

## OVERVIEW

### Gospel Theme: Jesus helps his friends.

The wedding celebration at Cana is this Sunday's Gospel. It is at this joyous human celebration, John's Gospel tells us, that Jesus begins to reveal who he is to the world. Jesus chooses to perform this first of his signs about who he is at a marriage. He honors the human commitment of two people because it tells us about what God's commitment to us is like. Jesus also does this sign at the request of his mother. This tells us that Jesus has come to be a servant, a theme that is prominent in John's Gospel, which culminates in Jesus' washing his friends' feet at the Last Supper.

*Seeds* focuses on ways families enjoy and celebrate each other. Children learn about God's love by experiencing love in their families.

**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* #265, 985, 1656-57, 2252.

**Materials:** Scissors, pencils, crayons, some kind of markers for the board game. You may wish to use dice or spinners rather than the numbered pieces provided on page 3.

## SHARING LIFE STORIES

**1. GATHERING** Gather standing in a prayer circle. Sing "One Family" from the *Seeds* music CD or sing another song the children know.

**2. OPENING PRAYER** Have the children remain standing quietly as you pray this opening prayer. They respond "Amen."

*Dear Jesus, we are here together with our Seeds family of boys and girls. We want to learn about you and about how you like and help your friends. Help us to be good listeners and good sharers.*

**Objective: The children will appreciate that weddings are celebrations of and for the whole family.**

**3. STORYTELLING: Jonah Saves the Day** As an introduction to this week's story, ask the children if they have been to a wedding. Some may have participated as part of the wedding party. Give them time to discuss their wedding experiences, then read, or tell in your own words, this story.

*Jonah's godmother, Julie, was getting married. Everyone in Jonah's family was invited to the wedding. Everyone had an important part in the wedding, except Jonah. His mom had a brand new beautiful dress and would get to stand up in the front of the church with Julie. His dad was going to videotape everything, so he would be way up front, too. Jonah's brother, Kevin, was going to be the ring bearer. Kevin had a new suit and tie. Everyone but Jonah had an important job.*

*"You will get to sit close to the front with Grandma and Grandpa," Jonah's mom told him.*

*"But that's not an important job," Jonah said. "That's just sitting."*

*Finally the day for the wedding came. Jonah's mom spent all morning getting her hair fixed. She came home with white flowers sticking out of a bunch of curls. Jonah's dad loaded the video camera, checked the batteries, and polished everyone's shoes. Kevin practiced walking with the pillow he had to carry. But Jonah just sat.*

*When they got to church, it was no better. More people had important jobs, but Jonah just sat in the back pew waiting for Grandma and Grandpa. He saw people deliver lots of flowers. Everyone said how pretty they were, especially the bouquet that Julie would carry. A woman Jonah didn't know began pinning flowers on some of the men. She gave a basket to Jonah's mom. She set Julie's bouquet on a little table right by the door.*

*"There is nothing for me to do," Jonah said to himself. "This is boring," But he did as his mom had asked, and just sat.*

*Some people came in carrying guitars. They leaned their guitar cases against the wall, right by the flowers. One man moved Julie's bouquet to the floor, so he could open his case and get out some music. Then they all went to stand in front by the organ.*

*Just then Grandpa and Grandma came in the door. When they saw Jonah, they gave him big hugs. The usher held his arm for Grandma to take. Grandpa took Jonah's hand and they all went up the aisle together. The usher put them in the second pew from the front.*

*Now the music started. Everyone turned around to look down the aisle. Jonah was on the end so he could see everyone. They were all lined up, ready to come down the aisle. First was Kevin with his pillow. A girl with flowers in her hair and a big basket of flowers in her hands was standing next to him. Behind Kevin was Mom, looking very pretty. But where was Julie? Grandma looked down the aisle, too. "It looks like Julie can't find her bouquet," she said to Grandpa.*

*"I know where it is!" said Jonah. He got out of the pew and walked very fast to the back of church. He passed*

*Kevin, and the girl with flowers, and his mom. He went right to the little table, and sure enough, there on the floor was Julie's bouquet. Jonah picked it up and handed it to Julie.*

*"Jonah, you saved the day!" Julie said, and gave him a big hug. Her veil tickled his face.*

*Jonah walked back to the front and got back in the pew with Grandma and Grandpa. He was very happy that he had done an important job, too.*

Ask the children to show you with their bodies and faces how Jonah felt when everyone had a job but him. How did he feel when he found the bouquet for Julie? How did Julie feel when she couldn't find her flowers? When Jonah brought them to her? Conclude by saying Jonah was important because he did what his mom asked him to. That is why he knew where the flowers were.

**4. STRETCH AND MOVE** Ask the children to gather in a big circle holding hands. They then drop hands and take three steps backward. This leaves plenty of room between them for this movement activity. Begin by saying, "Simon says, touch your toes." The children respond by doing what Simon says. Continue with swing your arms, run in place, hop like a bunny, sleep like a cat, shake hands with your neighbors. Make the game more fun by not saying "Simon says" occasionally. The children should not do the activity unless Simon asks.

## LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

**5. GOSPEL RITUAL** Gather in the area you set aside for the telling of the Gospel story. Sing "Two Little Ears" from the *Seeds* music CD to get the children ready to hear the Gospel message. If you do not have the CD, have the children say the words after you and do the appropriate gestures.

Two little ears to hear God's word.

Two little eyes to see God's world.

Two little hands to work each day.

Alleluia! Hear me pray.

**Objective: The children will understand that Jesus' miracle is a sign of God's love for human persons.**

**6. GOSPEL STORYTELLING: Jesus Helps at a Wedding** Have the children sit in a circle and tell them this story about a wedding that Jesus went to.

*Jesus and his mother and lots of Jesus' friends were invited to a wedding in the town of Cana. Cana was close to Nazareth where Jesus lived, so he went. After the wedding ceremony there was a party. The bridegroom served wine to all his guests. There must have been too many people there, because Jesus' mother, Mary, noticed that there wasn't enough wine for everybody. She told Jesus. Jesus said, "I don't know if I should help." But Mary told the caterers to do whatever Jesus said. Jesus said to the caterers, "Fill some of the wine jars with water." The caterers did what he said. "Now take the water to the chief caterer," Jesus said. When the chief caterer tasted the water, it had become wine. He told his workers to give everyone a glass. It was the best wine they had ever tasted.*

Distribute *Seeds*. Have children retell the story to you using the cover illustration. Stress that Jesus did a loving act, not just a show-off one. This act tells us Jesus wants to be our friend and help us.

**7. STRETCH AND SING** Play "Follow Me" from the *Seeds* music CD to provide a transition to the work area. Lead the children in the motions the song asks.

## BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

**Objective: The children will recognize the importance of families in their lives.**

**8. FAMILY FUN GAME** Have the children open to pages 2-3 of *Seeds* on their work tables. Discuss all the family activities that are shown on the game board. After the children tell you what a family is doing together, have them count the number of family members and tell who they think they are. Children who come from one-parent or blended families will be able to find a family like theirs.

If you are going to use the numbered squares to play the game, have the children cut them out and place them face down next to their game board. Play this game together as a class with each child using his or her own board. You select a number or have a child select it. All the children will move the same number of moves. If they land on a family activity space, they describe the activity. If they land on a "chute or ladder" space they move their marker up or down as the space indicates. If your children are able to play together in pairs, give them time to play another round of the game that way.

**9. CREATIVE DRAMA** Talk with the children again about the activities the families in the board game were doing together. Ask what their families like to do together. Then have them stand and spread out to allow themselves lots of room. Call out some of the activities they said, such as picnicking or biking, and let them mime for you how they do that activity. Choose simple activities they can act out such as making cookies, going to a movie, eating popcorn, fishing, or riding in a car to visit someone.

**10. MY FAMILY** Distribute crayons or pencils and give the children time to draw their family doing an activity together in the frame on page 4. Children may wish to draw families in identical shirts such as a team might wear.

**11. CLOSING PRAYER AND SONG** Gather in a prayer circle and ask the children to stand quietly as you pray the following prayer or one in your own words.

*Dear Jesus, thank you for my family. My family will always love and serve you. Please bless us every day. Amen.*

**12. SNACK** Serve a simple cake, but let the children serve it nicely, pretending they are at a wedding.

## OVERVIEW

### **Gospel Theme: Jesus brings us God's good news.**

In Sunday's Gospel Jesus goes to the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth. There he reads to the congregation from the writings of the prophet Isaiah: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me; God has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor." Jesus then announces that this scripture is fulfilled in him. He is the glad tidings, the good news.

Young children understand good news. Dad brings good news home from work. Mom tells the good news that grandparents or other relatives are coming to visit. Children have good news about friends, about school, about something new they learned to do. *Seeds* helps young children recognize the good news they experience in their lives and how they are bringers of good news. They can then understand the importance of the good news that Jesus brought to all of us.

**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* #123, 543-44, 561, 2637, 2648-49.

**Materials:** Crayons, colored pencils, or markers.

## SHARING LIFE STORIES

**1. GATHER AND SING** Begin class by gathering the children in a circle. Lead the children in the song about seeds and growing from the *Seeds* music CD. If you do not have the CD, sing "This Little Light of Mine" with the children. Make up verses that fit your group.

**2. OPENING PRAYER** Have the children remain standing and join hands while you say the following prayer. The children respond "Amen."

*Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to bring us your good news. Help us to listen to what Jesus is teaching us today.*

**Objective: The children will share good news in their lives.**

**3. GOOD NEWS FOR EVERYONE** Gather the children sitting in a story circle. Have some good news that you can share with the children in this session, such as a new book to read to them, a special person who will visit the class, or a flower to decorate the room. Tell the children that you have some good news for them. Make them guess, giving clues. Then tell them your good news. Ask the children if they

have any good news to share with you. Possibilities: *A new baby, a birthday coming up, guest, something smart a pet did.* Give each child a chance to share good news with the class. Discuss the happiness that good news brings.

Tell the good news about each child by playing this game. You say: "I know some good news about someone." Give them clues and make them guess who the child is. Example: *I know a child who makes us laugh. The child brought a bird to class. The child is a girl. She has red hair and a blue sweater.* Children can guess which of the class you are describing. Continue until you have described every child as good news for the group.

**4. STRETCH AND SING** Use "God Gave Me Hands" from the *Seeds* music CD or say the words below aloud to the class. They can make the gestures and sing along.

*God gave me hands that clap, clap, clap.*

*God gave me hands that clap, clap, clap.*

*Clap, clap, clap. Clap, clap, clap.*

*Thank you, God, for hands that clap!*

*God gave me toes that tap, tap, tap.*

*God gave me eyes that blink, blink, blink.*

*God gave me lips that shh, shh, shh.*

*God gave me friends to hug, hug, hug.*

## LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

**Objective: The children will understand that Jesus tells the good news that we are all members of God's loving family.**

**5. GOSPEL STORYTELLING: Jesus tells good news** Distribute *Seeds* and ask the children to describe the cover illustration. *Jesus is standing at a table with a scroll opened up. He is talking to the people. It looks like a holy place. Everyone is listening very intently. One child has hurt his leg and needs a crutch.* Explain to the children that Jesus is reading from the Bible. He is in a building that was called a synagogue. Explain that it is like our church and that Jesus is reading God's words just as the priest does at Mass each Sunday. Tell Sunday's Gospel story about Jesus telling God's good news.

*When Jesus was a child, he grew up in a small town called Nazareth. He lived in a neighborhood where he played with other children, went to parties with his family and friends, studied, and went to the synagogue to praise God. When he grew up, Jesus read from the holy writings of his people at Sabbath services. Sometimes he was chosen to explain the words to everyone. One day Jesus read these words at the synagogue.*

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. God sent me to bring good news to poor people, and to those in prison, and to people who are blind or sick or picked on.”*

*When Jesus finished reading, he rolled up the scroll and said, “I am the person God has sent to make these words come true.” Everyone who was listening was very glad that God had sent Jesus to bring them such good news.*

Have the children look at the cover illustration again and retell the story in their own words. Conclude by asking: What is God’s good news that Jesus came to tell? *Everyone belongs in God’s family. No one will be left out.*

## BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

**Objective:** The children will share good news in their lives.

**6. I TELL GOOD NEWS** Gather the children in the work area with their copies of *Seeds*. Ask them for all the ways they hear good news. *Somebody tells them, letters in the mail, television, radio, telephone, e-mail on the computer.* Direct them to spread open *Seeds* so pages 2 and 3 are facing up. Read the headline for the page. Distribute crayons, colored pencils, or markers. Tell the children you will describe something on the page. They have to listen hard. When they find the good news you are describing, they put an X next to it. Ask them to be very quiet so everyone can hear.

**1.** Someone’s mom is coming home from work. Her daughter has some good news from school. Put an X by the mother and daughter. What is the good news the little girl is telling?

**2.** Two friends are playing in a sandbox and one has good news to tell the other child. Put an X. What is the good news?

**3.** A Cub Scout is delivering a flyer to his neighbor. The flyer tells about a food collection for the poor. Put an X. What will you give?

**4.** One child is holding up another so she can put her special invitation into the mailbox. Put an X. What is the good news on the invitation?

**5.** A child is sitting at the computer reading an e-mail letter. Put an X. What is the good news? Who sent it?

**6.** Two children hear music and run to taste the good news. Put an X. What kind of ice cream do they buy?

**7.** One child is telling a friend about the new kittens. The mother cat is watching very closely. Put an X. Where is the mother cat? Which kitty would you choose?

**8.** A girl is talking on the phone to her grandma and telling her about school. Put an X. What is the good news on the paper?

**7. STRETCH AND SING** Play and sing “God Gave Me Hands” again to give the children a break from sitting and talking. Or substitute some game or song you know works well with them.

**Objective:** The children will learn to pray a thank-you prayer to God in sign language.

**8. I PRAY WITH MY HANDS** Gather in the story circle with page 4 of *Seeds* face up before each child. Read the title: *I pray with my hands*. Explain to the children that there are children and grown-ups who can’t hear very well. They have a special language that helps them hear good news and tell good news to others. This special language is called sign language. The fingers and hands do the talking. Have the children look at the upper two pictures—the *sign language for thank you*. Ask the children to put the tips of their fingers against their lips and throw them forward, as if they were throwing a kiss. Practice this a few times. Then practice the word for God and put the two words together. Some children may know these words already, and be able to demonstrate to the class.

**9. CLOSING PRAYER AND SONG** Gather the children in the prayer circle and ask them to stand and pray the good news with their hands. Make the *Sign of the Cross* together; then have the children sign the prayer while you say it.

*Thank you, God,  
for the rain,  
for the sun,  
and for the world.*

Add another dimension, singing, to your praise of God by using the thank-you song from the *Seeds* music CD.

*Thank you for the world so sweet.  
Thank you for the food we eat.  
Thank you for the birds that sing  
Thank you, God, for everything.*

**10. SNACK** Serve a variety of cookies or crackers. As the children choose a particular cookie or cracker, ask them to tell you what good news from *Seeds* class they will take home today.

## EXTENDING ACTIVITIES

**11.** Children take turns pretending they are Jesus reading in the synagogue. They tell the class some good news Jesus wants us to hear. Roll a long strip of paper on two pencils or dowels to create a scroll for the children to unroll when it is their turn.

**12.** Have the children plan a special *Seeds* party for their parents or for another group of children. Give them crayons and paper to make invitations. Decorate the tables with flowers they have made. Plan a simple snack—cookies that the children can help make or a variety of fruit. At the party each child can introduce one of the guests and tell what is good news about that person. Your *Seeds* children can teach the sign language prayer to the guests.

## OVERVIEW

### Gospel Theme: Jesus asks us to have faith.

In last Sunday's Gospel Jesus announces the good news to his neighbors in the Nazareth synagogue. He reads from the Bible where it says God will send someone to stand up for the poor, the blind, and the oppressed. Then Jesus tells the people that he is the One God has sent.

In this Sunday's Gospel Jesus' friends and neighbors listen to Jesus but begin to doubt that he, a person they know well, can be the one God has sent. When Jesus accuses them of hard-heartedness, they throw him out of the synagogue and even try to kill him.

This story of rejection sets the scene in Luke's Gospel for Jesus' ultimate rejection at his trial and crucifixion. This topic is too hard for the young child to grasp; *Seeds* instead focuses on the loving, healing actions God sent Jesus to do. In their own life experiences, the children will explore the sense of hearing and the skill of listening, which are ways they discover God's world, Jesus' message, and God's people.

It is sometimes difficult for preschoolers to be good listeners. They are very active and have a hard time sitting still to listen. Also, we adults often do not speak to children in a way they can understand. *Seeds* gives the children opportunity to participate in age-appropriate activities which sharpen their listening skills.

**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, 134, 852, 2774-75.

**Materials:** Scissors, one scarf per child to use as blindfolds, objects that make noise—an alarm clock, a zipper, a roll of tape, a bowl with water in it to splash, and other such things. Provide used business-sized envelopes so the children can take home their listening game pieces.

## SHARING LIFE STORIES

**Objective:** The children will practice listening.

**1. GATHER AND SING** Set the scene for the lesson by calling the children to the circle in a whispering voice. Have them stand together a little distance from you. You whisper, "If you can hear me, come to the circle and raise your hand." Perhaps no one will hear you. Say a bit louder but still in a whisper, "If you can hear me, come to the circle and raise both hands." In a near normal voice say, "If you

can hear me, come to the circle and pat your tummy." Finally say quite loudly, "If you can hear me, come to the circle and pat your head."

When the children have all gathered, ask them to join in the *Seeds* song, or some other gathering song, in a very soft voice. Next sing the song in a loud, outdoor voice. Ask the children which voice they liked best to listen to? Were they able to hear the loud and soft sounds?

**2. OPENING PRAYER** Have the children sit quietly with their hands in their laps while you say the opening prayer. They respond "Amen."

*Jesus, thank you for bringing us together today. Help us to be good listeners and learners. We want to hear your word and be your followers.*

**3. STORYTELLING: Skippy the Skunk** Have the children stay in the story circle. Tell them you have a story about a skunk. Ask them to guess what the skunk does in the story. Some may suspect that a skunk's reputation for smelling bad will be part of the story. Read the following story slowly and with a lot of energy so the children stay involved.

Skippy Skunk lived in a big forest full of trees, plants, animals, and bugs. No one ever talked to him or played with him because Skippy was a skunk. Skippy watched the rabbits all hopping together in the clearing. He watched the squirrels and chipmunks scamper up and down the trees. He watched the big deer and the little fawns drink from the stream that ran through the forest and then run off, all chasing each other. Even the bugs had a good time jumping from leaf to leaf and climbing up and down the bumps of bark on an old log. But none of the animals would talk with Skippy or play with him because Skippy was a skunk.

Skippy didn't smell bad all the time. It was only when he was afraid that he made the special skunk smell. That way his enemies ran away. But the other animals in the woods teased Skippy, made fun of him, and would never, never play with him.

Skippy was always lonely. He had no one to run and play with in the forest. No one would listen to his stories. Skippy felt his only friends were the sun, the moon, the clouds, and the trees.

One day when Skippy was resting on his favorite rock and watching the clouds, he noticed something odd. Huge, dark, billowing clouds were rising up out of the forest. "Something's wrong," Skippy said to himself. "Clouds don't come from the forest, they come from the sky. I will go and see what is happening."

Skippy hurried deep into the forest. Before long he saw bright orange flames shooting up between the trees. Then he heard the crackle of leaves and twigs burning. "A forest fire," Skippy said. "I will warn the other creatures in the woods. Everyone must run for their lives."

Skippy scurried away as fast as he could go. He passed the old log where the bugs were playing. "Get underground, bugs," Skippy yelled in his loudest skunk voice. "Forest fire! Forest fire! Hurry!"

The bugs dived into their holes in the ground and piled dirt in the doorway. “Good,” Skippy thought, “the bugs will be safe underground until the fire passes. But, I can’t stop. I must warn the others.”

Skippy ran to the clearing where the other small animals played and the deer were drinking. “Forest fire! Forest fire!” Skippy shouted. “Run! Hurry!”

“Where do we go, Skippy?” an old rabbit yelled. “We can’t swim across the river.”

“Follow me,” Skippy said. “There is a place where a tree fell across the river. You can cross there, but the fire can’t.” The deer and the squirrels leaped into the water and swam across, but the rabbits and chipmunks followed Skippy. They didn’t say, “Skippy stinks,” or “Phew!” or anything. They just followed Skippy and yelled as he did, “Forest fire, forest fire!” warning all the birds and other creatures of the forest.

Skippy led the group that followed him to where a huge tree had fallen across the river. Skippy was panting so hard that he could only motion the little animals to scamper across on the tree. He pointed and prodded until all the animals had joined the deer on the river bank. Then Skippy ran to safety with the others. The animals all stood together, watching the fire in disbelief.

“Skippy, you saved us!” a small chipmunk chirped.

“I’m sure glad that we listened to you,” huffed an old deer. “We never gave you a chance to be heard before.”

“Thank you, Skippy,” all the animals said. They cheered together, “Hurrah for Skippy, the hero skunk.”

Talk together about the story. Ask: Why was Skippy lonely? How did Skippy know there was a fire? What did he do to help the other animals and bugs and birds? Why did they listen to Skippy? How did everyone feel when they were safe?

**4. STRETCH AND SING** To give the children an experience in listening, have them stand and listen to “If You’re Happy and You Know It” from the Seeds music CD. After singing and making the appropriate gestures one time, play the song again. This time have the children only do the actions and not sing the accompanying words. For instance, instead of singing, “clap your hands,” they will simply clap. Comment on how watchers could tell what words are missing by watching the actions. This is like listening with our eyes.

## LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

**5. GOSPEL RITUAL** Gather in the area you have set aside for proclaiming the Gospel to the children. Display your copy of *Seeds*. Have the children sit in a circle with their copies of *Seeds* on the floor in front of them. Sing “Two Little Ears” as a listening reminder to the children.

### **6. GOSPEL STORYTELLING: Jesus has good news**

*When Jesus lived on earth, he told everyone who he was. “I am the person God has sent to tell you how much God loves you,” Jesus said. Not everyone listened to Jesus and not everyone believed him. Some people thought he should just go away. Some people even tried to push Jesus off a cliff. But lots of other people were glad to listen to Jesus. They were happy that God had sent Jesus to help poor*

*people and sick people and little children.*

Conclude by saying, “This is the good news about Jesus.”

Have the children pick up their copies of *Seeds* and tell you what is happening in the picture. *Jesus is speaking, what is he saying?* The people at the bottom look unhappy. What is wrong with them? *Maybe they are jealous of Jesus.* The children and the woman are happy. Why? Conclude by saying that Jesus gave us good news about God and we can be happy about it.

## BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

**7. BLINDFOLD AND LISTEN** Explain to the children that you are going to play a listening game where everyone has to use the sense of hearing. Before the game can begin, everyone has to put on a blindfold. Have ready materials to create a variety of sounds. After the children are blindfolded, make a sound and ask the children to guess what object is making that sound. For example: an alarm clock ticking or ringing, a zipper moving back and forth, a scissors being opened and closed, a sheet of paper being crumpled. The children remove their blindfolds when they have named all the sounds.

**8. THE NOISES GAME** Move to the work area. Distribute pages 3-4 of *Seeds* and scissors. The children will cut the page into eight pieces by cutting along the bold lines on the words side. When they have finished cutting, distribute envelopes to put the cards in.

Have the children leave their envelopes at their work places and move to the story circle. Show them how to play the game by using your set of cards. Draw one card from your envelope at a time. Show the children the picture side of that card. The children identify the object, animal, or person and make the sound they identify with that object, animal, or person. Show them the word on the other side of the card, read it to them, and have them say it after you. Assign partners and have the children get their envelopes and play the game in pairs. When you call a halt to this activity, remind the children to take their games home to play with their families.

Ask the children to clean up the work area. Commend them for listening to your request.

**Objective: The children will continue praying in sign language.**

### **9. CLOSING PRAYER: I pray with my hands**

The children learned a sign language prayer in last week’s Seeds class. Use page 2 of *Seeds* to review the words for “Thank you, God” and to learn two new sign language words. After you have practiced, pray together in silence, using only your eyes and hands.



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## OVERVIEW

**Gospel Theme:** Jesus calls us to follow him.

Sunday's Gospel has four scenes: Jesus is teaching on the shore with the crowds pressing close to him; Jesus gets Simon the fisherman to take him in his boat and he continues teaching from there; Simon and his friends lower their nets at Jesus' suggestion and get a huge catch; Simon and his friends leave their boats and follow Jesus.

*Seeds* brings this Gospel to preschoolers by focusing on following. The children will learn about some people who have actually followed Jesus and then look at themselves and their families as followers of Jesus. Preschool children are developing their freedom, creativity, and conscience through their play and their family relationships. Their call as Christians is first of all to take in the wonderful created world they are learning to name and navigate and to experience their parents' and guardians' response to the Gospel.

**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* #45, 73, 804, 2045.

**Materials:** Scissors, colored pencils, crayons, stapler or tape. Separate pages 1-2 of *Seeds* from pages 3-4 before your group meets.

## SHARING LIFE STORIES

**1. GATHER AND SING** Gather the children in the story circle and sing the song about seeds from the *Seeds* music CD or use some other gathering song.

**2. OPENING PRAYER** Stay in the story circle and ask the children to stand or sit quietly while you say this opening prayer. The children respond "Amen."

*Jesus, we like to learn about you in our Seeds class. We are your followers. Teach us what we must do to follow you.*

**3. GOSPEL WARM-UP: Going Fishing** Ask the children how many of them have ever been on a fishing trip. What's the first thing to do to get ready to go fishing? *Getting your fishing pole and box with hooks and flies ready.* What else is really important? What do you put on the end of the hook? Do you know what it's called? *Bait. People use worms, little minnows, or artificial worms.*

After you catch your fish, someone helps you take the fish off the hook and put it in a bucket of water. Then when

you get home, Mom or Dad has to clean the fish and fry it or bake it so everyone gets to eat.

During this preparation to hear the Gospel, give the children plenty of time to talk about their fishing experiences. Don't forget to talk about the safety rules. It's important always to wear a life jacket even if you know how to swim. When eating the fish, people have to be very careful of the little bones.

**4. CREATIVE DRAMA** Let's pretend we're all sitting in a boat. We will row out to the middle of the lake with oars. We are sitting down because we should never stand in the boat. Let's throw our fishing lines way out and then we'll wait a bit to see if we get a bite. Then when we do, reel it in around and around and around. Then we will row back to the shore. Do this three or four times. Add the following song.

*Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream.  
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream.*

## LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

**5. GOSPEL RITUAL** Gather the children in the area you set aside for proclamation of the Gospel. Lead them in singing "Two Little Ears" from the *Seeds* music CD.

**Objective:** The children will recognize why Simon and his friends follow Jesus.

**6. GOSPEL STORYTELLING: Jesus goes fishing** Read the following version of Sunday's Gospel to the children or tell it in your own words. Speak slowly and with energy so the children stay involved in the story.

*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 rowed Jesus out just a little way. Then Jesus sat in the boat and taught the crowd on the shore. When Jesus was finished teaching, he told Simon to row out a little farther where the water was deeper and put his nets into the water. "I think you will catch a lot of fish out there," Jesus said. 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 what had happened. He 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.*

Distribute pages 1-2 of *Seeds* and ask the children to look at the cover picture and tell you the story as far as they can.

Do the people in the boats look happy? Why not? *They have been fishing all night and their nets are empty.* Do they look tired? Could they be hungry?

Then demonstrate for the children how to fold the bottom of the page up and crease it. Be sure the faces of the two fishermen match. Ask the children to tell you how this picture is different. What has happened? How do the fishermen look now? How many fish have they caught? Give the children time to count. Ask what the fishermen and Jesus will do now. *Jesus asks them to follow him and they do.*

Have the children set aside this picture. They will use it again later on in the lesson.

**7. MARCH AND SING** Teach the children the “Follow Me” song from the Seeds music CD. Having the CD means you don’t have to lead the song while you are watching to make sure the children are participating in a respectful way. After you have done the words on the cassette a few times, change them to fishing words—row, throw, and reel.

*The children pretend they are rowing with oars.*

**Row! Row! Row!**

*The children pretend they are throwing out their fishing lines.* **Throw! Throw! Throw!**

*The children pretend they are reeling in their catch.*

**Reel! Reel! Reel!**

## BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

**Objective:** The children will come to know the stories of some outstanding followers of Jesus.

**Objective:** The children will recognize themselves as followers of Jesus.

**8. I FOLLOW JESUS** Distribute pages 3–4 of *Seeds*. Have the children look at the drawings of the three people. Read the names and point to the people. Tell them all these people followed Jesus, just like Simon and his friends did and like their parents do.

Point to Oscar Romero. Oscar Romero was the archbishop of El Salvador, a country south of Mexico, where many people are poor. Archbishop Oscar helped the poor people and worked with them to get the things they needed. Point to Oscar again and say, “Oscar followed Jesus.” The children repeat this after you.

Point to Martin Luther King, Jr. The children may recognize him through pictures in school or other materials. Martin was a leader for his people and spoke for their rights. He gave a famous speech where he said, “I have a dream that all people will learn to love and help each other.” Martin was a minister, a man who made a promise to follow Jesus all of his life and tell other people about Jesus. Point to Martin again and say, “Martin followed Jesus just like Oscar followed Jesus.” Children repeat.

Point to Kateri. Her whole name is Kateri Tekakwitha. She was a Native American who learned about Jesus from

French missionaries. People in her village laughed at Kateri because she believed in Jesus. She didn’t care. She loved her family and friends, but she loved Jesus, too. So Kateri went to live with other Native Americans in Canada who believed in Jesus. Point to Oscar first, and say, “Oscar followed Jesus, Martin followed Jesus, Kateri followed Jesus.”

Call the children’s attention to the blank space. Ask who can read the little word underneath the line. It says “Me.” Ask the children if they are followers of Jesus. Give them time to talk about how they are followers of Jesus because of Baptism, because they come to *Seeds* class, because they go to church, because they pray to Jesus, because they try to be kind and helpful. Then give the children time to draw their own pictures in the blank space. Print their names for them. Or, if you have extra school photos, have the children paste their photos on the paper. Draw your own picture, too, and write your name on the line.

After the children have finished drawing their pictures and writing their names, have them cut the page into four pieces, following the black lines on the other side of the page. Use the cards to play either or both of the following activities.

### 9. CONCENTRATION ASSIGN PARTNERS.

Each pair combines their four cards and places them on the table or floor with the “I Follow Jesus” side up. One child goes first and picks up a card and looks at the picture. He or she then picks up another card. If the cards are a match, the child keeps them. If not, the child puts them back.

**10. WHERE ARE JESUS’ FOLLOWERS?** Enjoy this activity as a whole class. Sing the first verse of “Where Is Thumbkin?” with the children to remind them of the tune. Then sing it again, replacing “Thumbkin” with “Oscar” first and then the names of the other two followers of Jesus and each child in your class. As the children sing, they put the pictures inside the fold of the cover picture.

*Where is Oscar? Where is Oscar? Children hold up card.*

*In the boat. In the boat. Children put card in the boat.*

*Oscar followed Jesus. Oscar followed Jesus.*

*So can I. So can I.*

**11. CLOSING PRAYER** Gather in the prayer circle.

*Jesus, we learned that Simon in the Gospel story and Oscar, Martin, and Kateri all followed you. We are your followers, too. Help us to be good followers.*

Sing and act out the “Follow Me” song to conclude.

**12. SNACK** Have goldfish crackers and juice. If you have a net of any kind, bring it to *Seeds* class for a decoration, or for a way to display the *Seeds* cards the children make.

## EXTENDING ACTIVITY

**13. PARISH FOLLOWERS** Have the children draw pictures of other people they want to put in Jesus’ boat of followers. They may wish to draw family members or parish people such as their pastor. Have sponges cut in the shape of fish. The children can dip them in tempera paint and apply them to the paper they will use for drawing.

## OVERVIEW

### Gospel Theme: Jesus wants everyone to belong.

The Beatitudes from Luke's Gospel confront us with hard-to-believe statements: Happy are the poor, the sorrowing, the hungry, the persecuted. Jesus teaches clearly that poor, hungry, sorrowing, and persecuted people have a place in God's kingdom. God wants them to belong, not to be left out. Since we are Jesus' body in the world today, it is up to us to include others in the human family and in our church families.

Children have a great need to belong. They easily express love and affection for people they care about. They can be devastated when they are left out or forgotten. *Seeds* makes use of the loving gestures children make on Valentine's Day to help them begin to understand that others, outside their circles of family and friends, need their love also. It is in experiencing our love for them, that the poor, worried, and sick people come to know God's love of them and God's desire that all people be happy together in the kingdom.

**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* #561, 1718-19, 1726.

**Materials:** Scissors, glue or tape, crayons or markers, straws, string, or yarn. You may need helpers to assist the children with the cutting and pasting.

## SHARING LIFE STORIES

**1. GATHER AND SING** Gather the children in the story circle and sing "Like Jesus" from the Seeds music CD. If you do not have the CD, have the children sing along with you to the tune of "The More We Get Together."

*The more we love each other, each other, each other.*

*The more we love each other, like Jesus we'll be.*

*For Jesus is your friend, and Jesus is my friend.*

*The more we love each other, like Jesus we'll be.*

*Verse 2: The more we help each other*

**2. OPENING PRAYER** Have the children remain in the story circle, standing or sitting quietly, while you say the following prayer or one of your own. Children respond "Amen."

*Jesus, thank you for the families we belong to. They love us and care for us. Thank you for our Seeds family where we learn about you. Help us find ways to include lots of other people in our families of love.*

**Objective:** The children will appreciate what it means to show love.

**3. STORY: The Valentine Family** Ask the children to be seated in the story circle. Have a big valentine displayed. Ask the children how they plan to celebrate Valentine's Day. *Possibilities: Make heart cookies, make valentines, buy valentine presents and candy, send valentines in the mail or deliver them by hand.* Give each child a chance to share.

Introduce this week's story by talking about belonging with the children. Have them share what belonging means in their families—*live together, share fun, share jobs, help each other, laugh, play, pray, go on trips.* Then ask what belonging means in this *Seeds* class—*we work together, pray together, play, respect each other, like each other.* Tell the children you know a story about a family who celebrated Valentine's Day in a special way.

*On the evening before Valentine's Day, the Heart family sat around the kitchen table. They had just finished supper. Johnny and Becky Heart were talking about the valentine party at school. "You know," Mr. Heart said, "our family should celebrate Valentine's Day in a special way. After all, we are Hearts." Mrs. Heart said, "I have an idea. Why don't we all make a special valentine right now? Tomorrow we can take it with us wherever we go. Each of us has to find someone who we think really needs our valentine."*

*After Becky and Johnny cleared the table and washed the dishes, Mom put crayons, markers, and scissors on the table. Becky had some heart stickers left over from the school party. She put those on her card. Johnny drew a picture with 15 hidden hearts in it. Dad made a heart card that could fold and stand up. Mom made a valentine basket and then cut out valentine flowers to fill it. The next day all of the Hearts took their special valentines with them. This is what happened when they got home that night.*

*Becky was the youngest, so she told first. "I went to the playground to look for someone to share my valentine with, but everyone was too busy playing. Then I noticed a little girl sitting on a swing with no one to push her. So I did. We played on the swings and the jungle gym and the slide. Then I walked her across the street to her house. Before she went in the house, I gave her my valentine with all the hearts, and she gave me a big hug. I felt very happy."*

*"That was really nice, Becky," said Johnny. Then he told about his valentine. "When I went to the store for Mom, I saw Joey, who played t-ball with me last summer. He had a cast on his arm from playing soccer. I gave him my valentine and he sat right down on the bench outside the store and tried to find all the hidden hearts. He found all but one, so I showed him where it was hiding. Then I helped him carry his groceries home and we played with his action toys. I was really glad I had a valentine to give Joey."*

“My turn,” said Mom. “I went to see Grandma at the nursing home to take her the heart cookies we made yesterday. I was going to give her the valentine basket, too, but when I was walking down the corridor to Grandma’s room, I met a lady with a walker. She said hello, and I said hello, and then she said, ‘I bet you are going to see your mother.’ She looked kind of sad. ‘None of my family live in this city, so no one comes to visit me.’ I said, ‘I will visit you every week.’ I gave her the valentine basket and she gave me a kiss, right here on my cheek.”

“Can I go with you and meet her?” Becky said.

“Of course, you can,” Mom said. “Now let’s hear what Dad did with his valentine.”

Mr. Heart said, “I carried my valentine in my briefcase. I was at my desk making phone calls when Bill come in the office. He looked sad. ‘What is wrong?’ I asked. ‘My wife is in the hospital. Dr. Mitchell said she will be okay, but I am still worried.’ So I said, ‘I have something special for you. You can take it to the hospital and give it to your wife.’ I gave Bill my valentine. He said he was going right to the hospital to show it to his wife.”

“Let’s do this again next year,” said Johnny. Everybody agreed. Mom served a special valentine supper with a heart cake with red frosting!

**4. STRETCH AND SING** Have the children spread out in the open area. Ask them to stretch up high, high, higher. Now squat on the floor. Jump up high. Squat on the floor. Jump to the right. Jump to the left. Stand and hop on the right foot, then the left foot. This movement exercise will loosen them up from their long time of sitting.

## LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

**5. GOSPEL WARMUP** Move to the area where you proclaim the Gospel. Distribute *Seeds*. Tell the children to turn to the back page and look at the four little pictures of people. As you name each member of the Heart family, they will identify the picture.

*Find the person Johnny gave his valentine to.*

*Find the person Dad gave his valentine to.*

*Find the person Becky gave her valentine to.*

*Find the person Mom gave her valentine to.*

**Objective: The children will recognize the love Jesus has for all people.**

**6. GOSPEL STORYTELLING: Jesus wants everyone to belong** Have the children place the cover of *Seeds* face up before them and describe the cover illustration. *Jesus with an armful of hearts.* He looks very happy. Ask the children why they think Jesus looks so happy. Recall the story of the Heart Family. What did they do that was special on Valentine’s Day? Ask them to listen carefully to the Gospel story and see if it makes them think of the Heart family.

*One day Jesus was talking with his friends and with a lot of people who had come to visit with him. One person asked*

*Jesus if God cared about people who are poor or lonely or sad. Jesus said, “God blesses the poor. They are part of the family of God. God wants hungry people to have food and lonely people to have friends. 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. We should love everyone and not leave anyone out of our community. Then we will all be happy together.”*

Ask: Did the Heart family do what Jesus suggested? Do you know other people who bring happiness? What are their names and what do they do? How do you bring happiness to our *Seeds* class?

**7. JESUS AND HIS FRIENDS** Move to the work area. Show the children how to cut the strip of people pictures from page 4. When they have four small pictures, show them how to fold on the dotted line on each picture. Go around the room pasting or taping the figures on the cover so they are all around Jesus. Talk again about how Jesus wants everyone to be happy. Then ask the children to place this picture to one side.

## BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

**Objective: The children will create a Valentine puppet.**

**8. VALENTINE PUPPET** Have the children cut out the heart shape and the four pink strips on page 3. Show them how to fold strips back and forth to make arms and legs for the heart puppet. Turn the valentine over so they can see the face. Using your heart for demonstration, show them where to paste the arms and legs. The end of the strips with the colored hearts serve as feet and hands. Put each child’s name on the back of his or her heart. Tape string, yarn, or dental floss to the top of the puppet and to a straw or pencil. Let the children make their puppet dance and walk for a few minutes. Then tell them they can use the puppet at home to tell the story of the Heart family. If there is time, do that for a few minutes, calling on different students to be members of the Heart family.

**9. CLOSING PRAYER AND SONG** Have the children stand in a circle with their puppets and sing the opening song: “Like Jesus.” Let the puppets dance to the music. Then ask the children to make the puppets quiet, their hearts still, and their ears ready to listen to the prayer.

*Thank you, Jesus, for giving us hearts that can love, can care, and can share. Help us to remember that everybody belongs to your family and needs our love and caring. Amen.*

**10. SNACK** Serve Valentine cookies or red gelatin blocks cut in heart shapes. Let the children serve each other and any adults who have helped during the lesson.

## OVERVIEW

### Gospel Theme: Jesus chooses to serve God.

In Sunday's Gospel story, the temptations in the desert, Jesus makes choices. The choices he makes show that he knows his scripture and that he knows what a human person's relationship to God should be. In his humanity, Jesus shows us how to live as God's children.

Lent is a special time to grow in God's love, a special time of choices. Preschool children cannot understand Lent but they can experience it in their families and parishes. They can understand choices because they are always making them. This week's *Seeds* activity requires choices that are neither right nor wrong, but simply preferences. The children will recognize their own growing ability to decide and choose, an ability they will use later to choose the good. *Seeds* also provides a Lenten prayer that the whole family can use.

**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* #1730-31, 2645.

**Materials:** Scissors, a pretzel on a piece of yarn for each child, glue, a brown colored pencil or crayon. You may wish to precut the strip of pictures on page 3. Have large, used envelopes available so the children can take *Seeds* home without losing any of the small pieces.

## SHARING LIFE STORIES

**1. GATHER AND SING** Gather the children in a circle and begin your *Seeds* session with any of the gathering songs the children know.

**2. OPENING PRAYER** Have the children stand quietly as you pray the following prayer. They respond "Amen."

*Dear God, Lent is here. It is a special time for everyone in our Church and in our families. We want to learn more about Jesus during Lent. We want to follow Jesus by being kind and loving as he was. Thank you for helping us.*

**3. MAKING CHOICES GAME** Play this choice game to prepare children for the Gospel. Have them stand in the circle and repeat the following words and gestures after you.

I can choose. Right or left. Up or down.  
Smile or frown. Stand or sit. Now I choose to sit down.

## LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

**4. GOSPEL RITUAL** Gather in the area you have set aside for proclaiming the Gospel to the children. Display your copy of *Seeds*. Sing together "Two Little Ears" from the *Seeds* CD, or have the children simply say the words and make the gestures.

Two little ears to hear God's word.  
Two little eyes to see God's love.  
Two little hands to work each day.  
Alleluia! Hear me pray.

**Objective:** The children will become familiar with the season of Lent as a time to pray with their families and with the Church.

**5. GOSPEL STORY WARMUP** Show the children the cover of your copy of *Seeds*. Do not distribute their own copies yet. Ask them to tell you what is happening in the photo. What is on the child's forehead? Why is it there? Many children have gone to Ash Wednesday services with their parents. Talk about the ashes as one of the customs we have to help us remember that we are followers of Jesus. Each day we make choices about being followers of Jesus. What are some of those choices? The ashes are put on our forehead in the sign of the cross. Let the children make a cross on each other's forehead. See that all the children know how to make the *Sign of the Cross*.

**Objective:** The children will recognize the choices that Jesus made.

**6. GOSPEL STORYTELLING: Jesus has to make some choices** Lent always starts with one of the Gospels about Jesus' temptation in the desert. Young children hear a lot about the devil or other evil creatures in cartoons and Halloween stories. This story will give them confidence in Jesus' ability to withstand the devil. Introduce the Gospel by telling 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 the Gospel.

*Before he started on his work of teaching everyone the good news about God, Jesus took some time off to pray. He prayed for 40 days and 40 nights. When he was finished praying, he was hungry. That is when the devil came along.*

*"Jesus," the devil said, "why don't you turn all the rocks around here into bread if you are hungry?" Jesus said, "People need more than food to be happy. They need to know about God, too."*

*Then the devil gave Jesus another choice. "Listen, Jesus, if you say I am really great, I will make you ruler of the whole earth." Jesus said, "God is ruler of the earth."*

The devil tried one more time. He took Jesus to the very top of the Temple in Jerusalem. They stood right on the edge of the tallest tower. The devil said, "Jesus, why don't you jump off? You can ask God's angels to catch you." Jesus said, "I know God loves me. I don't have to do something special." The devil gave up and went away.

Have the children retell the story to you. Make the point that each time Jesus said God was the greatest and best, Jesus made a choice to love and praise God.

**7. STRETCH AND SING** Play "Follow Me" from the *Seeds* music CD and let the children march, hop, and stomp around the room to it, working off their excess energy. Direct them to end up at the story circle.

## BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

**Objective: The children will recognize choices they make.**

**8. STORYTELLING: Allison Makes Choices** This story goes with the page 2-3 activity in *Seeds*. Have the choice squares in your copy of *Seeds* cut out and ready to tape on the page as you tell the story. Just tape the top so the children can see by lifting what the other choice was. The choices Allison makes are wagon, puppy, banana, teddy bear, and chocolate ice cream. Hold *Seeds* open so the children can see the big illustration on pages 2-3.

Allison and her mother are going to see Gran, Allison's grandmother. Allison has to decide if she will take her tricycle or her wagon. She decides to take the wagon. (Tape the wagon on the sidewalk.) Allison pulls the wagon as she and Mom go down the street. They come to the pet store and look in the window. Allison sees fish, dogs, birds, and kitties. Mom asks her what kind of pet she likes most. Allison says, "I like the puppy. I would name him Bojangles." (Tape the puppy in the pet store window.)

The next store is a fruit store. "Let's take Gran some fruit," Mom says. They look at the pears and the peaches. They look at the bananas and grapefruit. They look at the red apples and the yellow apples and the green apples. Allison feels a peach but it is pretty hard, so she chooses a banana for Gran. "It's nice and yellow," Allison says. (Tape the banana in the fruit store cart.) Allison's mom pays the fruit store man and Allison puts the banana in her wagon.

As they walk down the sidewalk, Allison tries not to step on the cracks. Count the cracks, 1, 2, 3... How many cracks do you see on the page?

The next store is a toy store. Allison looks at all the toys in the window. There are trucks and dolls and balls and wagons just like Allison's. There is even a stuffed dog that looks like Bojangles. Then Allison sees the Sale sign. There is a sale on building blocks and on teddy bears. Allison decides she would buy the teddy bear if she had money. (Tape the teddy bear on the Sale sign.)

The last store on the mall is the ice cream store. Let's count how far Allison and her mom have gone on the sidewalk, 1, 2, 3... Mom says, "Let's have an ice cream cone."

Allison has to choose what flavor she wants. There are so many. (Have children tell you what flavors the store has.) She chooses chocolate! (Tape the chocolate ice cream cone on the menu card.) Allison and her mom decide to walk and eat at the same time, so off they go to bring Gran the banana and tell her about all the choices they made on the way.

That night when Allison is ready for bed, she says to her Mom, "We made so many choices today. I chose a puppy, a banana for Gran, a teddy bear, and a chocolate ice cream cone." She kissed Mom and Dad good night and ended her prayers, "Thank you, God, for a nice day."

**9. WHAT WILL I CHOOSE?** Move to the work area. Distribute *Seeds* and have the children open their copy so pages 2-3 are facing up. Distribute scissors and demonstrate how to cut off the strip on page 3. If you have precut the strips, distribute them and let the children cut the five picture squares. Pick up the picture square with the puppy and the bird and ask the children to find their square that matches. Have them identify both pet pictures and say which one they would choose if they could have a pet. Have them place their choice in the pet store window. Continue in this way with the other four choices. Give the children lots of opportunity to talk about the choices they make. They will be teaching each other as well as enlightening you on how their decision-making processes work.

You may wish to have the children paste or tape their squares in place. Removable tape works well, because the children can then change their minds. Encourage them to tell their families the story about Allison.

**Objective: The children will become familiar with the season of Lent as a time to pray with their families and with the Church.**

**10. CLOSING PRAYER** Remain at the work place and have the children turn to the last page of *Seeds*. Ask them to describe the objects at the top and bottom of the page. *They are pretzels.* Ask: Do you like pretzels? Can you fold your arms like a pretzel? Demonstrate how to be a pretzel by putting each hand on the opposite shoulder. When everyone knows what to do, have them fold their arms like pretzels as you pray the prayer on page 4. The children respond "Amen."

If you have made a pretzel necklace for each child, place them now around their necks. Tell the children to color the pretzels on page 4 at home and teach their families the prayer. Encourage the children to fold their arms like the pretzel when they pray meal prayers and bedtime prayers at home. Post your own pretzel prayer on a bulletin board, so you remember to keep up this practice during the Lenten *Seeds* sessions.

**11. SNACK** Have pretzels of various sizes as your snack today. You may wish to have the children bake pretzel cookies by rolling sugar cookie dough between their palms and folding it in a pretzel shape.

## OVERVIEW

### Gospel Theme: Jesus prays to his Father.

We always hear the story of Jesus' transfiguration on the 2nd Sunday of Lent. As we get closer to the remembrance of his passion and death during Holy Week, the transfiguration reminds us of the glorious resurrection that will come.

*Seeds* centers on the prayer of young children. Teaching children the Church's prayers as well as praying together as a family strengthens children's awareness that God is with them. As teachers of young children, we help them learn behaviors and attitudes that are appropriate for prayer. Prayer time, at home, at church, and at school is a very special time for children to praise and thank God. Prayer spaces for the young child should be beautiful and simple and include many opportunities for the children to see, hear, smell, and touch. They need to experience church with all their senses.

**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* #554-56, 561, 568, 2645, 2649.

**Materials:** Scissors, markers or crayons.

## SHARING LIFE STORIES

**1. GATHER AND SING** Gather the children in a circle for the opening song. Sing the seed song from the *Seeds* music CD.

**2. OPENING PRAYER** Ask the children to fold their arms in the pretzel shape they learned last week. Say the following prayer slowly. They repeat each line.

*Thank you, Father,  
For hearts to love you with,  
For hands to fold in prayer,  
For bodies that can move,  
And friends to play with.  
Amen.*

**Objective:** The children will experience how the liturgy praises and thanks God for all our gifts and asks God's help.

**3. STORYTELLING: Jacob Belongs at Church** Stay in the story circle for this story about a boy who didn't want to go to church on Sunday. Have the children listen to see why Jacob doesn't want to go to church and what happens there.

*Every Sunday when Mom and Dad were ready to go to church they had to call to Jacob, "Come, Jacob, come. We must get in the car or we will be late for church." Jacob always came slowly down the stairs. "Do I have to go, Mom?" he asked. "Yes", said Mom. "It is important that we pray together as a family." Mom felt bad that Jacob didn't want to go to church, but she didn't know why.*

*Jacob liked the music in church. Many of the songs he could sing by heart. He liked hearing Father Ed's voice, especially when he read the stories about Jesus. He liked singing the Our Father with all the people in church and holding hands with Dad and Mom. He especially liked shaking hands and saying "Peace" to his parents and the people in the other pews. There was only one thing Jacob didn't like about church. He couldn't see! The grown-ups were so big in front of him that all he could see was the back of their heads. Even when everyone was sitting down and Jacob was on Dad's lap, he couldn't see.*

*One Sunday on the way to church, Jacob's mom said that Father Ed was not at their church any more. Father Joseph was their new priest. When they got to church, Dad and Mom and Jacob sat down in their regular pew, ten rows from the back. When the music started, Jacob stood on the kneeler between his parents. He heard a man's voice singing really loud in the back of church. It must be Father Joseph, Jacob thought, but when he tried to see who belonged to the voice, the grownups were in his way again.*

*Then Jacob got a big surprise! Over the microphone a man said, "Will all the preschool and kindergarten children please come up to the altar? I want you to be up here with me, so you can see what is happening." Jacob was so excited that he almost ran down the aisle. Father Joseph asked the children to stand close to him. Jacob could see everything Father did. Often Father Joseph would look at the children and smile.*

*Next Sunday Mom didn't have to call Jacob to go to church. He was at the door waiting. "Do you think Father Joseph will let us come up around the altar again, Mom?" Jacob asked. "We'll have to wait and see," said Mom. Sure enough, it happened again. Only this time the usher asked Jacob and Sarah if they would bring the gifts up to the altar when they went. Jacob felt so proud and grown up. He went back to his pew when his parents came to Communion. At the close of Mass, Father asked the grownups to hold up any children who couldn't see. Then he blessed all the people. Everyone sang the closing song as Father Joseph and the servers left the church. The children sang and clapped their hands and raised them high and waved.*

*That night when Jacob said his prayers with Mom and Dad, he said, "I like going to church now. Now I am just the right size."*

**4. JUST THE RIGHT SIZE** Move to the work area and distribute *Seeds*. Ask the children to open to page 2. Explain that these are pictures from the story of Jacob. Ask them to look carefully at the four pictures and see which shows the first thing that happened in the story. *The picture of Jacob going to church with his parents.*

Ask the children to take a crayon and put the number 1 in the box in the blank space on this picture. Recall why Jacob did not want to go to church. Picture 2 is Jacob sitting with his parents unable to see the altar. Picture 3 has Jacob and Sarah bringing the gifts down the aisle. Picture 4 shows all the children around the altar with Father Joseph. Ask the children if they remember what happened at the end of Mass and how Jacob felt then. Tell the children they will take these pictures home and tell Jacob's story to their families.

**5. STRETCH AND SING** Ask the children to move to the open area and spread out. They will all pretend to be Jacob as they follow your directions.

You are Jacob in church. Stand on your tip toes so you can see. Stretch up high, higher.

Father asks you to bring the gifts to the altar. Walk as fast as you can without running all around this area. Stop.

All the children stand in a circle around the altar.

While the children are in the circle, sing "Two Little Ears" from the *Seeds* music CD, or use some other song to prepare the children to listen to the Gospel.

## LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

**6. GOSPEL STORYTELLING: Jesus prays to his Father** Ask the children to describe the cover illustration of *Seeds* to you. How does Jesus look? *Happy, shiny, like he is listening to or talking with someone.* Point out Jesus' friends, the ones that usually go places with him. Their names are Peter, James, and John. Tell the children this is the story these three friends told the others. This is a hard Gospel for even adults to get, but the children can take it into their hearts and minds as a story that will stay with them until their understanding and life experience catches up.

*One day Jesus took us—Peter, James, and John—to a very high hill. We could see a long way from the top. We saw villages and wheat fields and roads and herds of cows and sheep. Jesus started to pray, so we were quiet. Then while we were watching him pray, Jesus' clothes became really, really white. We could hardly look at him. He was shining all over. All of a sudden Moses and Elijah were there, talking with Jesus. Peter starting asking Jesus if he wanted us to build some little houses for the three of them, but just then we heard a voice from heaven. The voice said, "This is my Son, my chosen one. Listen to him." It must be God, we thought. We got so scared we just hid our heads in our hands. When we looked up again, no one was there but Jesus, and he just looked normal again.*

Ask the children to retell this Jesus story to you. Where were Jesus and his friends, Peter, James, and John? What did Jesus start to do? What happened to Jesus? Who are Moses and Elijah? *They are Israel's great prophets. It would*

*be like having Presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln appear to a United States citizen. How did Jesus' friends feel? What did the voice say? Finally, ask why Jesus invited his friends along to the top of the hill so they could see this vision. Jesus wanted his friends to know they were on the right track when they followed him.*

## BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

**Objective: The children will identify personal prayer times.**

**Objective: The children will make their own prayer book.**

**7. PLACES I PRAY** Stay in the story circle. Ask: What does it mean to pray? *Praying is talking to God.* What do we talk to God about when we pray? *We thank God for all the wonderful things God gave us: our families, friends, food, place to live, clothes. We thank God for all the beautiful things in the world: flowers, sun, rain, trees, animals, different kinds of people.* Where are some of the places you pray? *At home, at the dinner table, in my bed, at church, in Seeds class.* Give the children time to talk about their special prayer places.

Move to the work area. Separate pages 1-2 of *Seeds* from pages 3-4. Have children take their scissors and cut apart pages 3-4 on the heavy horizontal line halfway up the page. They fold the top part of page 3 so the dinner plate goes against the church and the bottom part of the page so the park scene is in the middle. Insert this second folded page inside the first to make the prayer book. Check to see that all books are folded correctly.

Distribute colored pencils or crayons and go through the book, page by page, giving the children time to finish the activity. You may not have time for this activity in your *Seeds* session. Write a little note to the families of the children, asking them to help the children finish their pages. Send this note home with the children.

**8. CLOSING PRAYER** Gather the children in the prayer circle with their prayer books in their hands, seated. Read through the book with them once, and conclude by having them repeat after you, *Thank you, God, for listening to our prayers. Amen.*

**9. SNACK** Serve fruit or crackers. Lead the children in a sung grace they all know.

## EXTENDING ACTIVITIES

**10. MAKE A PRAYER CORNER** Have the children decorate your prayer corner. Bring flowers, make a cross, provide a table for gifts from nature, make a box or bulletin board where the children can put pictures of people or things they want to pray about.

**11. CHURCH VISIT** Take the children to church. Have them sit in the middle of church as you lead them in prayer. Then bring them up around the altar and sing a favorite song. Invite your pastor to join the children during your visit.

## OVERVIEW

### Gospel Theme: God wants us to grow.

Everything grows, greens, and blossoms in spring. Lent has often been described as springtime in the Church. In fact, *Lent* means *spring*. Spring is an ideal time to teach children about God the Creator, who gave us this beautiful world, God the Son, who became incarnate to show us how to live more fully, and God the Holy Spirit, who lives within each of us and graces all our best efforts. Lent is the special season for people seeking Baptism, the sacrament of sharing Jesus' new life. This week *Seeds* helps children delight in the growth of flowers, birds, and frogs, and their own physical and spiritual growth.

**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.

**Materials:** Scissors, envelopes to take frog and bird cards home. Separate pages 1-2 of *Seeds* from pages 3-4.

## SHARING LIFE STORIES

**1. GATHER AND SING** Call the children to come together for the opening circle time. Teach them "Everything's Growing" from the *Seeds* music CD.

Growing, growing, everything's growing.

Growing up, growing strong, I'm growing, too.

Flowers and dandelions, bluebirds and butterflies.

Growing up, growing strong, I'm growing, too.

Repeat the song and have the children act out how a seed grows. *It begins with the seed in a curled up position on the ground and grows to a tall plant reaching for the sun and swaying in the breeze.*

**2. OPENING PRAYER** Have the children sit quietly while you say the opening prayer. They respond "Amen."

*Dear God, we see the beauty of your springtime gifts and know how much you love us. We love you, too, and want to learn all about you.*

**3. WARM-UP ACTIVITY** The children will stay in their circle and follow you in this fingerplay.

I plant a little seed in the dark, dark ground.

Hide one finger in the fist of the other hand.

Out comes the yellow sun, big and round.

Make a large circle with your arms.

Down comes the cool rain, soft and slow.

Lower your arms slowly; wiggle your fingers for rain.

Up comes the little seed. Grow, grow, grow!

Hide your finger again in the other fist. Slowly push it up

Ask: Do the children have any growing plants at home? Have they ever planted a seed? How did they do it? What kind of seed was it? What did the flower or plant look like?

**4. STORYTELLING: Max grows pockets** Stay in the story circle for this story. Tell it with lots of exaggerated humor.

*Max had enjoyed the warm sunshine all morning while exploring the spring season in his grandparents' yard. But, now it was time to go into the house for a snack. His grandpa was working on the back porch.*

*"Max, your pockets have really grown since you went outside to play this morning," his grandpa said.*

*"What do you mean?" asked Max. He looked down at his jacket pockets. "Pockets can't grow." Grandpa just smiled and went back to fixing the lawn mower.*

*How can pockets grow? Max kept thinking as he ate some crackers and drank his juice.*

*"Grandpa," Max asked again when he went outside, "I just don't understand. How can pockets grow?"*

*"Well, Max, I don't know how it happens. When you went outside to play this morning, we couldn't even see your pockets. Look at them now. They have grown!" Grandpa exclaimed.*

*Max looked at his bulging jacket pockets. "That's because I have stuff in my pockets."*

*"Mmm," Grandpa said, "that might be some of it, but I think your pockets have grown. Let's go to Grandma's garden and plant everything from your pockets. That way we can keep an eye on what makes your pockets grow."*

*Max thought Grandpa was just being silly. "My rock won't grow, bird seed won't grow, gum won't grow, a stick won't grow, and my string won't grow." Max described everything in his pockets, but Grandpa was not convinced. He just shook his head.*

*"Like I said, I am not sure what's causing your pockets to grow, but something is."*

*"OK, Grandpa, let's go plant everything from my pockets. We can even mark where we planted it. I'll show you, Grandpa, nothing will grow," Max said.*

*"That's a good idea to mark where we plant everything, Max. Let's get started."*

*Max and his grandpa went right to the garden. Grandpa was sure they should plant everything soon before Max's pockets exploded. Grandpa pointed out the row in the garden that Max and Grandpa could use. They went to work preparing the ground for their planting project.*

*"Hurry, Max," Grandpa said. "We have the row ready. Now you plant everything from your pocket. I'll mark it." Max carefully emptied everything from his pockets into the black dirt. Grandpa labeled the row: ROCK, BIRD SEED, GUM, STICK,*

and STRING. Together, they covered each item and smoothed the dirt with their hands.

"I can't wait for the gum tree to grow," Grandpa said.

Max replied, "Nothing is going to grow. I am sure of it."

"I certainly hope the string does well. I can always use string," Grandma said.

"Grandma, Grandpa, you guys are really silly," said Max.

"We'll see," said Grandpa. "We'll just wait and see."

Spring passed quickly for Max. The days got warmer and warmer and soon it was summer. Each day Grandpa and Max went to the garden to check their row. Max was becoming more and more sure that he was right because nothing was growing. But Grandpa said, "Maybe we planted that gum too deep," or "String needs a lot of rain to grow." It seemed Grandpa was still convinced that new growth would appear.

One day, after a warm gentle rain, the two gardeners went to check their row in Grandma's garden. To Max's surprise, three green sprouts were peeking through the black dirt.

"Look, Grandpa, look!" Max exclaimed.

"My goodness, Max, it looks like I was right. Your pockets are growing!" Grandpa said. Grandpa and Max began to check their markers. It wasn't the rock that was growing or the gum. It wasn't the stick or the string. It was the bird seed.

"Bird seed! It's the bird seed that's growing," Max squealed.

"Do you think we can grow birds?" Grandpa asked Max.

"I don't know, Grandpa. Maybe we can. I didn't think that we could grow pockets." Max and his Grandpa both laughed, remembering how their garden began.

Ask what the bird seed needed before it could grow. Planted in the dirt, sun, rain, and lots of time. Do they remember what else Grandpa and Max planted? Gum, string, rock and stick. Why didn't these grow? Can Grandpa grow birds?

**5. STRETCH AND SING** Repeat the "Everything's Growing" song you used at the beginning of the session.

## LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL

**Objective:** The children will understand how they grow as God's children.

### 6. GOSPEL STORYTELLING: A man and his tree

Gather the children in the Gospel storytelling area. Follow the ritual that is familiar to your group. Distribute pages 1-2 of *Seeds* and direct the children's attention to the cover illustration. Talk about what the gardener and the child are doing to help the tree grow. *Hoeing around the tree to loosen the soil, watering it, giving it tree food.* Ask the children if they have fruit trees in their yards. How do they take care of the trees? The children will place their copy on the floor in front of them as you tell Sunday's Gospel.

*Jesus told his friends this story. A man had a fig tree growing on his property. Every year he went to the tree to pick some figs. The man loved the taste of figs. But the tree never had figs on it. It had leaves and in the spring it had blossoms, but it never grew even one little fig. Finally the*

*man said to the gardener, "Cut that worthless tree down." But the gardener said, "Please let it stay another year. I will give it tree food and water and take special care of it. Maybe next year it will have figs for you to eat." The man said, "Let's give it another chance."*

Review the Gospel story by asking: What will the gardener do for the tree now? What do children need to grow strong? Who helps you? Summarize by saying Jesus came to tell us good news. The good news in today's story is that God wants everything to grow.

## BUILDING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

**Objective:** The children will recognize the beauty and growth of God's creation.

### 7. I HELP A FLOWER GROW

Move to the work area. Page 2 of *Seeds* is a hidden picture that the children will find when they fold the page. Talk together about what the girl is doing to help the plant grow. Then demonstrate how to fold the bottom at the dotted line and then match that fold to the dotted line in the middle of the page to make a flower. Have the children open and close the fold, telling each other what helps the seed grow into a beautiful flower.

### 8. HOW DO BIRDS GROW? HOW DO FROGS GROW?

Pages 3-4 are sequencing cards that show the growth phases of birds and frogs. Have the children cut them apart and arrange the bird pictures face up on their work table. Talk together about how birds begin as small eggs. The birds break out of their egg shell. The mother bird cares for the babies, feeds them, and teaches them to fly. Soon the birds can play together in the air. Turn the cards over. The frog cards will be in the proper sequence. Frogs begin as small eggs, too. Then they become tadpoles and grow new parts on their bodies as they get bigger.

**9. CLOSING PRAYER AND SONG** Gather in the story circle. Have the children sit quietly and respond "Amen" to your prayer.

*Dear God, thank you for all the beautiful things you made for us to enjoy. Help us always to be kind and loving to all growing things.*

If you have the *Seeds* music CD, teach the children the "Thank You" song.

## EXTENDING ACTIVITY

**10. GROWING THINGS** Place about one cup of dirt in a Ziplock bag. Sprinkle a few seeds in the bag and cover with a bit more dirt. Moisten the dirt with a spray of water and seal the bag. Place in a warm sunny place to sprout. The children will be able to view the growth through the clear plastic bag.

Place a piece of sweet potato or a regular potato on a small dish of water. Make sure you have one or two eyes of the potato on the piece. Set in a warm, sunny place and keep water in the dish. Sprouts will soon begin to grow.