

*Pflaum*  *Gospel Weeklies*  
FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM

# What the Church Believes and Teaches

2011•2012

# Seeds

TEACHING STRATEGIES

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The Subcommittee on the Catechism, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has found the doctrinal content of this manual, copyright 2010, to be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

*Nihil Obstat*: Reverend Thomas L. Knoebel, Ph.D., *Censor Librorum*, June 29, 2009  
*Imprimatur*: † Most Reverend William Patrick Callahan, Bishop of Milwaukee, July 13, 2009

Where appropriate, this text reflects the language of the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*.

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# What the Church Believes and Teaches

## Seeds

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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 Very Young Catholics

Preschool children might be the most receptive learners of all—if they could just sit still! Here are some suggestions to keep in mind as you prepare very young Catholics to learn the basics of their faith.

- Children develop at different rates. Some of the young Catholics in your group may have a large vocabulary. Others will not. It may be necessary to rephrase directions and questions in order to make yourself understood by the entire group. A few in your group may be starting to read a few words. Most will not. You will need to read the few words on the pages of *What the Church Believes and Teaches* to your group. Ask them to follow along as you read.

- The muscles of three- and four-year-old children cry out for use. The wiggles, twitches, and jiggles you see before you are not signs of disrespect. They are signs of muscles trying to grow, and the only way they grow is through movement. Try to incorporate as much physical activity as possible in your lessons to help satisfy this need of growing bodies. When you talk about creation, let your young people be plants growing toward the sun. At Christmas, they can be shepherds carrying young lambs to visit Baby Jesus. In your classes, change postures and places often. At the beginning of class, stand for prayers in a prayer corner you have established, then move to tables or desks for coloring activities. Have story time in an area of the room where children can be comfortably seated on the floor.
- To help children identify their own books, print their names on either the cover or the inside cover of their books. This will also help children to become more accustomed to seeing their names. To make sure children won't lose their books, find a place to store the books between classes.
- Some lessons include notes for parents. After you and the children have completed these lessons, you may want to send the books home so parents can reinforce their children's learning. Enlist parents' help to make sure books are returned to class for the next meeting.
- Remember that children of three and four are very literal minded. Be careful about how you tell young children that God will answer their prayers. They might expect an audible vocal answer in which God says yes, no, or maybe to their requests. Avoid describing death by saying it is like falling asleep. A young child could draw the conclusion that the best way to stay alive is to fight bedtime as long as possible.
- Expect preschool children to forget information that is outside the realm of their experience or interest. Their world is very small and they are focused primarily on what happens there. Larger issues are likely to be too remote or abstract for their complete understanding.
- The "Prayers to Know" section of the children's handbook contains traditional Catholic prayers. It would be good for children to be able to say these important prayers by heart. It is fine for children to learn the prayers even if their understanding of them is incomplete. You need not explain each point or phrase. It's enough for preschoolers to understand that these prayers bring us closer to God.
- The most important thing you can do for these children is to give them happy experiences at your meetings with them. Help them to feel safe and welcome. Make sure there are no put-downs, no

sarcasm, no fighting, and no interruptions. As their teacher or catechist, you are the parish and the Church to these young children. Your love and respect for them reflect the love and respect Jesus has for all of God's children. This is a big responsibility. Thank you for taking it on.

### **Lesson 1: We Make the Sign of the Cross—page 4**

**Objective:** Children will be able to say the words and complete the actions of the Sign of the Cross.

*Perhaps no action so quickly identifies someone as a Catholic as the Sign of the Cross. In this prayer, Catholics proclaim their belief both in the Trinity and in the saving Death of Jesus on the Cross.*

*Learning this prayer gives young children a part in the liturgical prayer of parents and other grown-ups. It makes them an active part of the Church family. The Sign of the Cross is an especially enjoyable prayer for young children because it involves both words and physical activity.*

**Materials:** Crayons

**Lesson Plan:** Begin by asking, Can anyone make the Sign of the Cross and say the words? If so, let the child or children demonstrate.

Then suggest that you all make the Sign of the Cross together. Ask children to stand in a semicircle or wide arc. Then place yourself in the semicircle or arc, close to the middle. Because of your position, you will be visible to all the children, and you will not have the problem of the "mirror image," which you would have if you faced the children.

Ask children to watch you as you make the Sign of the Cross and say the words. Then invite them to join you in making the Sign of the Cross with words and actions. Be sure to say "Holy" as you touch your left shoulder and "Spirit" as you touch your right. Bring your hands together in prayer position at the midline of your chest as you say "Amen." Give children several opportunities to practice at this time, and be sure to make the Sign of the Cross with them whenever you pray together in class.

To explain to *Seeds* children what the Sign of the Cross means, say that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the Three Persons in one God and that we honor and praise them whenever we make the Sign of the Cross.

When children return to their desks or work tables, distribute their books. Help children find Lesson 1 on

page 4 of their books. Read the title of the lesson to them. Then ask them to look at the illustrations. They show a child making the Sign of the Cross. Review the words and the actions. Then ask each child to color the illustration to make that child look as much like himself or herself as possible. For example, they should use crayons to make hair of their own color and color the shirt like the one they are wearing today.

### **Lesson 2: Who Is Jesus?—page 5**

**Objective:** Children will be able to repeat that Jesus is both God and man.

*The central fact of Christianity is that Jesus is truly God and truly man. He took on human nature in order to save all people. These are difficult concepts for three- and four-year-olds. Indeed, they're difficult for people of any age. What you're doing by presenting these ideas to children of this age is planting the belief in the confidence that it will grow as the children gain greater maturity.*

**Materials:** Crayons, reproductions of Marian art, statues and pictures of Jesus and Mary

**Lesson Plan:** Read the words at the top of page 5 in the children's handbook. Explain that Jesus is both God and man. He came to earth to show us how to live and to bring us the opportunity to be with God forever. Mary is Jesus' mother, but his Father is God in Heaven.

Point out the drawing of Jesus and Mary on the page. Explain that no one knows what they really looked like when they lived on earth. They lived so many years ago that there was no TV, there were no photographs. That means artists try to draw what they think Mary and Jesus might have looked like. At this point show the art that you have brought.

Explain to children that they can finish the picture in their books. Mary's robe needs to be colored. What color would they like to make it? Suggest that they color Mary's robe their favorite color.

Finish by praying the Hail Mary together. Help children find this prayer on page 32 of their handbooks. Explain that *hail* is an old-fashioned word that means "greetings." So when we say "Hail Mary," it means "Greetings, Mary," or more simply "Hello, Mary." Be sure to make the Sign of the Cross before and after you say the Hail Mary. To help children learn the Hail Mary, you might want to say each line and ask children to repeat the line after you.

### **Lesson 3: We Go to Church—page 6**

**Objective:** Children will be able to describe their parish church as the place where their Church family gathers to worship God.

*The parish church is the place for Catholics to worship. There, people of all ages and races gather as a community to praise, honor, and thank God. To be saved, each of us must obey God's law, but we are helped by the prayerful support of our Catholic community. That's why it's important for Catholics to come together at least once a week to worship as a community.*

**Materials:** Crayons, bells of different sizes and shapes (kitchen timer, bicycle bell, jingle bells, hand bells, clock with chimes)

**Lesson Plan:** As children are gathering for class, set out the bells you have brought with you. Allow children to examine the bells and ring them. Caution them to be gentle with the bells and to allow others a turn.

Begin class with a prayer, including the Sign of the Cross at the beginning and end. Then ask the children what bells are for. *(The kitchen timer tells us something needs to be done. Bicycle bells tell us to watch out because someone is coming. Jingle bells remind us of horses pulling a sleigh through the snow. A hand bell may tell us it's time to line up to go into school. A chiming clock will tell us the time. All the bells give us some information or tell us to do something.)*

Then ask, Have you ever heard church bells? What do they sound like? What do church bells tell us? *(They tell us it's time to gather with our Church family to worship God.)* Our parish church is the place we go on Sunday or the eve of Sunday to celebrate Mass with other Catholics.

Ask children to move to the work area and help them find page 6 in their handbooks. Read the words on the page together with the children. Draw their attention to the people entering church. Explain that these people heard the call of the bells that tell them to come and worship God.

Ask children to finish drawing the bells and to color them.

### **Lesson 4: Mary Is Our Mother—page 7**

**Objective:** Children learn how to talk to Mary in prayer.

*Praying to the Blessed Virgin Mary is a beloved tradition in the Catholic Church. Children may have experienced a May crowning, in which*

*a statue of Mary was crowned with a wreath of flowers. Their families may pray the Rosary together. And they certainly have heard the Hail Mary prayed, even if they themselves do not yet know all the words.*

*In John 19:26-27, the crucified Jesus asks Mary to think of his beloved disciple John as her son, and John to think of Mary as his mother.*

**Materials:** Pencils, crayons

**Lesson Plan:** Begin class with the Hail Mary. Begin and end the prayer with the Sign of the Cross. Then explain that Jesus once told his follower John to treat Mary as his mother. At the same time he asked Mary to treat John as if she were his mother. Since we are all Jesus' followers, we, too, are encouraged to look on Mary as our mother. We can pray to Mary to ask Jesus to help us with what we need. Since Mary is a human being like us, she cannot answer our prayers directly. But she can ask God to help us because Jesus has made her our mother.

Help children find page 7 in their books. Read the sentences at the top of the page with the children. Then look at the pictures. Near the top of the page is Mary, who is listening to the prayers of her children on earth. Suggest to children some reasons why each of the people shown might be talking to their mother, Mary. Explain that people can tell Mary about things in their lives that make them happy. They can also tell Mary about things that make them feel bad or about mistakes they make. She will always be willing to listen to them.

Ask children to complete the lines from each of the people to Mary, who will certainly hear their prayers. Invite children to draw pictures of themselves talking to Mary in prayer.

### **Lesson 5: Saints and Angels—page 8**

**Objective:** Children will recognize saints as God's special friends and angels as God's messengers.

*The Communion of Saints is a belief that Catholics profess every time we say the Apostles' Creed. The term Communion of Saints tells us that all believers are connected—the souls in Heaven (the saints), the people on earth, and the souls of the dead who are preparing to be with God forever. This means that we can pray for the souls of the dead to help them enter Heaven. It also means that we can pray to the souls in Heaven (the saints), to ask them to pray to God for us. Catholics study the lives of the saints to learn, from their examples, how to be better, more faithful Catholics.*

*God created angels to be his messengers, and he has given each of us a guardian angel to watch over us and protect us.*

**Materials:** Crayons

**Lesson Plan:** Distribute the children's books and help them to find page 8. Read the information at the top of the page, answering any questions children may have. Invite them to look at the illustrations one at a time. Tell children about the angel and the saints pictured.

The **Angel Gabriel** was sent by God to tell Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus.

**St. Elizabeth Ann Seton** was an American who helped train women to teach in Catholic schools.

**St. Francis of Assisi** praised God for creation. He liked animals and birds, flowers and trees, and the sun and the stars.

Then ask children to point to the picture of the saint who was a teacher. Continue by asking them to point to the saint who loved all that God made. Finally, ask children to find the picture of the angel who was sent by God to tell Mary that she would be Jesus' mother.

Conclude with a simple litany. Explain that a litany is a special kind of prayer. Teach children the response, "Pray for us." Ask them to say this after you name each of the saints on this page. After you name the Angel Gabriel, ask children to say, "Protect us." End the litany with the Sign of the Cross.

### **Lesson 6: The Holy Family—page 9**

**Objective:** Children will be able to name the members of the Holy Family.

*The love and respect the three members of the Holy Family show for one another are examples for all families. The humility the divine Jesus showed by obeying his human parents is an example of perfect obedience to the Fourth Commandment. The Church honors the Holy Family with a feast, which is celebrated on the Sunday in the eight days, or octave, in which the Church celebrates Christmas. If there is no Sunday in these eight days, the feast of the Holy Family is celebrated on December 30.*

**Materials:** Crayons

**Lesson Plan:** Ask children about families. How do they show love for one another? How do they help one another? How are children their age able to help in their families?

Explain that children their age can be a big help at home. They can put away toys. They can hang up clothes. They can go to bed without complaining. They can share with their brothers and sisters and avoid fighting with them.

Then introduce the term *Holy Family*. Who do they think the Holy Family is? If anyone says their family is holy, agree with them. All families are expected to do their best to be holy. But the Holy Family is even more special than our own families.

Distribute the books and ask children to find page 9. Ask children to follow along as you read the words at the top of the page. Then ask again, Who is the Holy Family? If there is time, talk with children about what life was like in Jesus' time. People had to work hard. Most worked with their hands in the fields and workshops. As a carpenter, St. Joseph worked with hand tools, like a hammer and saw. There were no power tools. There was no electricity! There were no television sets, computers, or cars. No washing machines, stoves, or vacuum cleaners. But even then, boys like Jesus went to school. They had to learn how to read the Word of God. Going to school was important so that young people could learn the history of their people and the laws God had given them.

Ask children to identify the colors in the boxes at the bottom of the page. Then ask them to choose the correct crayons to follow your directions.

1. Color the heart by the mother of Jesus red.
2. Color the heart by Jesus green.
3. Color the heart by the foster-father of Jesus brown.

### **Lesson 7: Who Leads Our Church Family?—page 10**

**Objective:** Children will recognize the priest as the leader of their parish community.

*In the Sacrament of Holy Orders, baptized men receive the graces they need to serve the people of the Church family as ordained ministers—bishops, priests, and deacons.*

*A bishop is the leader of all the Church communities in a large area. All the bishops of the world make up the college of bishops, which is responsible for taking care of the whole Church.*

*The ordained minister that children will be most familiar with is the priest who leads their parish and celebrates Mass. In some parishes, children will also know a deacon, who has been ordained to help the priest.*

**Materials:** Crayons

**Lesson Plan:** Ask children who leads most of the prayers when they go to Mass. What special clothes does he wear? What actions does he carry out? Does he hold his hands and arms in any special way? (*Let children demonstrate.*) What do you call him? (*Accept any term, such as Father, Father Mike, or the priest.*)

Explain that a priest is a man who serves God's people. He leads the people when they gather in church to worship. He is the leader of our Church family. That's why we call him *Father*.

Help children to find page 10 in their handbooks. Children will be able to recognize the picture of the priest in the vestments he wears when he celebrates Mass. Ask them to look for any shapes they see in the picture. They should color the shapes in the picture the same colors they see in the shapes at the bottom of the page. Children may already have had experience in finding these shapes in other preschool materials. If not, they may need extra help to find the shapes in the picture.

If a photograph or portrait of the pastor of your parish hangs somewhere in your church, take children to look at the picture.

### **Lesson 8: Who Is the Pope?—page 11**

**Objective:** Children will see the Pope as the leader of all the Catholic parish communities in the world.

*The Pope may seem like an unknown and distant person to three- and four-year-olds. But even young children will have the sense that the Pope is someone important when a papal visit or address is being reported. The attention that adults and older children in the family focus on the Pope may signal how important he is. The word pope comes from a Latin word that means "father" or "papa."*

**Materials:** Crayons

**Lesson Plan:** Distribute the children's handbooks and help them find page 11. Help by holding up your book so children can see the page. Ask them to look at the figure in white. Does anyone know who this man is? Read the words at the top of the page with the children. Then write the word *pope* on the chalkboard or on chart paper. Explain that this word is like our English word *papa*. In fact, the Pope is also called the Holy Father. So *Pope* and *Holy Father* are different titles, or names, for the same person—the leader of the great Church family that meets every week in Catholic churches throughout the world.

Ask children to complete the broken lines of the images on the page. This will reveal three churches. Explain that these churches show that the Pope is the leader of all the Catholic churches in the world.

Tell the children that you have some homework for them. They will feel very important to have a homework assignment. Tell children to ask their parents to help them remember the names of churches they have attended for special events such as Baptisms and weddings or when they visited relatives in other parts of the city or country.

If a photograph or portrait of Pope Benedict XVI hangs somewhere in your church, take the children to look at the picture.

### **Lesson 9: We Remember—page 12**

**Objective:** Children will be able to name the Church seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter.

*Preschool children are not yet able to project how long a week, a month, or a year is. For that reason, you may wish to teach this lesson at four different times in the year; that is, when each season is at hand. That means, for example, teaching children about Advent a few weeks before Christmas and waiting until after Ash Wednesday to teach children about Lent.*

**Materials:** Pencils

**Lesson Plan:** Distribute the children's handbooks. Help children to find page 12, and read them the title, "We Remember." Ask, Whom do you think we will be remembering today? If necessary, prompt children by reminding them that this is a religion class. Someone will probably say *Jesus*.

Explain that we remember Jesus all during the year, but at certain times during the year, we remember special events in Jesus' life.

Children love birthdays, especially their own. Ask children if they remember when their birthdays are. Who else remembers their birthdays? Point out that the Church remembers Jesus' birthday. Ask, Do you know what the Church calls Jesus' birthday? Look for a 100 percent response!

Then ask children to look at the illustration of the wreath. Have they ever seen one like it? Many children may have seen one in church. Some may have even seen one in their homes. Ask, Do you know what this kind of wreath is called? You may have to help them out with this answer.

Explain that *Advent* means "coming." Advent is the time just before Christmas when we are waiting to celebrate Jesus' birth. During this time we are getting ready for Jesus. We clean and decorate our homes. We try to get our hearts ready, too. We try to be very kind to others. We help out at home by picking up toys and going to bed on time without complaining.

Ask children to complete the word *Advent* on the page. Use the word many times during the Advent season, and print it on the chalkboard or on chart paper so children can review the shape of this word throughout December.

In several weeks you will be able to teach Christmas in the same way and establish the close relationship between Advent and Christmas.

You will be able to establish a similar relationship between Lent and Easter. Lent is the season when Catholics prepare with prayer, fasting, and almsgiving to celebrate Easter, the great feast of Jesus' Resurrection. In three- and four-year-old terms, of course, Lent means hearing stories of how Jesus died, doing extra things to make other people happy, sharing what we have with others, and saying more prayers at home and at church.

### **Lesson 10: What Is Baptism?—page 13**

**Objective:** Children will be able to repeat that Baptism makes them children of God and members of the Church community.

*Children will likely be very interested in Baptism. Most will have seen an infant Baptism and will realize that they themselves were baptized as infants. To prepare for a discussion of Baptism, send notes home to parents asking them to send photographs of their children's Baptism to class. Let children show their photographs and share stories they may have heard about their Baptism from moms, dads, and grandparents.*

**Materials:** Baby doll, large basin, water, shell for pouring water

**Lesson Plan:** After children have shared photos and stories, help them to find page 13 in their handbooks. Tell them to follow along as you read the words at the top of the page. Ask them what the priest's words remind them of. (*The words of the Sign of the Cross.*) Then draw children's attention to the two things Baptism does for the person who is baptized.

Next ask children to look at the Baptism shown on the page and the words of the priest. Water is poured for each of the Three Persons of the Trinity.

Children can pretend to baptize the baby doll. Put some water into the basin, and then show the doll to the children. Encourage them to give the baby a name. Then children can take turns baptizing the baby. To make it easier, allow one child to hold the doll over the basin while another child pours water three times. Help children to say the words that go along with each pouring of water. Be sure everyone who wishes to has a turn.

Finally, tell children that their parents and godparents made promises for them when they were baptized. This would be a good time to help children learn about these baptismal promises. Explain that you will ask them the questions that the priest asked their parents and godparents at their Baptism. They are to answer the questions by saying “I do.” And when they say “I do,” they will be renewing the promises their parents and godparents made for them at Baptism.

### **Baptismal Promises**

**Leader:** Do you reject Satan?

**Response:** I do.

**Leader:** And all his works?

**Response:** I do.

**Leader:** And all his empty promises?

**Response:** I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

**Response:** I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

**Response:** I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

**Response:** I do.

**Leader:** This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*(Please say Amen.)*

**Response:** Amen.

### **Lesson 11: Right and Wrong—page 14**

**Objective:** Children will be able to recognize loving actions as right actions and unloving actions as wrong actions.

*Because they have not reached the age of discretion, three- and four-year-olds are not able to clearly grasp the difference between right and wrong. That's because at this age, children are almost completely self-centered. They are working to build an idea of themselves as persons. Children need to be able to see themselves as separate persons before they can begin to consider others. But young children can begin to understand the difference between loving (good) actions and unloving (bad) actions.*

**Materials:** Crayons

**Lesson Plan:** Help children find page 14. Read the title, “Right and Wrong.” Then read the words at the top of the page. Make sure children understand that right or good actions show that someone is acting in a loving manner. Children this age would probably say that someone acting in a loving manner is being “nice.” Someone acting in an unloving manner is being “mean” or “nasty.”

Ask children to look at the illustrations and discuss each one. In considering each situation, ask, Who is being loving? How can you tell? Who is being unloving? How can you tell? Before moving on to the next illustration, ask children to draw a red circle around the illustration if it shows a loving action. If the illustration shows an unloving action, they should draw a blue X through it. Explain that Jesus wants us always to do loving actions.

### **Lesson 12: The Golden Rule—page 15**

**Objective:** Children will be able to recognize that being fair involves treating everyone as they themselves want to be treated.

*Because children of three and four are developing a sense of who they are, they are focused on themselves and their own needs. Although you can do little to change the self-centeredness that is part of this stage in their development, you can remind them of the needs of others. You can also emphasize how pleasant home, daycare, and preschool are when children wait their turns and share. Children will understand that it isn't fair for one child to monopolize a toy or game, eat all the treats, or grab all the attention.*

**Materials:** Pencils

**Lesson Plan:** Help students turn to page 15 in their books. Ask them what they see in each set of pictures. You may want to use questions as prompts.

- How many swings are there on this swing set? How many children are there? How many children do you think want to swing? How will each child get a chance to swing? *(The children will need to take turns using the swings.)*

Read the direction under the pictures and allow time for children to follow the direction.

- How many apples do you see? How many children do you see? How many children do you think will want to eat an apple? Is there an apple for each child?

Read the direction under the pictures and allow time for children to follow the direction.

- How many children do you see? How many children do you think will want a hug?

Read the direction under the pictures and allow time for children to follow the direction.

### Lesson 13. We Have Things to Share—page 16

**Objective:** Children will recognize that Jesus teaches us to share God's gifts.

*Preschool children find it difficult to share. At the same time, however, children can learn about sharing from watching the adults around them. We can show children that sharing what we have with others is an important and loving thing to do.*

**Materials:** Pencils

**Lesson Plan:** Distribute the children's books and help children find page 16. Read the sentence at the top of the page. Ask, Do you know what Jesus said about sharing? Paraphrase what Jesus says in Luke 3:11. "If you have two coats, give one to someone who doesn't have a coat. If you have food, share it with someone who has no food."

Ask, What do you have that you can share? What do your parents and teachers tell you to share? Repeat each item that is mentioned.

Spend a few minutes talking about each scene that is illustrated on the page. Encourage children to describe what they see in each picture. Then ask the children to draw a circle around the pictures that show children sharing.

### Lesson 14. God Loves You!—page 17

**Objective:** Children will begin to see themselves as part of a worldwide community, each member of which is loved by God.

*Because the world of three-and four-year-olds consists mostly of the people they see on a regular basis, children this age do not have an idea of the size and diversity of the human family. But the adults in their lives can make them aware that the human family consists of great numbers of people of different cultural backgrounds.*

**Materials:** Crayons

**Lesson Plan:** Help children find page 17 in their handbooks. Ask them what they see there. How are the dancing children dressed? *(They are wearing different clothes according to where they live.)* Are they all the same race? *(No, some are black, some are brown, some are white, some are Asian.)* Do they all look alike? *(No, some have curly hair, some have straight hair.)*

Explain that God makes many different kinds of people and loves them all. God wants all people to be happy and to have a share of the good things in the world. Invite each child to color the child at the top of the page to look like himself or herself, with the same color hair and the same color clothing.

### Lesson 15. What Is Prayer?—page 18

**Objective:** Children will be able to describe prayer as talking to God.

*Be careful in discussing prayer with three- and four-year-olds. Remember, they are very literal. Explain that God answers prayers but not with words we can hear. If we feel bad about something that has happened and we tell God about it, our answer may come in the form of a change in our feelings. We may not feel so sad anymore. If we tell God about something good that happened, our answer may come in the form of feelings of gratitude toward the person or people who made the good thing happen.*

**Materials:** Crayons

**Lesson Plan:** Ask children when and where they pray. Some will say at church; others at their bedside every night. Explain that it is fine to pray in any place and at any time. Some people will pray when they feel very happy. Seeing a litter of five-week-old puppies will make some people say a quick prayer of thanks to God for making such cute little creatures. Many people who see a traffic accident will say a quick prayer to God to help the victims.

Then ask children if they say prayers they know by heart or if they make up their own prayers. Some three- and four-year-olds may know the Prayer to the Guardian

Angel by heart. Some may think made-up prayers are not acceptable to God. Explain that God likes all prayers from people. Made-up prayers are fine, and so are memorized prayers. The important thing is that our prayers are sincere, that we mean what we say. To close class with prayer, begin with the Sign of the Cross, a memorized prayer, and finish with a made-up prayer that relates to the subject of the lesson. For example:

God, our Father in Heaven,  
We thank you for bringing us together today  
to learn about prayers. Help us to think of you  
often and to stay close to you in prayer. Amen

Distribute the children's books and help children find page 18. Read the words at the top of the page to review what children have learned in this lesson. Then ask children to look at the four pictures. Tell them to use a red crayon to draw a line around a child praying before a meal. Then ask them to draw a yellow line around a child praying in the morning and a green line around a child praying at night. Finally children will draw a blue line around a child praying in church with others.

### **Lesson 16: The Church Has a Holy Book—page 19**

**Objective:** Children will be able to say that the Holy Bible is the holy book of Christians.

*Our holy book is the Bible, the living Word of God by which God speaks to his people. The Bible tells the story of how God created Heaven and earth and how he sent Jesus to show us how to live.*

**Materials:** Crayons

**Lesson Plan:** Ask students if they know what we call our holy book. Have they ever seen this book? Where? Do they know what is in that book?

Distribute the children's books and help children find page 19. Tell them the page shows a picture of our holy book. Can anyone read what the title is? The title is the two words on the cover of the book. The title is *Holy Bible*. Ask them if they have heard that title before. At church on Sunday, they hear people read from this book. It has lots of stories about Jesus and about the good people who lived before Jesus was born. It tells stories about Jesus' life and Death and about all the people he helped. It tells how Jesus came back from being dead and lives in Heaven today.

Ask children to color the title of the book. Print the words one at a time on the chalkboard or on newsprint or chart paper. As you print each word, say that word out loud. Then ask children to repeat the words as you point to them. Be sure to print the words occasionally

during remaining classes so children will become familiar with them.

### **Lesson 17: The Holy Bible Tells Us What God Made—pages 20 and 21**

**Objective:** Children will be able to say that the Bible tells us that God made the world.

*The important thing in this lesson is for children to learn that God made the world and all that is in it. God alone creates something from nothing. Human beings can make plans and build bridges. They can write books and compose music. They can develop medicine to cure diseases. Yet all of these human creations are made from materials God made from nothing long ago.*

**Materials:** Crayons

**Lesson Plan:** Find a copy of the Bible, preferably one with the words *Holy Bible* printed in large letters on cover. Show the Bible to the children and ask if someone can show you which word is *Holy*. Then ask which word is *Bible*.

Read the opening of the Book of Genesis. Read as long as the story holds the attention of the children. Ask them what the story is about. They will easily recognize that the story is about creation. Ask children one at a time to name some of the things God has made.

Distribute children's handbooks and help children find pages 20 and 21. Invite children to color all the things they see there. As they finish, ask them to read with you the banner across the bottom of the pages. Then walk around the room, asking each child to point to a different one of God's creations or creatures—a stream, a mountain, an animal with fur, an animal with feathers, a child, a flower, a tree, and so on.

### **Lesson 18: The Bible Tells Us Stories about Jesus—page 22**

**Objective:** Children will be able to say that the Bible includes the story of Jesus welcoming little children like them.

*Children will enjoy learning about the Bible passage in which Jesus blesses and comforts little children. They will be pleased to know that Jesus, far from considering children unimportant, will welcome them and others who are like them into his Kingdom. For many grown-ups, this is a difficult teaching. To enter the Kingdom of God, they must become as humble and simple as children.*

**Materials:** Pencils, crayons

**Lesson Plan:** To begin, gather in your prayer space. Have a Bible in a prominent space, perhaps with a lighted candle close by. After the Sign of the Cross, ask a child to carry the Bible reverently to you, perhaps holding it high as children have seen the Lectionary carried into church. From the Bible, read the account of Jesus welcoming little children. Select from the slightly different versions of the story the one that appeals most to you. See Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16, and Luke 18:15-17. When you finish reading, ask children to tell you what the story was about. What does it tell us about Jesus? Do you like Jesus for what he does and says in this story?

Distribute the handbooks and help children find page 22. Read the words at the top of the page. Can children find Jesus on this page? Then ask them to notice the little children who are with Jesus.

Then read the word under the illustration. Ask the children to color the word *Come*.

Encourage children to think about this Gospel and look at this picture often. And when they do, they can say this prayer: "Jesus, I will always come to you."

### **Lesson 19: The Bible Tells Us the Christmas Story—page 23**

**Objective:** Children will be able to say what the Bible tells us about Jesus' birth.

*The Christmas story is, of course, the Bible story with which children will be most familiar. Tell children that Christmas is the celebration of God coming into the world. Christmas celebrates the mystery of the Incarnation—the reality that the Word became flesh. The Second Person of the Trinity, God's Son, took on human nature. Christmas is a happy time for us because Jesus not only came into our world, but he also came to save the world and its people. His coming makes our salvation possible.*

**Materials:** Crayons

**Lesson Plan:** With the children, make the Sign of the Cross. Ask a volunteer to carry the Bible to you. The child can carry it high as the Lectionary is carried in church. Then announce that you will read from the Book of Luke, Chapter 2, verses 1-20. Ask children to raise their hands, without speaking out, as soon as they recognize the story. When you finish the reading, call on some of the children who have raised their hands and ask them to say how they recognized the story.

Ask children what they like best about Christmas. Most will say they like getting presents best. Ask if anyone knows why we give presents at Christmas. Explain that giving gifts at Christmas is a celebration of the incredible gift God gave to the world. That is the gift of Jesus, who came to teach us how to love one another.

Distribute the handbooks and help children to find the Christmas scene on page 23. Discuss the people and animals in the illustration. Point out Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the donkey that Mary rode to Bethlehem. Also point out the outline of a star above the Christmas scene. Invite children to complete and color the Christmas star.

Ask children to imagine how they would have felt as visitors to Bethlehem. Would they have felt tired after journeying to Bethlehem? Would they have been cold? Excited? Would they have been thrilled to be staying up so late? Conclude by singing a Christmas carol.

### **Lesson 20: Jesus Is the Good Shepherd—page 24**

**Objective:** Children will identify Jesus as the Good Shepherd and will be able to say that Jesus knows each of them by name.

*The cross is the most important symbol of Christianity, but it was not always so. First- and second-century Christians felt that the image of the Good Shepherd was more appropriate. For them, the cross was a symbol of the cruel executions carried out by the Romans who ruled them. It was not until Christianity became a tolerated religion in the fourth century and St. Helena undertook her search for the Cross of Jesus in Jerusalem that the cross became the revered symbol that it is today. Up until that time, Christians decorated the walls of the catacombs with images of the Good Shepherd.*

*The Old Testament often refers to God as a shepherd, including in Psalm 23. In the New Testament, Jesus often describes himself as the shepherd of his followers: "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me" (John 10:14).*

**Materials:** Pencils

**Lesson Plan:** Most preschool children probably know little about shepherds. You may want to begin a discussion of shepherds by talking about some working dogs that help the shepherd in his work. Ask children if they have heard of German shepherd dogs, collies, Old English sheep dogs, or Australian sheep dogs. These are called working dogs. What work do they do? How are

they different from dogs who hang around the house all day and bark at the mail carrier? Shepherd dogs are bred to keep sheep together in a group. And they work for a shepherd, the man or woman who looks after a flock (group) of sheep.

In Jesus' day, everyone knew what a shepherd did. He led his sheep to good pasture, where they could eat. He protected them from wolves and thieves. At night he took them into a stone pen through a gate and lay down in the gate so no one could get to the sheep without waking him.

Jesus says he is like the shepherd and we are like the sheep. And he is serious when he says he knows us by name.

Help children find page 24 in their handbooks and look at the illustration on the page. Tell children they are like the sheep with Jesus. Jesus will care for each of them and for each member of their families. Help children write their names and the names of their family members on the sheep.

Close with this prayer, asking students to repeat each line after you say it. Begin and end the prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

Jesus, you are our shepherd.  
We are your sheep.  
Please guide us.  
Teach us what to do.  
Keep us safe.  
We will follow you.  
Thank you for taking care of us.  
Be with us now and forever. Amen

### **Lesson 21: Jesus Went to a Wedding—page 25**

**Objectives:** Children will discover that Jesus ate many meals with his friends and even went to a wedding. They will also celebrate the completion of this book with a small party.

*Many stories in the Bible show Jesus sharing meals and enjoying being with his friends. This is especially true of the story of the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12). Here Jesus enjoys himself and performs a miracle that saves the bridegroom from the embarrassment of running out of wine.*

**Materials:** Crayons, juice, cookies that do not contain nuts, small paper plates, paper cups or plastic glasses

**Lesson Plan:** Explain that the Bible tells the story of Jesus and his friends attending a wedding in a town called Cana. Jesus was having fun talking to the wedding guests when his mother told him that there was no more

wine. Jesus told the waiters to fill six huge water jugs with water. Then he told one of the waiters to take a taste to the wine steward. When the wine steward tasted it, he said it was very good wine, and the party went on. Jesus wanted his friends to have a good time, just as he wants us to have a good time today.

Help children to find page 25. Tell them to find Jesus in the picture. See if they can find the water jugs.

Then set up the party. If possible, gather children around a large table. Give each one a glass of juice and a small plate with a cookie or two. Before the group begins to eat, ask them to pray by repeating each line of this prayer after you.

Come, Lord Jesus,  
be with us now.  
We know you like children.  
We know you like parties.  
We are gathered in your name.

Send your Spirit to join us  
as we join hands and say,

Bless us, O Lord,  
and these your gifts,  
which we are about to receive  
from your goodness.

Through Christ, our Lord. Amen

### **What Did You Learn?—pages 26 and 27**

**Objective:** Children will test themselves on how well they remember what they have learned in this book.

**Materials:** Crayons

**Lesson Plan:** Tell children they will now test themselves on what they have learned. Because “testing” is a grown-up activity, children will probably feel very important as they undertake this task.

Help children to find pages 26 and 27 in their handbooks. Explain that on these pages, children will see illustrations from the lessons in their handbooks and they will be reviewing what they learned from these lessons. You may need to explain what it means to review material that has been learned. To review means to call something back to mind so we can almost see it again.

As children look at the illustrations, tell them to have their crayons ready and to listen carefully to directions. Begin by asking children to use their brown crayons to draw a circle around St. Joseph. If they need help, ask them to recall what St. Joseph did to earn money to support Jesus and Mary. Then they should look for a man with a carpenter's tools.

Continue with the directions for the review. Ask children to draw:

- a blue circle around a child saying night prayers.
- a black circle around the holy book of our Church family. What do we call this book?
- a red circle around Jesus the Good Shepherd. What shows you that Jesus is a shepherd?
- a yellow circle around the child being baptized. What shows that the child is being baptized?
- a green circle around Jesus and the little children. In what book do we read this story?
- a red circle around the Pope. What color does the Pope usually wear?
- a blue circle around the child doing a loving action. What shows that this is a good action?

### **Words to Know—pages 28-31**

A feeling 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 this book includes "Words to Know," 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 *What the Church Believes and Teaches for Seeds*. 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 by asking questions such as these: 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?

### **Prayers to Know—pages 32-33**

Children will also become familiar and comfortable with "Prayers 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 preschool 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. Preschool 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.