdens the way they did in Jesus’ time.* Have the children discuss their own neighborhoods and talk about the geography of their area and the variety of people they see daily. Ask what photos they might put on the cover of *Promise* to show their neighborhood.

GOSPEL STORYTELLING: Jesus has good news.

Gather the children in a story circle. Build on the cover activity by explaining that when Jesus was a child he grew up in a small town called Nazareth. As a boy, he lived in a neighborhood where he played with other children, went to celebrations with his family and friends, studied and worshiped. When he grew up, Jesus read from the Holy Writings of his people at Sabbath services and explained them. That is what Jesus does in the Gospel story this Sunday. He reads from the Holy Writings about how someone will bring God’s good news to the poor. When Jesus finishes reading and rolls up the scroll, he tells his friends and neighbors that he is that someone. God’s special time is beginning, when people will live together in peace and happiness. Jesus is God’s special messenger who is filled with God’s Spirit. Have the children imagine they are in the synagogue when Jesus stands up and reads from the Holy Writings.

One Sabbath day Jesus went to the synagogue in his hometown, Nazareth. They asked him to be the lector and read from the prophet Isaiah. Jesus read: “God’s spirit is upon me. God sent me to bring good news to everyone. Poor people will have a fair share. Blind people will see again. Slaves will be set free. This will be a special year of God’s love.”

When Jesus finished reading he told the people, “God has sent me to make these things happen.”

Ask the children how they felt when they heard Jesus talking about God’s good news. Whom did Jesus bring good news to? They will remember the Gospel stories about the children, the lepers, the blind man. Conclude by telling the children these people were all part of Jesus’ neighborhood, in the country of Israel where he lived.

BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

GOSPEL ACTIVITY: The Neighborhood Game (pages 2-3) Gather the children in the work area. Discuss the importance of living in a neighborhood. *People care for each other, watch out for each other, work, play, pray, and have good times together, and support each other in hard times.* Have children open *Promise* to pages 2-3, study the illustration, and identify the elements of a neighborhood—*park, homes, church, school, shopping area, open space.* Have them cut off the strip on the right of page 3 and cut out the four circles. Identify together the objects—*house, school, church, swings.* Explain that the object of *The Neighborhood Game* is to complete the neighborhood by placing the cutout circles on an empty circle on the board. Illustrate by holding up the house circle and discussing possible places to put it—*any of the empty circles.* Do this with the other circles. Divide the class into pairs or threes and give each group a penny for flipping and buttons or paper clips for markers. Direct them to take turns flipping the penny. When a child flips *heads*, he or she may move forward two spaces; on *tails* a player moves forward one space. When a child’s marker lands on a yellow space, he or she may place a circle on the board. The first child to complete the neighborhood wins the game. Children may replay with new partners.

CONCLUDING PRAYER Have the children turn to page 4 of *Promise*. Read aloud the first thank-you statement and give the children time to place one of the circles from their neighborhood game on the empty space to finish that verse of the prayer. Continue with the other three statements; then conclude by asking children to repeat after you: *Thank you, God, for our neighborhoods.*

Conclude this prayer by singing the following song to the tune of “Three Blind Mice.”

*My neighborhood, my neighborhood.
See how we live. See how we work.
We mow the lawn and we shovel the snow.
We gather at church and we pray and sing.
We play with our friends in our own backyard.
My neighborhood.*

EXTENDING ACTIVITY

OUR CHURCH NEIGHBORHOOD Have the children draw a picture of your church neighborhood like the one in *Promise*. Take a walk with the children. Help them take notes about or make drawings of the buildings, parks, homes, and people in the neighborhood. Create a large poster that you can display in your parish church or community gathering space.

OVERVIEW

Gospel Theme: Jesus faces rejection.

In Sunday's Gospel Jesus has a problem. The people in his hometown are not willing to believe that he is God's good news for them. This rejection at the beginning of his public life foreshadows the unbelief Jesus will encounter. However, it does not stop him. In the Gospels for the next Sundays, Jesus continues to gather followers and to teach about God's love for us.

Promise explores the children's own experience of identifying and dealing with problems. They practice making decisions that improve a bad situation.

Doctrinal Concept: The Christian faith is, above all, conversion to Jesus Christ, full adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps... For disciples, saying "yes" to Jesus Christ means that they abandon themselves to God and give loving assent to all that he has revealed (National Directory for Catechesis #29.B). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #65, 73, 134, 2774-75.

Materials: Crayons or markers, paste or glue, tape, scissors.

MATERIALS ALERT! You will need wire coat hangers for a mobile project in next week's lesson.

SHARING LIFE STORIES

GATHER AND SING Gather the children in a circle in the open area. Try to have the children alternate boys and girls. Sing the following familiar song, adding gestures for them to imitate.

The whole world is in God's hands.
(Hold arms in a circle in front of body.)

The whole world is in God's hands.

The whole world is in God's hands.

The whole world is in God's hands.

You and me, brother, are in God's hands.
(Point to a boy across the circle).

You and me, sister, are in God's hands.
(Point to a girl across the circle).

All of us children are in God's hands.
(Make a sweeping gesture to include everyone in the circle.)

The whole world is in God's hands.

OPENING PRAYER Ask the children to remain standing while you say the following prayer. They respond "Amen."

Loving God, you are always with us. We trust in your love. We know you will always help us when we have problems. Thank you.

COVER ACTIVITY: I have problems. Gather the children in the story circle. Distribute *Promise*. Read the cover statement aloud. Ask the children to look closely at the illustration and identify the things that are wrong. *Going down a hill backwards on a sled; skis crossed; stuck in deep snow; one wrong skate; too many clothes to get up off the snow; wearing slippers in the snow; needs mittens and ear muffs; snowman's head is on upside-down.* Have the children decide how these problems can be solved.

STORY: Playground Feud (page 2) Have the children place *Promise* on the floor in front of them while you tell the following story.

Miss Flynn, the first-grade teacher, heard the children were fighting over the tire swing at recess time. She called the children together and asked what the problem was. "I had the swing first," said Vanessa. "The other kids wouldn't wait their turn," said Randy. "Too many kids on at one time," said Estella. "How can we solve this problem?" asked Miss Flynn. The children decided on a rule they would all follow. Miss Flynn wrote their rule on the board—ONE ON THE TIRE SWING AT A TIME. The next day Miss Flynn looked out her window and saw the first graders were still fighting over the swing. Miss Flynn called them in. The children came up with two solutions to this problem. Can you think of any others?

Have the children retell the story using the illustrations on page 2. Discuss the two solutions presented in the last frame. Brainstorm other possible solutions: *sign-up sheets for the swing, other games to play at recess, swinging alphabetically, no tire swing at all.* Conclude this part of the lesson by asking the children to choose the solution they think best. Have them give reasons for their choices.

LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

Objective: The children will recognize that Jesus had problems being accepted by his own neighbors.

GOSPEL STORYTELLING: Jesus has a problem.

Remind the children of last Sunday's Gospel in which Jesus read the Bible and talked to people in the synagogue in his hometown, Nazareth. Jesus told people that he is God's messenger. That is where the story picks up this week. Read the Gospel story.

Some people from Jesus' neighborhood thought he was just showing off. "How can Jesus be God's messenger?" they asked. "He is Joseph's son! We know his dad." Some of Jesus' neighbors wanted him to do miracles to prove he was from God. Jesus said people don't always believe God's messengers, especially in their own country. Sometimes it takes a stranger to really believe in a person. This made some

of Jesus' neighbors so angry that they tried to push Jesus off a cliff. But Jesus just walked away.

Ask: What did Jesus do to make people angry? Is it hard or easy to be God's messenger? Conclude your Gospel reflection by asking the children what kind of prayer Jesus might have prayed before he went to bed that night. *He would have thanked God for getting him out of trouble, asked God to forgive the people who wanted to hurt him, prayed that they would come to believe in him, and ask God's strength to keep doing his work.*

STRETCH AND MOVE Give each of the children an imaginary ball. Ask them to discover all the things they can do with the ball.

- Throw
- Catch at different heights
- Spin
- Kick
- Roll like a bowling ball
- Bounce like a basketball

Now tell the children the ball is changing. It is—

- Heavy
- Light
- Smaller
- Larger
- Sticky
- Covered with mud

Conclude by saying it is time to put the balls away in a big bin. One by one the children drop their balls in the imaginary bin and move to their places in the work area.

BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Objective: The children will explore ways of recognizing and dealing with their problems.

GOSPEL ACTIVITY: Make It Better (page 3) Gather the children in the work area and turn to page 3. Discuss the illustration of the children fighting over the bat, each one wanting to be first up. Ask the children if they ever want to be first in line, first to play the game, first to get the pizza. Have them suggest ways the children might solve their problem. Find the small picture that shows one way of solving the problem—throwing the bat and going hand over hand to see whose hand is on top.

Discuss the illustration of the children playing kickball. One child is not playing and looks sad. What is the problem? Maybe the girl is new and nobody thinks about asking her to pray. Maybe she is not a good player. Maybe some kids don't like her. Find the small illustration that shows a way the children can solve the problem of an outsider.

Discuss the third illustration which shows a child whose paper has been ruined by spilled juice. What do you think happened? Probably the boy with the juice bottle spilled on the girl's paper. What can make this problem better? The boy can admit he spilled the juice. He can say, "I'm sorry." He can help the girl get another paper.

Have the children cut out the illustrations of the three problems and the smaller strips that make the situations better. Give them tape or paste to tape along the top of the smaller strip. Provide large envelopes for them to take their pictures home to show them to their parents.

A FORGIVENESS PRAYER Gather the children seated in the prayer circle with the three illustrations laid out on the floor in front of them. Direct them to turn over the picture of the children with the bat and pray this page with you. Next turn over the illustration of the children and the spoiled paper. Pray this prayer, too. Conclude with the third card.

Ask the children to stand with their cards in their hands and repeat the following prayer after you, line by line.

Loving God,
thank you
for giving us feelings.
Please help us
to love and forgive
each other.
Amen.

EXTENDING ACTIVITY

A WEB OF HELPERS You will need a ball of yarn for this activity. Gather with the children in a circle, seated. Start the game by stating a problem you may have seen in your *Promise* classroom. For instance: We were waiting in line and someone pushed someone else. Roll the ball to a child across the circle from you and ask that child to suggest what could make that problem better. The child then hangs on to the string and rolls the ball back to you. You state another problem and roll the ball to another child. If your children are good at noticing and stating problems, they can leave you out of the game and simply roll the ball to each other.

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OVERVIEW

Gospel Theme: Jesus calls us to follow him.

In Sunday's Gospel of the miraculous catch of fish, Jesus' followers see what a wonderful friend he is. Jesus invites these new friends to help him gather more people together into God's family. *Promise* explores how the children make and keep friends. They make a mobile as a visible representation of the community of faith to which they belong.

Doctrinal Concept: Crowds of people from every walk of life came to the seashore to listen to Jesus proclaim the coming of the kingdom. The message of salvation in Jesus Christ is intended for all people despite their social, cultural, racial, ethnic, or economic differences (*National Directory for Catechesis* #52). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #592, 804, 2045.

Materials: A wire coat hanger for each child, scissors, tape or paste, yarn or thread.

SHARING LIFE STORIES

GATHER AND SING Gather the children in the open area. Stand together in a circle holding hands. Sing the following song to the tune of "Did You Ever See a Lassie?" Lead the children in circling to the left and then the right for the beginning part of the song and instruct them to imitate your gestures for the second part.

We are all one family,
one family, one family.
We are all one family,
one family are we.
For your friends (point across circle)
are my friends (point to self)
and my friends (point to self)
are your friends (point across circle).
We are all one family,
one family are we.

OPENING PRAYER Ask the children to stand quietly as you pray the opening prayer. The children repeat each line after you.

Thank you, Loving God.
For giving us hearts to love you and others.
(Place hand over heart.)
For giving us eyes to see the beauty of your world.
(Make binocular shapes with fingers.)
For giving us bodies that can move.
(Stretch way up and crouch way down.)
For giving us ears to hear the stories about Jesus.
(Cup hands behind ears.)
Thank you, God. Amen.
(Lift hands up in prayer.)

Objective: The children will recognize they like to be invited.

STORY: Max is invited (page 2) Sit in a story circle. Ask the children when they have been invited to a party. What kind of party was it? Who was there? Who invited you? When have you had a party and invited people to come? Were there rules about how many people you could invite? How did you decide? Take at least a few minutes with this discussion, as it is the theme of the lesson.

Distribute *Promise* and have the children turn to page 2. Read the story aloud, frame by frame. Ask: How did Max feel at his new school? How did he feel when Sam invited other children, but not him? Why did Sam do that? *His mother may have helped him with his invitations and didn't realize there was a new child in the class.* Why was it important to Max that Sam called him on the phone and invited him? How will Max feel at school now?

Summarize the discussion by noting that inviting and being invited are part of every day. Prove it by inviting the children to pretend they have a phone with them and are going to call someone they like to talk to.

CREATIVE MOVEMENT Teachers have a rule of thumb that children of *Promise* age can attend only to a task for the number of minutes that matches their age. That means a teacher must change her focus every six minutes, or 10 times during the *Promise* hour. Making transition times part of the story or Gospel is one way to shift that focus so children can connect in a different way with what you want them to do and understand.

Ask the children to stand next to their work desks or tables. Have them pick up an imaginary phone. They dial a friend and then walk around the room talking to that friend. All do this at the same time. Ask them to use their face and body movements to stop and react to good news, fun news, sad news, exciting news. Then ask the children to finish their conversation with their friend, return to their place, hang up the phone, place it on the table, and sit down. Ask volunteers to share some of the news they received.

LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

Objective: The children will recognize Jesus called people to follow him and do his work.

GOSPEL WARMUP: I have friends Gather the children in the Gospel area. Ask: What makes people be friends with someone? *Like the same things, like books or baseball or computer games; enjoy doing the same activities; trust the person won't hurt you or laugh at you.* Accept all answers. Ask volunteers to tell what they did with a friend yesterday or over the weekend. Summarize the discussion by saying Jesus

had friends, too. They will hear about some of those friends in this Sunday's Gospel story.

GOSPEL STORYTELLING: Jesus has friends. Ask the children to turn back to the cover illustration and describe the scene. *Jesus is in a boat with two discouraged-looking men. They are trailing an empty net in the water. One man is telling Jesus they haven't caught any fish. Jesus suggests trying a different spot.* Read the Gospel story to the children or tell it in your own words.

One day when Jesus was teaching by the lake, people surrounded him on all sides. Jesus saw Simon's empty boat nearby and asked Simon to take him out in it. Simon and a friend rowed Jesus out a little way from the shore. Jesus sat in the boat and taught the crowd on the shore. When Jesus finished teaching, he told Simon to drop his net into the water on the other side of the boat. Simon said, "Jesus, we fished all night and didn't catch a thing. But I'll do what you say." Simon trusted Jesus and threw out the net. When he pulled the net in, it was overflowing with fish. Simon called to friends on shore to bring another boat. Jesus' new friends caught enough fish to fill both boats. Simon could hardly believe the catch and felt afraid of Jesus. But Jesus said, "Don't be afraid. I am your friend, and I want you to help me. From now on instead of gathering fish into a net I want you to help me gather people into God's family." So Simon and the others followed Jesus. Later, Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter.

Ask the children to tell the Gospel story to you so you can check their comprehension.

CREATIVE DRAMA Gather the children in the open area. Ask them to sit on the floor in their own boat on the lake. The children all practice rowing their boat. Big waves come along. It gets very cold. The children continue rowing. It gets warm again. Demonstrate how to throw their fishing nets into the water and haul in their catch. Have some of the children describe the fish they caught. Now the children are ready to dramatize the Gospel story.

Everyone gathers together on one side of the room. Choose two children, one to be Simon and one to be his friend. You become Jesus, say goodbye to the children, and ask Simon and his friend to take you fishing. Pantomime rowing out into the lake. You tell Simon and his friend to throw out their net. They

do so and catch a lot of fish. All the other children have to come over and help them haul in the net. Then they all go out fishing with Jesus again. When Jesus is done fishing he motions for everyone to follow him. Jesus leads the children around the room until they end up at their work places.

BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

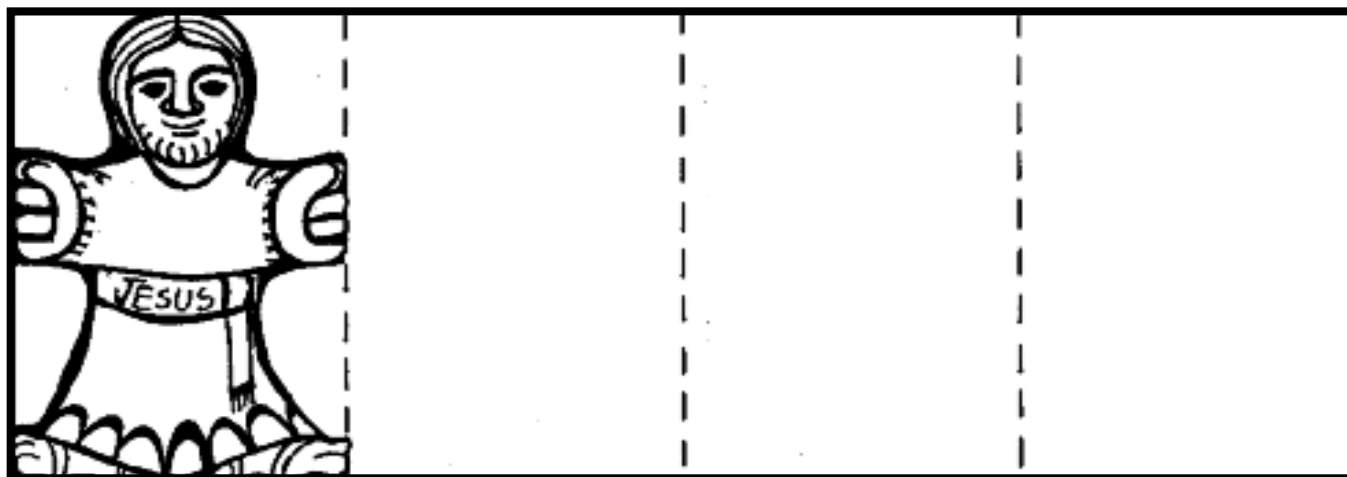
Objective: The children will identify themselves as followers of Jesus.

GOSPEL ACTIVITY: The Big Catch Mobile (pages 3-4) Direct the children to turn to page 4 and look at the illustration. It shows what happened when Simon and his friend dropped their net where Jesus told them to. Have the children cut out the illustration on the heavy lines and attach it to a wire coat hanger by the tabs, as illustrated on page 3. Cut out the three fish and attach them to the bottom of the hanger with differing lengths of yarn or thread. If you have pictures of the children, have them hang them by threads too, and make an all-class mobile of Jesus' followers.

CONCLUDING PRAYER Lead the children in singing "The Whole World's in God's Hands." Make up verses from today's lesson about the fish and Simon and the people on shore, as well as verses about your class and church or school.

EXTENDING ACTIVITY

FOLLOWERS OF JESUS Duplicate one copy of the strip below for each child. Talk together about followers of Jesus they know or know about. *Family members, black Americans they have been learning about in February, religious leaders, parish members, saints.* Have them fold the paper in an accordion fold, and cut around the edges of the Jesus figure. Be sure they don't cut the edges by the hands. They draw on the three blank figures their own likeness and those of any of the other followers of Jesus you talked about. Link the chains together for a classroom decoration.



OVERVIEW

Gospel Theme: Jesus tells us about being happy.

In the beatitudes Jesus counters the idea that wealth, abundance, laughter, and social acceptance are signs of God's blessings and their opposites—poverty, hunger, sorrow, and persecution—signs of being outside God's care. Many people find life and meaning in the midst of their struggles. God blesses all people and wants all people to be happy. *Promise* explores what makes children happy and how Jesus includes all people in his community.

Doctrinal Concept: Moral catechesis is a catechesis of the beatitudes, for the way of Christ is summed up in the beatitudes, the only path that leads to the eternal beatitude for which the human heart longs (*National Directory for Catechesis* 25H). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #942, 1718-19, 1726.

Materials: Scissors, paste.

NOTE: Children can often express their feelings much better in song and gesture than in words. *All My Feelings* by Janis White Dees has 14 songs that deal with being mad or sad, strong or afraid, ready to obey or rebellious. The songs are easy for children to learn and make their own. Call 1-800-232-5533 and ask for a free cassette of these songs.

SHARING LIFE STORIES

GATHER AND SING Gather the children in the open area. Lead them in the following song.

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands. (*clap, clap*)

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands. (*clap, clap*)

If you're happy and you know it, and you really want to show it,

if you're happy and you know it, clap your hands. (*clap, clap*)

Repeat substituting stomp your feet, touch your toes, shout hooray.

OPENING PRAYER Ask the children to sit down in a prayer circle and listen as you pray the following prayer. The children add names of people they thank God for.

Loving God, you want everyone to be happy. We can help make your wish for everyone's happiness come true. Thank you for all the people who help us, especially... Please bless us all today and all of this week. Thank you.

Objective: The children will explore what makes them happy.

COVER ACTIVITY: What Makes Me Happy? Stay in circle. Ask: What makes you happy? *Possible answers: friends, pets, family, nature, food, computer games, Disneyland.* Let children share freely. Distribute *Promise*. Have the children study the cover illustration and tell you who are the happy people. Identify the H as the beginning letter of *happy*. Have the children tell you which of the activities on the cover are ones that make them happy.

STORY: Too Many Friends (pages 2-3) Ask the children if they ever felt left out because of their size or age, because only one person could be chosen, because they were last in line. Invite the children to share how they felt when they were left out. Tell them you know a story about a girl who had a problem—she had so many stuffed-animal and doll friends they didn't all fit in her bed at night anymore. She didn't want to leave anyone out. Have children gather at the work tables and open *Promise* to pages 2 and 3. Read the name of the story and have the children identify the pictures across the top. Read the story to the children the first time even if the children can read. Have them follow the words and pictures line by line. The second time through, ask the children to read with you. If time permits, have two children take the parts of Mom and Tina and read to the class. Discuss the story and the solution. Ask the children what they think of Tina and her mom's solution.

CREATIVE DRAMA Gather the children in the open area. Divide them according to which of Tina's stuffed animals they would like to be:

Bear

Moose

Pig

Bunny

Pony

Assign each group a space in the room and ask them to go there. Each group will take a turn to show the other groups how they move, eat, and play.

Choose one child to be Tina. Tina goes to each group of animals and says, "Show me how you walk, how you eat, how you play together." After the animals show their stuff, Tina asks why this animal should be the one that sleeps with her. Give the children hints about how they might answer. The bear can give Tina bear hugs; the moose can protect her with his big horns; the pig is warm; the bunny is soft and furry; the pony can give her good dreams about going for rides. Tina then asks the animals how they sleep. When they show her how, she tiptoes away and moves on to the next group. When all the animal groups have had a turn, Tina leads them all to the Gospel storytelling area.

LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

GOSPEL STORYTELLING: The Beatitudes. Have the children look at page 4 while you tell the Gospel story:

Sometimes people think God must not care about people who are poor or hungry or sad. But Jesus said, “God blesses the poor. They are part of the family of God. God wants hungry people to have food. God wants people who are sad to laugh again. God wants all people to be happy. There is room for everyone in God’s family. And if we love everyone and do not leave people out of our community, then we will all be happy.”

MOVE AND SING Ask the children to stand and put their *Promise* copies on the floor in front of them. Repeat the opening song, this time adding less rambunctious movements such as touch your nose, pat your head. End with “If you’re happy and you know it, follow me.” Children pick up their *Promise* copies and follow you to the work area.

BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Objective: The children will recognize Jesus has a place for everyone in his community.

GOSPEL ACTIVITY: Jesus wants everyone to be together (page 4) Explore with the children whom Jesus includes in his family of followers. Suggest people that could be left out:

- Does Jesus want me (teacher) to be left out because my clothes are too old or I’m too grumpy?
- Does Jesus want ____ left out because she has blue eyes or ____ because his hair is curly?
- Would Jesus leave out someone who was new in our country and doesn’t know the same language we do?

Stress that Jesus doesn’t want anyone left out—kids we don’t happen to like, children and adults who look different or act differently from us, people of other religions. Direct the children’s attention to the picture of Jesus. Note how his arms and hands are open to welcome everyone into his love. Talk about the children at the top of the page and how happy they look to be loved by Jesus. Identify the children at the bottom. Discuss how we sometimes leave people out because of their color (African-American child), because of how they dress (child with all the right clothes), because they are shy or because they are too tall or short or fat or skinny. Have the children cut out the four shapes at the bottom of the page and paste them in the matching areas. Now these children are together with Jesus and the others.

CONCLUDING PRAYER Stand in the prayer circle and sing the following to the tune of “The more we get together.”

*We all are one big family,
one family, one family.
We all are one big family,
one family are we.*

*We care for each other,
each other, each other.
We care for each other,
one family are we.*

*We welcome each other,
each other, each other.
We welcome each other,
one family are we.*

EXTENDING ACTIVITIES

HAPPY BRACELET Give each child a strip of construction paper that is one inch wide and five or six inches long. The children draw hearts and the names or faces of people who love them inside the hearts. Have them help each other tape or staple the bracelet on their arms.

WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY? All sit in a circle. You roll a ball to a child and ask, “____, what makes you happy?” The child answers, then rolls the ball to someone else in the circle and asks the same question. Continue until everyone in the circle has a chance to answer. Make sure the children know no one has to answer. A child may simply roll the ball on to someone else and ask the question.

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Promise

Teaching Guide

February 21, 2010 • 1st Sunday of Lent

Deuteronomy 26.4-10; Romans 10.8-13; Luke 4.1-13

OVERVIEW

Gospel theme: Jesus faces temptation.

In Sunday's Gospel Jesus has to choose if he wishes to be a magician, a king, or a teacher who helps people learn how to love one another. *Promise* helps children recognize the importance of making loving choices. They will relate the practice of loving actions to the season of Lent.

Doctrinal Concept: Lent is the primary penitential season in the Church's liturgical year. It reflects the forty days Jesus spent in the desert in fasting and prayer (*National Directory for Catechesis* #37.A). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #68, 73, 538, 566, 804, 1194.

Materials: Markers, crayons or pencils, scissors.

SHARING LIFE STORIES

GATHER AND SING Gather the children in the open area. Stand in a circle and sing the following song to the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

We make choices every day,
every day, every day.

We make choices every day
at home, at school, at play.

Some are loving. Some are not.

Some are not. Some are not.

Some are loving. Some are not.

Unloving ones we stop!

(All clap hands loudly.)

OPENING PRAYER Ask the children to sit down in the circle as you pray the opening prayer. They respond "Amen."

Loving God, Lent is a time for us to choose loving actions. Help us learn about choices today. We are your children and we love you. Thank you.

Objective: The children will realize they can make choices.

WARMUP: I can choose. Have the children stay seated in the circle. Ask what choices they made before coming to school—getting up when called, eating breakfast, deciding what clothes to wear. Ask if they made any choices that were loving to others or to God, such as a morning prayer, being kind to a sibling, doing what a parent asked without whining. Be sure to ask what other way they could have acted so they get the idea they make choices all the time.

STORY: Jack's OOPS Day Tell the children the name of the story you will tell. Ask if they can guess what happens to Jack on OOPS day. If they listen, they will hear what kind of choices Jack makes.

It was early Monday morning. It was still dark outside. In Jack's bedroom the alarm clock was ringing. Very loudly. Jack pulled the pillow over his head to shut out the ringing. The next thing he knew, Mom was knocking on his door. Very loudly. "Get up, Jack," Mom said. "You'll be late for school." Jack tumbled out of bed and got dressed very fast. When he came into the kitchen for breakfast, Mom pointed to his shoes. "What's the matter with your socks?" Mom asked. "Oops," Jack said and went to his room to find socks that matched. When he was eating breakfast, Jack reached for the milk and sloshed his cereal all over the table. "Oops," Jack said. "I'll clean it up, Mom." Just then he looked out the kitchen window to see the school bus pulling away from the sidewalk. "Oops," Jack said. "I missed the bus, Mom. Will you drive me to school?" Mom grumbled a little, but she got out the car and drove Jack to school.

When Jack got to school, Mrs. Redden had already started reading class. "Get your book, Jack, and join us," Mrs. Redden said. "Oops," said Jack. "I was in such a hurry this morning, I forgot my backpack." Mrs. Redden was disappointed. "Then you will just have to sit and listen," she said.

Jack walked to the lunchroom with Tami and Abdul. "Oops," said Jack. "I forgot my lunch, too." Tami said, "You can have my apple." Abdul said, "You can have my chips." Jack said, "Thank you."

When Jack got home that afternoon, he said, "Mom, I had a bad day. I did 'Oops' things all day long." Jack told Mom all about his day, starting with his choice to stay in bed when the alarm went off. "You are right, Jack," Mom said. "You had an 'Oops' day, but tomorrow will be different. Let's make a chart for the 40 days of Lent, which begins today. Every time you make a good decision, we will draw a happy face on the chart for that day." Mom and Jack made the "Oops" chart. Mom said, "You made a good choice when you told me about your feelings, Jack, so we can put a happy face on the chart right away." And so they did.

Have the children stand and divide into two groups. The groups will take turns showing with their faces and bodies how Jack felt when:

1. the alarm rang and he turned over and went to sleep; his mom knocked on the door; he had to get dressed fast.
2. he put on the wrong socks and had to change them; he spilled his cereal all over the table and floor.
3. he looked out the window and saw the bus pulling away; his mom gave him a ride to school.
4. he didn't have his reading book; he didn't have his lunch, but his friends shared theirs.

Finally bring out your own calendar for Lent and draw a big happy face on it to show the children they had made a good decision to help each other tell Jack's story.

LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

Objective: The children will recognize that Jesus made choices.

COVER: Jesus makes choices. Come back to the story circle and distribute *Promise*. Ask the children to tell you about the cover illustration. *Jesus is sitting on a hill looking around him. There is a city at the bottom of the hill with a camel caravan coming to it. This is the city of Jericho, a big commercial center. This is where Zacchaeus, the little man who climbed a tree to see Jesus, lives. Off in the distance is another city with a big building in the middle. This city is Jerusalem and the building is the Temple.* Read the direction on the bottom right and give the children time to find the hidden objects.

GOSPEL STORYTELLING: Jesus makes a choice.

Talk to the children about Lent, a special time of year to grow in God's love, a special time of choices. Tell the children that Jesus had an important choice to make when he began his work. Should he become a powerful king or should he teach people to love each other? Ask children which choice they think Jesus made. Then tell this Gospel story.

One day the devil asked Jesus to turn stones into bread to prove how great he was. Jesus said, "People need more than food to be happy. They need to know about God, too." Then the devil gave Jesus another choice. "If you say I am great, I will make you ruler of the whole earth." Jesus said, "God is ruler of the earth. In my work I will be a friend, not a king." Then the devil challenged Jesus. "Jump off this tall building, and call angels to catch you. Prove you are God's Son." Jesus said, "I know God loves me. I don't have to show off who I am." The devil gave up and went away.

Ask: Why did Jesus make the choices he did? What would you do? Go back to the cover and have the children retell the story.

STRETCH AND MOVE Lead the children in a game of Simon Says. Stress that if they choose to listen carefully, they can play the game a long time. Have Simon ask the children to make a lot of large muscle movements to stretch out their bodies.

BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Objective: The children will recognize that Lent is a special time for making good choices.

GOSPEL ACTIVITY: We show love during Lent (page 2) Move to the work area. Write the word LENT in large letters on the chalkboard or newsprint. Ask the children if they know what Lent is. Accept all answers. Perhaps your class is meeting on Ash Wednesday and the children will have received ashes. Explain that ashes are meant to remind us we are human persons who need to think about how we behave and what we choose. Lent gives us time to practice being followers of Jesus. Explain that Lent lasts forty days

(we don't count the Sundays) and concludes with the feast of Easter.

Ask the children to turn to page 2 of *Promise*. This game can last for all of Lent. Ask for volunteers to pick a square and describe what that square has to do with Lent. Many parishes give money to help others. Families try to pray together more. Children help at home. Children do loving actions. Give up candy and soda. Show love to parents. Pray for others. Share with others. Be helpful. Share things we have. Thank God for creation. Have fun together. Give up video games. Attend Mass. Share treats. Take care of creation.

Students should number the squares 1 to 16, then read the instructions at the top of the page. Use your copy to play the game as a class. If there are Lenten activities your children would rather do, make new squares and paste them over the ones that don't fit your group. You may also enlarge the page on a copier, so there is room for the initials of everyone in your group.

Be sure the children know they should show this page to their parents and tell them how they can play the game at home during Lent. Plan to ask them about their experiences during future classes.

Objective: The children will create a prayer book.

MY LENT PRAYER BOOK (pages 3-4) If you do not have time for this activity during your *Promise* class, have the children simply cut and fold the pages into a booklet and complete it at home. If you do this, ask them to bring the booklet to class next week, so the children can share the pages with each other. The gifts of God in creation on pages 2-3 of the booklet are:

A apple	N nest
B butterfly	O owl
C cat and cattails	P pig
D dog	Q quail
E eggs	R rain and rabbit
F flowers and frog	S squirrel and sun
G girl and grass	T turtle
H horse and heron	U umbrella
I iguana and ivy	V vegetables
J jay	W water and worm
K kitten	X fence
L llama	Y tree
M mushroom	Z zebra on the girl's shirt

CONCLUDING PRAYER Gather in a prayer circle with the prayer booklets. Read aloud the large-type sentences on each page. Conclude by thanking God for your time together and blessing the children as they begin Lent.

OVERVIEW

Gospel Theme: Jesus shows us how to change and grow.

In Sunday's Gospel Peter, James, and John glimpse Jesus transfigured in glory—a vision of him as God's beloved Son that helps them believe in Jesus. *Promise* invites children to use their imaginations in regard to themselves and to the world around them.

Doctrinal Concept: Conversion to Christ and communion with him lead the faithful to adopt his disposition of prayer and reflection... Prayer should be the ordinary environment for all catechesis so that the knowledge and practice of the Christian life may be understood and celebrated in its proper context (*National Directory for Catechesis* #20.4). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #5554-56, 568, 780, 2645, 2649.

Materials: Pencils, crayons or markers, scissors, paper punch, construction paper, yarn.

SHARING LIFE STORIES

GATHER AND SING Gather the children in the open area. Stand in a circle and sing "Jesus, I Will Stay With You," from the *Promise* CD. The words are as follows:

Refrain:

Jesus, I will stay with you.

Close to you, Jesus.

I will always stay with you.

Close to you, Jesus.

Verse 1:

Just like Mary, I will stay
here beside you, every day.

Verse 2:

All I have I give to you.
Help me, Lord, in all I do.

Verse 3:

Bless my friends and family.
Bless them all as you bless me.

OPENING PRAYER Ask the children to sit in the circle as you pray the opening prayer. They respond "Amen."

Loving God, you have given us so many wonderful gifts. The gift to see, to hear, to feel, to taste, to smell. Thank you, also, for the wonderful gift of our imaginations. We will use them today to praise you.

STORY: Fly Away Ask the children to sit quietly as if they were sitting on a magic carpet. They close their eyes as you sprinkle imagination dust on them. Now they will hear about the wonderful trip Mr. Herder took with his first grade class.

One beautiful, sunny day Mr. Herder took his class to the playground and gave them each a balloon. Each balloon had a child's name on it. "Oh, look!" said Sarah. "My balloon has a rainbow. I love rainbows." Darrin's had a red maple leaf painted on it, because he used to live in Canada. Mr. Herder's balloon was white with a black dog's face. Mr. Herder loved his dog, Charley.

All the children gathered around Mr. Herder, holding tight to the strings of their balloons. "We're off on an imaginary adventure!" said Mr. Herder. "Don't fly too close to each other." The balloons slowly began to rise and the children's feet left the ground. Soon they were above the treetops. A gentle breeze blew them over the playground. "Look! There's my house!" Suzanne cried. "My mom is waving at us," said Zach.

The wind blew the children higher and higher. Soon they crossed the Atlantic Ocean and were sailing over a beautiful green country. Beneath them giraffes were grazing. Monkeys slid down their long necks. Monkeys were swinging on elephants' trunks, too. The children's balloons went lower so they could see everything that was happening. "This must be Africa," Angie said. "This is where my family came from."

The wind lifted the balloons high again, and soon the children could see kangaroos hopping and koala bears playing with boomerangs. "Australia!" everyone said at once.

"Where are we going next, Mr. Herder?" the children asked. "Home!" Mr. Herder answered. The wind lifted the balloons again and blew them home to the playground where their parents were waiting. "Thank you, Mr. Herder. That was fun!" the children said and they all went home to tell their families about their trip.

STRETCH AND MOVE Gather the children in the open area. Have them move like the animals in the story. They walk with long necks stretched out and head held high like the giraffes. They lumber along like the elephants, trying to get the monkeys off their trunks. They hop like the kangaroos and throw boomerangs like the koala bears. They then hold on their balloon strings and land gently in the Gospel area.

LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

Objective: The children will recognize that their imagination is a special gift from God.

COVER ACTIVITY: I can imagine. Gather the children in the story circle. Distribute *Promise*. Have the children look at the cover, read the theme statement aloud, and ask the children what they imagine they would see if they were up in a balloon over their city or countryside. Give them time to respond and then ask what it would feel like to be an astronaut and walk in space? What will come up in the

garden? What picture they would paint? Enjoy the children's speculation in these areas.

GOSPEL STORYTELLING: Imagine the Future (page 2) Direct the children to turn to page 2. Read the title and be sure the children understand what future means. Have them look at the top row of pictures. See if anyone identifies President Lincoln. Read the sentence at the top of the page. As the children follow along tell them the story of Lincoln—his love of learning, his job as a clerk in a store in a small town, his study to be a lawyer which led to politics and eventually to his election as president. Ask: Did Abraham Lincoln ever imagine himself as president when he was little? When he was reading and studying? When he was living in a small town and helping people as a lawyer?

Direct the children's attention to the middle row of pictures, a review of two previous Gospels and a simple telling of the Transfiguration. Read the sentence at the middle of the page. Tell how Jesus' friends and neighbors tried to figure out who Jesus was going to be when he grew up.

When Jesus was little, three kings came and brought him important presents. When he was about 30 years old he gave his first sermon in his hometown synagogue, which we heard about in the Gospel story in January. Then one day Jesus took his friends Peter, James, and John to a special place. There Jesus let his glory as God's Son show just a little bit, and Peter, James, and John were overwhelmed. It was the most amazing thing they had ever experienced. Jesus did this because he knew that he would have to die on the cross before very long, and he wanted his friends to know he would rise up and be glorified, too. He helped them imagine how great he would be.

Talk about what the children imagine for themselves. What do they want to be when they grow up? Share your story about how you imagined your future and ask them to share their imaginings. After this discussion direct children to take *Promise* to their work area and draw a picture at the bottom left of page 2 of themselves as they are today and at the bottom right of themselves as they imagine they might be someday. Go around the room as they work and assist children who need help.

BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Objective: The children will practice using their imaginations in prayer.

ACTIVITY: My Prayer Pocket (pages 3-4) Have the children turn to page 4 and look at the prayer pocket. Explain that there are many people and events in the world that we need to pray about. Ask them to take a moment and think of something or someone we need to pray for. Bring out the current events of the day in addition to their answers. Distribute scissors and have them cut off the strip at the top of the page and cut on the heavy dark lines to separate the four cards. Have them display the cards in front of them. Take them one at a time and explain that each symbol represents something or someone we can pray for. *The group of people represents our families and friends, and other people of the world we hear about. The dove is a sign of peace. The food reminds us of all we have to eat. The hospital picture reminds us of people who are ill.* Turn the cards over one at a time and read the prayers on the backs of them aloud together.

Next have the children cut out the prayer pocket circle and trace around it on construction paper. Show the children how to cut off the top part of their prayer circle and place the bottom part on the construction paper circle. Go around the room punching holes and distributing yarn so each child can lace the two circles together.

If you do not have time for this activity, it makes a good one to send home for the children to do with their parents. The directions on page 3 ensure that a parent will be able to help the child complete the activity and understand its purpose.

CLOSING PRAYER Ask a child to volunteer his or her prayer pocket for a class prayer. Take turns drawing cards from the pocket and sharing as a class people or concerns for which you and the children wish to pray. Say the *Our Father* to conclude this praying.

EXTENDING ACTIVITY

THE OUR FATHER Teach the children the following gestures to the *Our Father*.

Our Father... *hands raised in prayer*

Your kingdom come *hands crossed over heart*

Your will be done... *arms in circle as if embracing earth*

Give us this day... *hands ready to receive as in Holy Communion*

Forgive us... *shake hands with neighbors*

Lead us... *hands clasped in prayer*

But deliver us... *hands raised in prayer*

Amen!

OVERVIEW

Gospel Theme: God wants us to grow.

Children of *Promise* age are very much aware of how they are growing. Physically they are getting taller and are losing teeth. Intellectually and socially, their world is constantly expanding. They are more aware of who they are and of others. They are greatly influenced by values they are exposed to both at home and at school as they develop their sense of right and wrong and their understanding of consequences. Relationships become important as they discover the joy of friendship.

In Sunday's Gospel Jesus tells a parable about growth. A landowner wants to cut down a barren fig tree but the gardener wants to fertilize and cultivate it one more year. *Promise* invites the children to thank God for all life and for all forms of growing.

Doctrinal Concept: Catechesis links human experience to the revealed word of God, helping people ascribe Christian meaning to their own existence. Catechesis helps them relate the Christian message to the most profound questions in life: the existence of God, the destiny of the human person, the origin and end of history, the truth about good and evil, the meaning of suffering and death (*National Directory for Catechesis* #29.A). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #293-94, 301, 315, 322, 545.

Materials: Pencils, crayons, or markers, scissors, paste or tape, paper cup or small can, bean seeds, soil. Separate pages 1-2 of *Promise* from pages 3-4 before class.

SHARING LIFE STORIES

GATHER AND SING Gather the children in a circle in the open area. Teach them the following words to the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

Jesus helps us grow each day,
grow each day, grow each day.
Jesus helps us grow each day
with his gift of love.

After the children have learned the song, demonstrate how they should all squat down, then rise slowly, like a plant growing, on the first three lines of the song. On the last line they stand tall with their arms stretched up high, palms open and flat.

OPENING PRAYER Ask the children to sit in their place in the circle as you pray the opening prayer. They respond "Amen."

Loving God, thank you for our lovely world. Thank you for the flowers and trees and bushes and vegetables that grow in it. Thank you for making us strong and growing. We want to grow in love of you, too.

Objective: The children will recognize signs of growth in themselves and in God's world.

COVER ACTIVITY: What helps me grow? Move to the work area. Ask the children ways they have grown since you started being a *Promise* class. *Taller, heavier, new teeth, stronger, older.* They will have lots of contributions. Distribute *Promise* and colored pencils or crayons. Read aloud the cover sentences. Give the children time to find and color the hidden pictures. Clockwise from upper left: *bed (sleep) a woman who can be mother, grandmother, teacher, nurse, and others, apple, sun, church, a man who can represent a father figure, teacher, or friend, book, water, milk or juice, carrot, sandwich.* If some children do not know where to begin, pair them with more confident children. Call time after a few minutes and discuss with the children about what they found. Try to give each child the opportunity to contribute.

ACTIVITY: What makes the tree grow? (page 2) Ask the children to turn to page 2. Tell them this story about how a tree grows. They draw on the page as you talk.

Once upon a time, there was a lawn with wonderful dark rich soil. (*Have the children color the lawn at the bottom of the page a rich brown or black or red—whatever the soil of your area is like.*) A group of schoolchildren decided to plant a tree on that lawn so there would be shade for all the children who would come after them. So they planted the tree you see here. The sun shone on the tree almost every day. (*Pause while children draw a big sun in the sky.*) Some days it rained. (*Pause*) The grass began to grow on the lawn beneath the tree and flowers grew in the grass. (*Pause*) Soon leaves came out on the tree. (*Pause*) When it got very hot in the summer the children watered the tree. (*Help children decide whether they would use a hose or watering can or pail.*) In the autumn the tree had little apples on it. (*Pause*) The children were so proud of their tree that each one drew a picture of himself or herself under the tree. (*Give children time to draw themselves in the picture.*)

Have children share their pictures with each other in pairs retelling all the ways the tree grew and what helped it grow.

STRETCH AND MOVE Gather in the open area. Reread or retell the story of how the tree grows. The children will pantomime the actions. End with the children seated in a circle in the area you set aside for the proclamation of the Gospel.

LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

GOSPEL STORYTELLING: God wants us to grow.

This Sunday's parable is difficult for both children and adults, because it is about an agricultural situation unfamiliar to us. Prepare the children by calling on several of them by and asking them to respond to the following situations.

"_____, you have a shirt that has holes in the elbows and two buttons missing and a big stain on the front. What should you do with that shirt?" Accept whatever answer the child gives. Most likely he or she will want to get a new one.

"_____, you and your mom planted tulip bulbs last fall but nothing is coming up where you planted them. Should you dig up the ground and start over next fall with different bulbs?"

After these warm-up activities, tell the children this Sunday's Gospel parable.

Jesus told his friends this story. A man had a fig tree growing on his property. He kept looking for the tree to have figs that he could eat, but it never did. Finally the man said to his gardener, "Cut that worthless tree down." But the gardener said, "Please let it stay another year. I will give it fertilizer and take special care of it. Maybe next year it will have figs for you to eat."

Ask: What kind of person is the owner of the property? *Impatient, makes decisions, thinks he did enough for the tree.* What kind of person is the gardener? *Patient, likes trees and wants to give them a lot of chances, is willing to try a new way to help the tree.* Who is like God in the parable—the owner or the gardener?

SING AND STRETCH Play "And It Was Good" from the *Promise* music CD to provide an activity break. Children can use creative drama techniques to act out the verses.

BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Objective: The children will plant a seed and tend it. **GOD HELPS EVERYTHING GROW** (page 3-4)

Distribute pages 3-4 to the children. Explain that they will plant a seed as a reminder of how God helps everything grow. Give each child a paper cup filled with soil and a few bean seeds. Identify the ruler and tell them that they will use it to measure the growth of their plant. Direct the children to write their names on the child's sign on page 4, cut out the figure on the heavy lines, and paste or tape it so it stands as shown in the diagram. Follow the directions for planting the bean seed on page 3.

CONCLUDING PRAYER Gather the children in a prayer circle. To the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" sing:

*Jesus helps us grow each day,
grow each day, grow each day.
Jesus helps us grow each day
with his gift of love.*

Go around the circle giving each child a chance to thank God for something or someone that helps him or her grow. Repeat the song after this sharing.

EXTENDING ACTIVITY

MEASURING You will need a large ball of string for this activity. Have each child stand against a wall or door. Cut a piece of string to represent the child's height. Put the string in an envelope with the child's name and the date. Send them home for the children's families to keep or keep them in your possession and bring them out again in May to see how much growth has happened. If you have plants in the classroom, let the children measure them.



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