

Pflaum  *Gospel Weeklies*
FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM

What the Church Believes and Teaches

2011•2012

Promise 

TEACHING STRATEGIES

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What the Church Believes and Teaches

Promise

Teaching Strategies 2011-2012

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Welcome to the *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies* Faith Formation Program: *What the Church Believes and Teaches*

The sacred duty and the joy of each succeeding generation of Christian believers has been to hand on the deposit of faith that was first entrusted to the apostles by Christ himself. We have received this gift, the deposit of faith—we have not conceived it. It is the heritage of the whole Church. It is our privilege and our responsibility to preserve the memory of Christ's words and the words themselves and to teach future generations of believers to carry out all that Christ commanded his apostles.

National Directory for Catechesis, #26

For over a quarter century, the *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies* have provided schools and parish religion programs with a basic catechesis on the Sunday Gospels. These widely acclaimed magazines offer the finest in up-to-the-minute catechetical reflections, exercises, and activities based on the words of Jesus Christ and on his Gospel as celebrated weekly in the Sunday assembly. The *Weeklies* have formed several generations of young people and helped bring faith to their lives and bring their lives to the Catholic faith.

The basic teachings of the Catholic faith are seeded generously throughout each level of the *Weeklies*. These basic teachings are documented in an annual Scope and Sequence. Nonetheless, because of the very nature of a lectionary-based resource, the basic teachings do not occur in exactly the same way each year in the 32 issues of each level of the *Weeklies*.

Therefore, Pflaum Publishing Group has undertaken to make part of each year's subscription to the *Weeklies* a student's handbook of those elements of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that have been judged necessary and appropriate for the age group served by each level. *What the Church Believes and Teaches* is a new component for the *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies*. At the beginning of each year—with the first shipment of the

Weeklies—every child will receive his or her own book of basic Church teachings. The content for this book is based on protocols established for the teachings to be learned and mastered at each level of elementary-age catechesis. This handbook gathers under one cover the Church teachings presented in the 32 issues of the *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies*. *Teaching Strategies* provide you with ways to help children master these teachings. In addition, the guide that accompanies each issue of the *Weeklies* will point you to the handbook and to those teachings that are reflected in that issue. *What the Church Believes and Teaches*, together with the *Weeklies*, can also be of great help to parents who want to take an active role in the faith formation of their children.

The handbook provides, in one convenient publication, all the teachings that must be mastered. The weekly issues provide the stories, exercises, activities, reflections, prayers, and challenges that show how a faithful Catholic can live out these teachings, celebrate them in the liturgy, and share them at home, at school, and with friends.

Learning by Heart

Much of what you find in *What the Church Believes and Teaches* can be learned by heart. From earliest times, catechesis has used the formulations of the Creed, the sacraments, the Commandments, and prayers (especially the Lord's Prayer) to transmit the faith. The handbook affords you the opportunity to help your students learn by heart the principal expressions of the faith, basic prayers, key biblical themes, personalities, and language. Such learning is not mere rote. Memorization is an effective form of catechesis that nourishes the human heart and helps form the human spirit in Christ.

Conclusion

It is our hope that this new and exciting addition to the wondrous experience of the *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies* will assist you in your ministry. It is our prayer that *What the Church Believes and Teaches* will give you the added assurance that you are indeed cultivating in your students the good soil in which the seed of the Catholic faith can take root and bring forth a lifetime of good fruit.

Tips for Teaching Young Catholics

Know your audience! That's good advice for many professionals, but certainly for catechists and teachers. Here are some things to keep in mind about the kindergarteners and first graders who are your audience.

- These children are self-centered—still living in the world of “me.” One of your goals is to help them learn “we.” You can do this by example. “Dominic can't find his paper. Let's all take a second and help him look for it.” By the middle of first grade, children will be doing much better in this area.
- They have short attention spans. Accommodate their need for a change of pace every ten minutes or so. Integrate movement into your lesson plan, and try a variety of approaches—using their senses, marching, singing, dancing, or playing a game. Break things up by having them move from their tables or desks to sit in a circle on the floor for discussion, prayer, or a story.
- They won't always “get it” the first time. Check understanding frequently, especially when presenting new material. Ask children to tell you what you said in their own words, or ask questions to assess what they have learned.
- They are concrete thinkers. Tie into their reality in the examples you use, the stories you tell, and the questions you ask. Because religion and faith are by nature based on spiritual realities, it is important to provide examples and comparisons children understand. Strive to make the truths of faith applicable to their daily experience.
- They are learning. Be patient with them. Establish classroom routines to help them develop basic organizational skills and to learn boundaries. Give clear directions and repeat directions. Don't expect them to get everything.
- They don't like to make mistakes. Let them know it is okay to be wrong. It's okay to ask for help. Encourage them to look for the good in what they do. Help them to be patient with themselves. “You didn't get it this time, but maybe you will the next time.”

- They are curious. Some of their questions may surprise you. That's because they have heard many things that they don't quite understand. Respond with honest yet simple answers. Don't suggest that they shouldn't be asking such a question or that questions are out of place. Rather, encourage and respect their curiosity.
- They know they do things that are wrong. They know that sometimes they do hurtful things on purpose. It is difficult for them to distinguish between moral evil and accidents or mistakes. They tend to gauge the seriousness or wrongness of an action by the reaction they get. If a parent yells, or they get in trouble, it must be really wrong, therefore, sinful. They are not yet ready to acknowledge and take responsibility for actions that are wrong because they disobey God's rules.

1. A Promise Is Special—page 4

Point out that the name of this book and of their weekly lessons is *Promise*. Ask the children to brainstorm.

- What is a promise?
- What other words or feelings does the word promise make you think of?

Discuss making and keeping promises. Let the children share stories about making or receiving promises.

- What kind of promises have you made? To whom did you make a promise?
- Who made a promise to you? What did they promise?
- How does it feel to keep a promise to someone?
- How does it feel when someone keeps a promise to you?

Help the children find a promise from God on this page. “I will send Jesus, my Son, to help you.” Let them highlight or underline the promise.

Help them find a promise from Jesus on this page. “I call you my friends.” Let them highlight or underline the promise.

Emphasize that God always keeps his promises to us. Jesus is always true to his word. We can trust God and Jesus.

2. Promises—page 5

Be sure the children understand the directions. Younger children may not be able to read the material yet. Read the questions and answers aloud, pausing to let them mark their answers.

As the children are considering the promise they could make to God, you might want to remind them of the promises of God and Jesus on page 4. This may help them formulate their own promise.

After the activity, read the text at the bottom of the page. This will help you summarize and reinforce the discussion you have had.

Give each child a large paper heart. Ask them to copy their promise to God onto the heart. Then have them draw a picture of how they will fulfill their promise. Have the children take home their heart pictures as reminders of their promise to God. Encourage them to tell their family about the promise and the picture. Suggest that they display their pictures at home where they can be reminded every day of their promise.

BELIEVE

3. God's Word—page 6

Help the children understand by your example that the Bible is a special book.

1. Treat the Bible with honor.
2. Establish a prayer center in your classroom. Include a colorful cloth, a crucifix or statue, and flowers or a green plant as gifts of creation or signs of the season. Give the Bible a place of honor in your prayer center.
3. It is important for *Promise* children to participate in setting up their prayer area. Let them take turns during each meeting carrying each item in procession and placing the items on the prayer table. Children who are not carrying items can lead the procession and form an honor guard. Play a selection from the *Promise* CD “Children of God” to enhance the action.
4. Use the Bible. When you share a Bible story or passage from *What the Church Believes and Teaches* or from the *Promise* lesson, read the selection from your classroom Bible. The children

are too young to understand book, chapter, and verse, but they will know that the promises of God are found in the Bible. They need to understand that the Bible is a special book that deserves honor, but that honoring the Bible doesn't mean we keep it in a box and never open it.

Use this example to help children understand how to use the Bible.

It is getting close to your birthday. A card comes in the mail with your name on the envelope. Your mom looks at the return address sticker and says, “It's a birthday card from Grandma.” Do you say, “Oh, good. That is so special. I'll put it away in my treasure box.” Or, do you say, “Oh, good. I'll open it right away.”

God wants us to open and read his words of love!

4. God Shows His Love—page 7

This is the day to celebrate God's creation.

- Include some gifts of creation on your prayer table; for example, a sea shell or pinecones.
- Take a nature walk and ask the children to look for things that God made. If possible, bring back some specimens for your prayer table.
- Give children the opportunity to show and tell about the pictures they draw. Be positive in your comments on each drawing.
- Share a snack that comes from a garden or orchard; for example, apples, carrots, cherry tomatoes, grapes.

Pray the Lord's Prayer today, which children can find on page 29 of their handbooks. This prayer reminds us that God is our Father who loves us. We are all children of God.

Make a name tag for each child that reads “God made (*space for child's name*) with love.” Let the children print their names on the tags. Play a name game to help children learn everyone's name.

Ask children to sit cross-legged in a large circle on the floor with some space between each person. You will need a large ball. Begin by saying

your name and rolling the ball to a child. The child picks up the ball and says his or her name and rolls the ball to another child. Continue until everyone has had a turn.

5. God Makes Promises—page 8

Read the story of Adam and Eve from a children's Bible.

Have the children make happy/sad puppets. Give each child a paper plate. On one side, have them draw a happy face, and, on the other side, draw a sad face. They can glue on yarn hair if you like. Tape or glue the paper plates onto craft sticks that can serve as handles.

Read the text about Adam and Eve. Ask children to hold up their puppets, showing the happy face when Adam and Eve are happy, and the sad face when Adam and Eve are sad.

After the children do the coloring activity, let them share their responses by using their happy/sad puppets again to show whether the children in each situation are happy or sad.

Have pairs of children act out the following situations. Have the others "vote" with their happy/sad puppets.

- One child shares his or her snack with another child.
- One child yells at another.
- A child holds the door open for someone carrying a big box.
- Two children push to be first in line.
- Two children fold towels together.

5. God Makes Promises—page 9

As you read the text with the children, stress that God wanted Adam and Eve to be happy forever.

Read Matthew 1:20-21 from your classroom Bible.

Have the children make a JESUS banner. Outline the letters of the name on a long piece of butcher paper. Be sure to draw big, chunky letters. Cut up multi-colored construction paper scraps into small (1/2 to 1 inch) irregular pieces. Let children fill in the letters of the word *Jesus* with colorful pieces to make a mosaic. Be sure to display their

work where other children, parents, and parishioners can appreciate the message of the banner and the children's good work.

5. God Makes Promises—page 10

Ask children if they know the story of Noah's ark. Let them tell what they know. Fill in the blanks or read the story of Noah from a children's Bible or picture book. Don't let them get stuck on God destroying everything. Emphasize that God took care of Noah and his family because Noah believed and trusted God.

Let the children act out the story of Noah. They can accompany the parade of animals to the tune of "The Ants Go Marching," changing the names of the animals, and, of course, all the animals will go marching two by two. You can find the words and melody for "The Ants Go Marching" at many websites, including the site for the National Institute of Health, Department of Health and Human Services: kids.niehs.nih.gov/lyrics/antsgo.htm

Children will know that we still have floods and other natural disasters. They may know someone who has suffered the ravages of a flood or hurricane. Don't let them think that this was a punishment from God. Gently help them understand the biblical message. God didn't say there would never be another flood, rather that no flood would ever again destroy the whole world. In other words, God always gives us a chance. God cares about each creature and wants everyone to be saved. Even if people die through a natural disaster, God will take those who are faithful to him to happiness in heaven.

After children complete the activity, ask for examples of how God cares for people, animals, and the earth. Challenge children to come up with one example for each band of the rainbow.

This would be a good time for a painting activity. Water colors or finger paints are both good choices for rainbow art. After their pictures dry, have the children print "I care" below their rainbow. Encourage them to take their pictures home, explain to their families what the rainbow means, and hang their pictures where family members can be reminded of God's promise.

5. God Makes Promises—page 11

After the flood God asked Noah and his family to take care of the earth.

Help the children to understand that God calls them to take care of his creation today. Let them share ways they can help take care of:

- the earth, water, air
- plants and animals
- God's people

Then ask each child to choose one way he or she takes care of the earth and draw a picture of that. Next have each child choose one way he or she takes care of another person. Work with the children to illustrate things they really do, not things they may do some day.

Gather the children in a circle. Have them take turns sharing their pictures. Let each child choose one or two pictures to describe to the group. Follow each presentation with positive and encouraging comments.

Help children plant seeds that will germinate quickly, such as beans, grass, or carrots. Place the pots in a sunny spot in the classroom. Watch how sun and water affect the growth of the seeds.

Display a picture or statue of St. Francis of Assisi. Tell children that St. Francis is known for his love of God's creation. He showed us that we can love God by taking care of the earth.

6. The People of God—page 12

Tell children that we consider Abraham our father in faith. Each one of us is one of billions of children of Abraham.

Give each child a piece of card stock and a star pattern or stencil to trace. Direct children to trace and cut out their star, print their name in large letters on one side, and cover the other side with aluminum foil or silver glitter. If you are using glitter, allow the glue to dry. Punch a hole in one point of each star. Use fishing line to hang the stars over your prayer space.

Ask children what they think it means to be God's People. Help children recognize the various communities in their daily lives: family, class, school, neighborhood, team, club, and so on. Point out that each of us joined the People of God through faith and Baptism. Explain *faith* and *Baptism* in your own words, or direct the children to the "Words for You to Know" on page 31.

Use the children's finger play to help illustrate the difference between church and Church. "Here is the church and here is the steeple. Open the doors and see all the people." The building is the church. The people are the Church, the People of God.

If the weather permits, take the children outside with drawing paper and pencils. Position them where they can see the front of your parish church. Ask them to draw a picture of the church. Keep these pictures for use with the lesson on page 17, "Your Parish."

PRAISE AND CELEBRATE

7. Baptism—page 13

Take the children to see the baptismal font or pool in your parish church. Use a doll to demonstrate the action and words of Baptism. Limit your demonstration to the pouring of water and the words. There is no need to go into detail at this time about the anointing with chrism, the white garment, and the candles.

There are several new vocabulary words on this page: *Baptism*, *sacrament*, *grace*. Have the children repeat the words aloud. Talk about what each means so they can explain each in their own words. For definitions, see "Words for You to Know," pages 31-33.

Talk about the promises of Baptism. God says, "You are my child." The person who is baptized promises to live as a child of God.

Ask children what happens if a baby or very small child is baptized, which happens often. How do babies and young children make this promise when they can't even talk? Explain that parents and godparents make the promise for the baby or child. They also promise to teach the child

about God, so that someday the child can make the promises on his or her own. Ask children how many of them were baptized when they were babies. Tell them that now they are old enough to make this promise themselves. Their parents and godparents will still help them be true to their promises.

Be sure the children know how to do a crossword puzzle. Have the children work in groups of three or four to solve the puzzle.

Answers

Down	Across
1—holy	2—God
4—love	3—family

8. Your Baptism—page 14

Write a note to parents asking them to help their child complete the scroll on page 14. Encourage them to share photographs or video of the occasion with their child.

Suggest that they commemorate this special day each year by lighting their child's baptismal candle (or any white candle) and by tracing the Sign of the Cross on their child's forehead. Finish by sharing a special dessert.

Give the children an opportunity to share their baptismal stories, complete with photographs. Then have each draw a picture of what happened at their Baptism, using the information they have collected. Tell them to include the other people who were present. Display their pictures, with their names underneath their pictures, on a bulletin board. Add the words: *I am a child of God and a member of the Church.*

9. The Sign of the Cross—page 15

Place a crucifix on your prayer table. Gather the children around and ask them to tell you what the crucifix means to them. Help them to see that, ultimately, the Cross is a sign of God's love for us. Ask the children to recall the words of Baptism: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Help them make the connection with the Sign of the Cross. Be sure all of the children can make the Sign of the Cross, with both actions and words.

Use the Sign of the Cross to talk about the Trinity. Foster a growing awareness of the Blessed Trinity. Discuss with the children when they could make and say the Sign of the Cross:

- at the beginning and end of prayers
- when they are frightened
- when they need God's help
- when they are doing something for God.

Ask children to mention other concrete examples of times when making the Sign of the Cross could help them remember that God is with them.

The text again picks up the theme of promise. Ask the children if they ever make a promise and then say "Cross my heart." What do they mean when they say this? Point out these words in their book. Ask them to make the Sign of the Cross without words. Stop them when they reach for their left shoulder. They are literally crossing their heart. Encourage them to think about this whenever they make the Sign of the Cross. They are crossing their hearts to promise to do everything in God's name.

Take the children to church to the baptismal font. Let them all dip their fingers into the water, and make the Sign of the Cross. Tell them that anytime they enter the church, they should bless themselves with holy water. It should remind them of the time when they entered the Church through the Sacrament of Baptism. It should remind them that they are children of God.

Jesus taught us to pray to "Our Father." We can all say this because we are children of God and God is our Father. Pray the Lord's Prayer with the children. (See page 29 of the children's handbooks.)

10. Our Church Family—page 16

Ask children about their family gatherings and celebrations. What do they do at these gatherings? Talk? Share stories? Eat? Work or play together? Do these gatherings and activities help a family grow closer?

Make some comparisons to the Church family gathering for liturgy. We pray and sing together. We share family stories from the Bible. We eat a holy meal.

Tell the children that at Mass we pray to God to help us and others. Ask them to think of some people they might want to pray for. We also pray for people who are hurt or suffering. Ask them to think of some suffering people to pray for.

Remind children of the Sign of the Cross, a prayer that is both words and actions. Ask if they can think of other prayerful actions. Tell them that many such actions are part of our celebration of the Eucharist, or the Mass. Have children practice each prayerful action as you discuss it.

- **Genuflection**—We do this in the church aisle before we go into the pew and again before we leave church. One knee should touch the floor. It is a sign of respect, and says that we believe we are entering the presence of God. The priest does this after the consecration of the bread and wine.
- **Bow**—We do this during the Creed, when we say the words “by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” We also bow before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. It is a sign of reverence.
- **Sign of Peace**—This hug or handshake extends a blessing, the peace of Christ, toward our neighbor.
- **Kneeling**—We kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer, especially during the consecration of the Eucharist. It is a sign of worship and adoration because we believe that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist.
- **Standing**—We stand when the priest or deacon reads the Gospel. This is a sign of special respect for God’s Word.
- **The Sign of the Cross on forehead, lips, and heart before the Gospel**—We ask God to help us understand his Word, to speak his Word, and to love his Word.
- **Folding hands**—We do this when we pray and also when we go to and return from Communion. This action helps us to direct our attention to God and to not be distracted by other things that may be going on around us.
- **Folding arms over chest**—Show the children how to fold their arms over their chests when they

approach the priest or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. Show them how they will hold their hands and bow when they are ready to receive Holy Communion. Help the children understand that they will be receiving Jesus in Holy Communion in a year or two.

11. Your Parish—page 17

Give children the pictures they drew of your parish church for the lesson on page 12 of their handbooks. Ask them to look at their pictures as you read about your parish. Talk about how people in your parish actually do each of these things together.

Then ask if their pictures are finished. Invite children to add some pictures around the church building showing people praying, people in class, people helping others, and people having fun. Encourage children to draw things that your parish actually does, such as running a food pantry, holding a parish festival or picnic, or playing softball or volleyball. Ask children to share what they love about being part of their parish.

Tell children that their pictures need one final touch—a name. What is the name of your parish family? Print the name of your parish on the chalkboard or on newsprint. Give the children time to copy it on their pictures and in their books. Encourage the children to take home their finished drawings and tell their families about them.

Move on to the text about the priest. Help children understand that the pastor takes care of the people of the parish. Print the name of your pastor on the board or newsprint. Give the children time to copy his name in their books. After you have discussed all that your pastor does for you, invite children to make a thank-you card for him. Give each a piece of construction paper. Help them to fold their construction paper to make cards. On the front of the card, ask them to draw a picture of your pastor doing one of the things that he does for the people of the parish. On the inside of the card, have them write “Thank you for” They can fill in the actions they have drawn on the front of the card and sign their names. If possible, have the group hand deliver their cards to your pastor.

Finally read about the Pope. Show the children a picture of our Pope and tell them his name. Print his name on the board or newsprint so they can copy it into their books. Encourage them to listen for the Pope's name the next time they go to Mass. Explain that we always pray for him and for the whole Church at Mass.

12. Happy Times—page 18

Let children talk about happy times they have at home and with their extended families. Go on to ask how they celebrate Christmas and Easter. Point out that these are *holidays* but first of all they are *holy days*. They are Church days. Their celebrations should first and foremost be about going to church.

Show the children a family calendar that is full of reminders for birthdays, appointments, games, free days, and so on.

Then show them a liturgical calendar. It is full of holy days and holy seasons. Help them find the Sundays of Advent and Lent, the days of Christmas and Easter.

Take time to talk about the pictures for the matching activity. Be sure children understand these points.

- One candle of the Advent wreath is lighted for each Sunday of Advent until, on the fourth Sunday, all the candles are lighted. As the light from the Advent wreath grows, we are getting closer to Christmas. The wreath is round and green, representing eternal life.
- A crèche, or nativity scene, shows the birth of Jesus as described in the Bible. (Luke 2:1-20 or Matthew 2:1-11)
- A crucifix depicts Jesus' suffering and Death on a cross
- Jesus rose from the dead, and gives us new life.

Help the children explore some of the traditions that enrich our celebration of Christmas and Easter. Divide the children into four groups. Give each group one of the following questions about Christmas. Give them time to think and talk about their answers. Then invite them to share with the rest of the class. Give everyone the opportunity to add their own ideas. Follow the same plan for the

Easter questions. Be ready with your own answers to supplement their ideas.

- Why do we have Christmas trees?
- Why do we give Christmas presents?
- Why do we have Christmas lights?
- Why do we go to Mass on Christmas?
- Why do we color and decorate eggs?
- Why do we decorate with Easter lilies?
- Why do we sing Alleluia?
- Why do we have Easter baskets?

12. Happy Times—page 19

To highlight the aspect of remembering that is integral to our liturgical days and seasons, make matching cards for a memory matching game. Let children play the game in groups of two to four children.

Words	Pictures
Advent	Advent wreath
Christmas	nativity scene
Lent	crucifix
Easter	risen Jesus
Mary	Mary and the Baby Jesus
Saints	image of the adult Jesus collage of several saints

Help the children learn more about saints.

- Read a picture book about one or more of the saints featured on this page.
- Focus on the patron of your parish or another popular local or national saint.
- Choose two saints whose feast days occur in the months in which you meet with the children. On a class day near the feast days of these saints, tell children about the saints and have a coloring page or other activity to honor them.
- To emphasize the religious nature of these celebrations, read the opening prayer from the Mass for the feast days.
- Invite another adult—a teacher, director of religious education, principal, pastor, or a parent—to come to your meeting and share with the children some information about one of their favorite saints.

FOLLOW JESUS

13. Jesus Is God's Son—page 20

Let the children share loving stories about their own families. Be sure to share a story about your own family, either now or when you were the age of the children in your group.

Using the Christmas crèche or a picture of the nativity of Jesus, have children identify Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. Explain that Mary and Joseph were married. Jesus was the Son of God and the child of Mary. Joseph was his foster father. He took care of Jesus and Mary here on earth.

Ask children what they think the Holy Family did every day. Help them think of ordinary things that their families also do—eating together, sharing news, praying, and working. Mary worked at home—cleaning, baking bread, washing clothes, and so on. Joseph was a carpenter. Jesus helped Mary and Joseph. He played with his friends. Have children form groups of three. Have the groups role-play scenes from the life of the Holy Family.

Have each child draw a picture of the Holy Family doing something that their own family might do. Ask children to take their pictures home and tell their families about their pictures.

14. Jesus Teaches Us—page 21

Help children visualize each teaching of Jesus listed on this page. Ask children to give instances of how they have or could do each. For example, they could tell about how they have been fair, a time when they told the truth, and so on.

Have children make a collage. On a large sheet of poster board, write the words, *Jesus Teaches Us*. Have children look through magazines for pictures that depict people helping, sharing, forgiving, and so on.

After children complete the coloring activity, ask volunteers to act out each example of someone following Jesus. Let them add their own ideas of how children follow the teaching of Jesus. The rest of the class may guess what action is being demonstrated.

15. Jesus Wants Us to Do the Right Thing—page 22

Talk about the times when Jesus obeyed his Father.

- He came to earth as a human child.
- He preached the Kingdom of God and brought it within our reach.
- He showed us the love of the Father.
- He died on the Cross to save all of us.
- He returned to his Father in Heaven.

Help children understand that we can choose to obey God every day. We can choose to do what is right and good. Give an explanation of sin. A sin is freely choosing to do what we know is wrong. It is going against what God wants and disobeying God. Tell children that they can't judge whether an action is sinful by looking at how big a mess they made or how angry someone is with them. What makes an action a sin is choosing to do what they know is wrong.

Read Matthew 25:34-40 from a children's Bible or Lectionary. Give children time to draw a picture of themselves taking care of someone who needs help. Be sure to give the children an opportunity to share their pictures. Connect their actions to the Gospel passage as they share. Help children identify acts of kindness they can do at home for family members.

Involve children in a small service project. Choose a project that they can accomplish on their own. It could be decorating paper grocery bags for the parish food pantry, making cards for people in the parish who are sick, picking up litter on the parish grounds, or collecting good used books for children at a women's or family shelter.

16. Do What Jesus Says—page 23

Tell children that Mary was the person who did the best at following Jesus. She loved God and Jesus very much. Mary can help us to be good followers of Jesus, too. Read the story of the wedding at Cana to the children. Ask the children to retell the story to you. Ask them who did what Jesus said.

The children will enjoy acting out this story. There are plenty of roles to go around: Jesus, Mary, the bride and groom, the waiters, the head waiter, the disciples, and other wedding guests.

Read the directions for the activity and give children time to draw their lines. Then talk about each example again and have the children signal their responses to the examples with a thumbs-up or thumbs-down gesture.

Have children gather in a circle. Go around the circle, giving each the person (including you) the opportunity to tell about a time when they did what Jesus tells us to do. Let the others respond with enthusiastic thumbs up!

17. Saints to Pray for Us—page 24

Place a statue of Mary on your prayer table along with some flowers. Help children recall that Mary, Joseph, and Jesus are the Holy Family. They lived together as a family on earth. Now they are together in heaven. They are also part of our Church family. All of us who follow Jesus will be happy together in heaven.

Help children learn to pray the Hail Mary. They can find the prayer on page 29 of their handbooks. Display a poster of the prayer and help the children read it. Explain unfamiliar words simply. For example, *Hail* is a greeting, like “Hello.” *Fruit of your womb* means “your child.” Ask children to find the words that ask Mary to pray for us.

Display the poster for future meetings of your group. Pray the Hail Mary together over the next several weeks so the children will be able to memorize it.

Before they work out the puzzle, ask children if they know the answer. Afterward, remind children about the saints they met in the lesson on page 19, “Happy Times.” You may wish to have children do the fill-in activity suggested there.

Assure the children that they can ask Mary and all the saints to pray for them. We are all brothers and sisters in the family of God.

18. Angels to Guide Us—page 25

Some children this age may be aware of angels, including Guardian Angels. Others will not. The main truth you want children to understand is that God loves each one of us so much that he gives each of us a special angel to protect and guide us.

Help children understand that angels are invisible, but very real. Feelings are only one example of something we can’t see, but are nevertheless very real. Maybe the children can suggest others.

Introduce children to the guardian angel prayer. Give each child a piece of card stock on which to copy the Prayer to My Guardian Angel. Provide markers, stickers, sequins, feathers, and so on, for them to use to decorate their card. Encourage them to pray to their Guardian Angels every day. Stress it is important that we ask our Guardian Angels to protect us from all kinds of harm. Guardian Angels help us to do what God wants.

Tell or read about angels who brought messages from God to people on earth.

- Luke 1:26-38—The angel Gabriel brought the news to Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus.
- Matthew 1:19-24—An angel told Joseph that Mary would have a baby who was the Son of God. The angel told Joseph to name the baby Jesus.
- Luke 2:8-14—An angel told the shepherds the good news that Jesus was born. A great crowd of angels praised God.

Explain that Mary and Joseph and the shepherds could see and hear these angels because God wanted them to get his special message.

Point out that we sing the words of the angels in the Gloria at Mass: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.”

PRAY

19. Jesus Loves Children—page 26

Ask the children if they like stories. Invite them to share a favorite story. Then tell them that one of your favorite stories is in the Bible. It is a true story. Read the story on page 26 about Jesus welcoming and blessing the children. Stop reading after Jesus blesses the children.

Ask the children how this story makes them feel. Tell them that you want them to draw a picture of the story. They should show themselves with Jesus.

They may be alone with Jesus or there may be others present. They could be sitting on Jesus' lap, or hugging Jesus, or talking to Jesus, or laughing with Jesus.

Play some reflective but joyful music as you distribute drawing paper and crayons or markers. Before the children begin drawing, have them close their eyes. Ask them to imagine themselves in the story. Read the story again slowly. This time stop reading after the line that tells children that Jesus wants to bless them. Then give children time to complete their drawings.

While children are working, prepare a bulletin board or display area. Post the words *We Pray to Jesus* as a heading. When the drawings are completed, mount them in your display. Then gather the children and have them read the heading, "We Pray to Jesus." Ask children to look at their own pictures and listen carefully. Read the last three lines of text slowly, so children can absorb the words.

- When you go to Jesus, you are praying.
- When you talk to Jesus, you are praying.
- When you are close to Jesus, you are praying.

Afterward pause for a short quiet time.

20. Jesus Makes Promises—page 27

Tell the children that Jesus made some promises about praying.

1. Read the first promise: "When you pray together, I am there with you." Ask children who they pray with and when they pray with others. Write their responses on the chalkboard or newsprint. Then read the text that follows the promise.
2. Read the second promise: "When you pray, I will hear you." Remind children that Jesus always keeps his promises. We can believe and trust him. So Jesus always hears our prayers. Sometimes we don't get an answer right away, or we don't get the answer we want. But we can believe that Jesus will always hear our prayers and respond with love.

Explain to children that their prayers to Jesus can be about the same things they say to their family and friends. Ask children to talk about their conversations with family members and friends.

- When do you thank someone in your family? What words might you use?
- When do you tell family members that you love them? What words might you use?
- When do you ask for help? What words might you use?
- When do you tell someone you are sorry? What words might you use?

Tell children that when they pray, they can:

- Thank Jesus.
- Tell Jesus they love him.
- Ask Jesus to help them and others.
- Tell Jesus they are sorry for their sins.

Give children time to complete the prayer starters. Be available to help by asking gentle questions to spur their thoughts.

3. Read the third promise: "I will give you a special helper." Explain that the helper is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. Review the concept of the Blessed Trinity in the lesson on page 15. Remind children that we often make the Sign of the Cross before and after we pray. When they make the Sign of the Cross, they can ask the Holy Spirit to help them pray well.

Read the prayer to the Holy Spirit with the children. Then give them time to decorate the prayer. Point out that their drawing and coloring can be a prayer, if they are talking to the Holy Spirit in their hearts and minds.

20. Jesus Makes Promises—page 28

4. Read the fourth promise: "I will be with you always." Help children to see this means that they can pray, or talk, to Jesus whenever and wherever they want to. Tell them that it is now time for them to make a promise to Jesus. Their promise will be about when and where they will pray. Encourage them to make a promise they can keep. Help them to be realistic and specific in deciding what to draw.

Tell the children that it is important to pray every day. Prayer helps us grow closer to God. It helps us to become more holy, more like God. Explain that it is a good idea to pray at the same time or the same place every day. That makes it easier to remember. Tell them that the next time you meet with them, you are going to ask if they are keeping their promises about praying. Be sure to follow up on this!

5. Read the fifth promise: “I am going to prepare a place for you.” Assure children that Jesus loves them so much that he wants them to be with him forever. He wants them to be happy with him, and God the Father, and Mary, and all the other friends of God. This is the most wonderful promise of all!

TREASURES OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH

Prayers for You to Know—pages 29 and 30

A sense of belonging is very important to children. They gain security and confidence from belonging to a loving family and extended family. Part of the security of belonging comes from understanding and feeling comfortable with what family members say and do. A child learns to expect warm hugs from Mom and knows that Dad will want to take his or her hand when they cross a street. A big sister or brother will sometimes be ready to play catch, and Grandma and Grandpa will almost always have time to tell a story or read a book.

Children gain the same kind of security and confidence from belonging to their Church family. And part of that security of belonging comes from understanding and feeling comfortable with the words they hear and the actions they see in church. That’s why *What the Church Believes and Teaches* includes both “Prayers for You to Know” and “Words for You to Know.”

Children will become familiar and comfortable with “Prayers for You to Know” through repetition throughout the year. The goal is for children eventually to learn these important Catholic prayers by heart so they can feel part of the community that is praying the Lord’s Prayer at Mass or the family that is praying before meals.

Help young children to learn these prayers by saying a line and asking them to repeat that line after you. You may also wish to share this hint with parents. Children will probably need help to remember some of these prayers, but most children should be able to memorize the Sign of the Cross and the Blessing Before Meals.

Words for You to Know—pages 31-33

“Words for You to Know” are child-friendly illustrated definitions of words that are part of the special language of the Church. Children will become familiar and comfortable with these words from hearing them in the lessons in this book. One or two of the words will be part of each lesson.

But the words can be repeated and reviewed throughout the year. Make a game of it. What is the word for this picture? Who knows what this word means? Where did you hear it before? Is this a word you hear in church?