



## Sunday Gospel Background

In this parable, an employer goes on a journey and entrusts his money to three workers. Two of them double his money. But when the third worker only buries it, the employer is irate. This Gospel presents opportunities to talk about gifts and talents. Find ways to affirm your child's gifts, especially those that might seem "ordinary," such as humor, energy, or thoughtfulness.

## Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** "Dear God, thank you for making everyone in our family unique and special. Help us learn more about you, and the gifts you give us. Amen."
- ☐ **Story • Friends Share with One Another (page 1)** Invite your child to color the picture. Then tell this story about two friends:

Maria and Mateo live in San Francisco where it rains a lot. One day, Maria was over at Mateo's house playing in his backyard. They noticed the sky was getting dark, but they were having so much fun that they didn't notice the raindrops until they came down hard and fast. "Let's go!" Mateo yelled, and he took off running to the house. Maria followed right behind. By the time they got through the back door, Maria's hair was wet and Mateo's shirt was sticking to his back.

Mateo's mother made hot chocolate for them. They watched the rain run down the windows as they drank the chocolate. "My mom said I should be home by 4:30," Maria

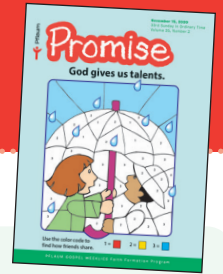
said. "How can I walk home in the rain?" Mateo laughed. "I know how you can get home," he said. "I will be right back." Maria heard Mateo talking to his mother. Then she heard cupboards opening and closing. "What is Mateo doing?" Maria wondered. Then Mateo appeared. He had a yellow raincoat, a yellow hat, and a big red and yellow umbrella in his hand. "I can walk you home," Mateo said. "The coat and hat will keep me dry, and the umbrella will keep the rain off you." Maria smiled. "Good idea!" she said. The two friends walked down the block to Maria's house.

Share an experience of a friend who has helped you, and invite your child to do the same. Explain that being a good friend is a talent that God gives us. We can practice being a friend and get really good at it.

- ☐ **Activity • What do I like to do? (page 2)** Explain that God has given each of us special talents. Look at the images all around the page. If you see an activity your child enjoys, point it out. If not, talk about other things your child likes to do. Invite your child to draw a picture and write words that finish the sentence "I like to."

## Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Parable of the Talents** Explain that Jesus once told a story about using our talents and sharing them with others.



Once there was a man who decided to go on a long trip. He called in three of his servants and said: "I trust you with my business while I am gone. Amos, I give you five talents. Samuel, I give you two talents. Joshua, I give you one talent." A talent was a very large amount of money.

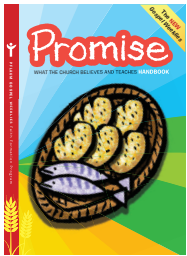
Then the man left on his trip. Amos said to the other servants, "I will take my five talents and use them to earn more." Samuel said, "I will use my two talents to earn more too." Joshua said: "I am going to bury my talent. I don't want to lose it."

After a long time, the man came home. He called his

workers together. Amos told him, "Look, you gave me five talents, and I have earned five more." The man said to Amos: "Well done, my good and faithful servant. I trust you to do important work for me. Come and share my joy." Samuel told the man, "I doubled the money you gave me too." The man said: "Well done, my good and faithful servant. I will trust you with more. Come and share my joy."

Joshua stepped up and said: "Sir, I know you are a tough boss. I was afraid I would lose your money, so I buried it. Here it is." The man said to Joshua: "What a lazy servant! Give your talent to Amos and leave me. I do not trust you anymore."

- ☐ **Word of the Week • service (page 2)** Help your child locate the Word of the Week on page 2. Share this definition: We offer service when we help one another.



- ☐ **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 11. Read aloud the title, then briefly review the story of Noah. Explain that after the flood, God asked Noah and his family to take care of the earth. Just like the man in the Gospel who wanted his servants to use their talents to take care of his business, God wants his servants—us—to take care of his Creation today. Discuss how your family takes care of the earth, water, air, plants, animals, and God's people. Invite your child to draw a picture of your family doing one of these activities together. Display the drawing in your home.

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, pages 3–4.*

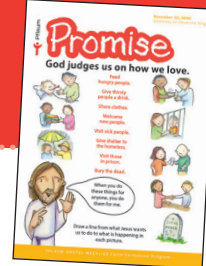
## Live the Gospel

- ☐ **Gospel Activity • Hide It! A Game of Sharing Your Talents (pages 3–4)** Explain that each picture card shows a special talent and will be part of the game.  
Help your child cut out the cards. Place them in a small box or bag and take turns drawing cards. Each player chooses one of the two activities pictured (front or back of card), and pantomimes it so the other can guess what it is. Invite other family members to join if available. When another player guesses the activity, the player pantomiming may keep the card. A player who draws the Hide It! card must return all cards to the box. The winner is the player with the most cards when all the cards have been drawn.
- ☐ **Closing Prayer** "Thank you, God, for all of your gifts. Help us do our best always to share them. Amen."
- ☐ **Family Corner (page 2)** Say the family prayer any time throughout the week.



## Parent Resources

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### Sunday Gospel Background

Sunday's Gospel compares the Last Judgment to a shepherd separating sheep from goats. The shepherd distinguishes the sheep by their merciful actions. The sheep are people who have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, sheltered the stranger, clothed the naked, and visited the sick and imprisoned. Jesus offers us a clear message for how we should treat others.

### Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together:** "Jesus, help us be like you by looking for ways we can help others. Amen."
- ☐ **Story • The Thank-You Box** Explain that you are going to tell a story about two brothers named Dalton and Drew.

Dalton Nelson had a problem. His brother Drew had made a project for his sixth-grade religion class. It was a Thank-You Box. On one side of a big cardboard box, Drew had drawn pictures of all kinds of food. On the other side, he drew pictures of mittens and hats, shoes and sweaters. On one end of the box, Drew had drawn a soccer ball and hockey skates. Drew wrote "Thank You, God!" in big letters on the other end of the box. Dalton helped him color the letters.

But now that the box was finished, Dalton had a problem. Drew wanted Dalton to put some of his own things in the box, and Dalton didn't want to. "You have two soccer balls," Drew said to Dalton. "Put one of them in the box. We will take the box to church. Father Bill will give the things in the box to a family that doesn't have toys or clothes." Dalton made a face. "What if my other soccer ball gets a hole in it?" he asked.

"Then I won't have any at all."

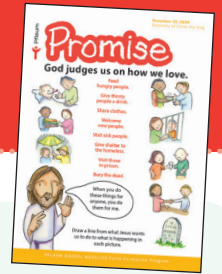
Drew pointed to the picture of the sweater he had drawn on the box. "What about your hockey sweater from last year?" Drew said. "It doesn't fit you anymore. It's just lying on the floor in your closet." Dalton said, "That's my favorite sweater. You can't take that."

Just then, Mom came in the room. "No one is going to take anything away from you, Dalton," Mom said. "But I did find all these jackets and mittens and hats in the hall closet. Let's see which ones you will wear this year. You can choose what you want to put in the Thank-You Box. Then we will go to the kitchen and the family room and find food and toys for the box too. Is that OK?" Dalton went with Mom. Soon he felt happy and excited that the Thank-You Box was full.

**Ask:** How did Dalton feel about sharing his clothes and toys at the end of the story? What changed for Dalton?

### Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Jesus Teaches the Works of Mercy** Explain that Jesus' friends often asked him who would be in his kingdom. In Sunday's Gospel, Jesus makes the answer clear.



One day, Jesus told his followers what it will be like when he comes again.

He said: "I will gather all the people of the world together. Then I will say to some of them: 'You have my Father's blessing. Come to the kingdom we have prepared for you. I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you welcomed me. I was naked, and you gave me clothes. I was sick, and you took care of me.'

The people will ask, 'Jesus, when did we see you hungry or

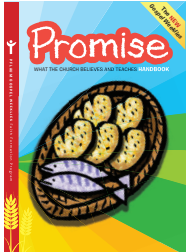
thirsty or sick or any of these things?' I will answer, 'Whenever you did one of these things for someone in need, you did it for me.'

Then I will say: 'Not all of you can come into my kingdom. Some of you saw me when I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. You saw me thirsty and didn't give me a drink. I was a stranger, had no clothes, and was sick, and you didn't help me.'

Those people will ask, 'Jesus, when did we see you like this and not help you?' I will tell them, 'What you did not do for someone in need, you did not do for me.'"

**Ask:** What ways of helping others did Jesus give us in the Gospel? Explain that these are some of the Works of Mercy. Mercy means being willing to forgive or help. It means treating others like God treats us.

- ☐ **Cover Activity • What Does Jesus Want Us to Do? (page 1)** Look at the cover together. **Ask:** Are any of the people acting like Drew and Dalton's family? Call attention to Jesus and read aloud his words. Read aloud the list in red. Have your child draw lines from the sentences to the pictures that match. Help your child recognize these actions as Works of Mercy.



- ☐ **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 21. Read aloud the text and invite your child to imagine what each teaching of Jesus looks and feels like. Help your child complete the activity on page 21. Refer back to the list of eight teachings marked with red hearts. For each picture, **ask:** Which teaching is the child following? Which teaching is the child not following?

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, page 2.*

- ☐ **Word of the Week • saint (page 2)** Help your child locate the Word of the Week on page 2. Share this definition: *A saint is a person who lived like Jesus and is now in Heaven.* Explain that following Jesus' teachings and doing the Works of Mercy will help us become saints in Heaven someday too.

## Live the Gospel

- ☐ **Activity • I can do Works of Mercy. (pages 2-3)** Look at the town together on pages 2-3. Read aloud the question on page 2 and ask your child to find the people in the town who are doing Works of Mercy. Then direct your child's attention to the four small pictures on page 3. Have your child find people who are sharing what is pictured in each square.
- ☐ **Activity • Make a crown for Jesus. (page 4)** Explain that this Sunday is a special celebration of Jesus Christ as King. Read aloud the title and directions for this activity. Have your child trace the letters of Jesus' name on the crown. Encourage your child to color the jewels of Jesus' crown by doing kind actions this week.
- ☐ **Closing Prayer:** "Jesus, thank you for your gifts. Help us to show our love for you by sharing them with others. Amen."



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### Sunday Gospel Background

This Sunday, the Church begins preparing for the feast of Christmas, the celebration of God becoming human. Advent also calls us to prepare for Jesus' coming in glory at the end of time. Being ready for Christ's Second Coming is the theme of Sunday's Gospel.

### Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** "Jesus, we are getting ready to celebrate your birthday at Christmas. We know you came to be with us because you love us. We love you too. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen."
- ☐ **Word of the Week • Church Year (page 4)** Help your child locate the Word of the Week on page 4. Explain that we start a new Church Year on the First Sunday of Advent. Share this definition: *The Church Year helps us remember and celebrate Jesus' life.*
- ☐ **Cover Activity • Advent Is a Time to Get Ready (page 1)** Invite your child to read the captions. Discuss the photos by asking questions such as: What is the child waiting for? What do we wait for during Advent? What colors are the candles? What kind of songs might the girl be singing? What do you think is in the gift box?
- ☐ **Story • We Get Ready for Christmas (page 2)** Have your child look at the photos as you share the story.

Todd and Kayla were two children who had a big problem. Christmas was too far away. "I want Christmas to be tomorrow," Todd told his mom. "Why can't we have our presents now?" Kayla asked her dad. "Christmas is four weeks away," Mom said. "This is only the first Sunday of Advent." Kayla whined, "I want Christmas to come fast." Dad and Mom didn't know what to do with such impatient children.

That night after supper, Dad cleared a space on the kitchen table. He put down a big piece of paper. He used a ruler to make lines going across the paper and then lines going up and down. "You are making a calendar," Todd guessed. "Yes, I am,"

Dad said. "I am making an Advent calendar. It will help make Christmas come faster." Dad wrote the days of the week across the top of the calendar page and put numbers in the squares.

"Now we need to fill in the squares," Dad said. "What is something you like about getting ready for Christmas?" Todd said, "I like baking Christmas cookies." Kayla said, "I like putting up the Nativity scene." Mom said, "I like getting Christmas cards from our friends and family. I even like writing Christmas cards." Dad smiled. "You have the right idea. We will write all those ideas and more on our Advent calendar. When we do them all, Christmas will be here."

**Ask:** What would you add to the Advent calendar? Look at each of the squares in the calendar on page 2, starting with the single candle at the top left and the picture next to it. The boy is lighting one candle for the first Sunday of Advent. Have your child color the flame on the single candle.

Continue through the Advent calendar square by square, identifying the actions that are happening or the saint you will learn about later in the lesson. Keep this calendar visible throughout Advent. As your family does the actions, have your child color the frame around the corresponding picture. (The actions do not have to be done on the days specified.)





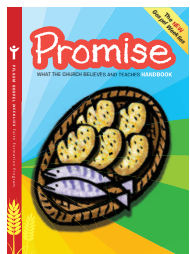
## Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Jesus Will Come Again** The Gospel for the First Sunday of Advent is always about Jesus' Second Coming in glory at the end of time. This can be confusing for children, who do not yet have a sense of long periods of time. Introduce this Gospel by reviewing the Gospel stories from the October and November *Promise* lessons. Explain that Jesus knew he wouldn't be around all the time to tell us stories and answer questions. Here is what he said:

Jesus told his friends that he would come again. He said:  
"Get ready! Pay attention! You do not know when this time will be. It will be like a man who puts his servants in charge

when he goes on a trip. He gives them work to do. He tells them to always be ready for him to come home. Do not let me find you sleeping when you should be working."

**Ask:** What can we do to get ready for Jesus? What will Jesus want to know when he comes again? What would you like to be doing when Jesus comes?



- ☐ **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 18. **Ask:** What are some of your favorite celebrations that you look forward to every year? Then look at the Church Year calendar together. Note that it is full of holy days and holy times. Help your child find the Sundays of Advent and the days of Christmas.

Talk about the pictures for the matching activity for Advent and Christmas. Help your child understand that we light one candle of the Advent wreath each Sunday of Advent until the fourth Sunday, when we light all four candles. As the light from the Advent wreath grows, we get closer to Christmas.

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, pages 3–4.*

## Live the Gospel

- ☐ **Activity • Advent Booklet (pages 3–4, top)** Show your child how to make the one horizontal cut on the heavy black line. Set aside the Advent wreath activity. Show how to fold the page to make a booklet. Invite your child to open the booklet and together, read the stories of the saints.  
  
Conclude this activity by reading the instructions to the word search on the back page of the booklet. Offer help if you notice your child struggling to find the hidden words.
- ☐ **Activity • Our Class Advent Wreath (pages 3–4, bottom)** You can adjust the activity for home use in several ways. You can turn the page over to the blank green square and cut out a single, circular wreath shape. Or you can make additional pinwheels using the square as a template. If you want, add four candles made from rolled paper (three violet, one rose). Place the violet candle on your wreath on the First Sunday of Advent, and so on.
- ☐ **Closing Prayer** Gather around the Advent wreath. Pray the "Our Advent Prayer" from the Advent booklet together.



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### Sunday Gospel Background

In Sunday's Gospel, John the Baptist tells people to prepare for someone powerful and good who is coming. "Be ready for him," John says, echoing the words of the prophet Isaiah.

### Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** "Come Lord Jesus, come! Mary and Joseph are ready. The crib is ready for you. And we are ready too. Come Lord Jesus, come! Amen."
- ☐ **Cover Activity • Advent Is a Time of Change and Growth (page 1)** Look at the cover pictures together. **Ask:** Do you see any changes from the first picture to the second picture? As you find each of the twelve changes, **ask:** Is this an Advent change? **Answers:** (1) The priest's chasuble is now violet (purple). (Advent) (2) A different saint is on the wall. (3) The chair is different. (4) An Advent wreath replaced the Easter candle. (Advent) (5) A Nativity scene replaced the flowers. (Advent-Christmas) (6) The flowers are now red. (7) Who moved the chalice? (8) The symbol on the priest's chasuble is different. (9) The priest changed his shoes. (10) The priest's hands look more relaxed. (11) It is night outside the window. (12) There is one less step into the sanctuary.
- ☐ **Activity • I grow up! (page 2)** Look at the top part of page 2 together. Have your child check the box next to each picture that shows something he or she can do. Then have your child look at the box about teeth below and read aloud the sentence. Invite your child to count loose or missing teeth, write the number, and color in that number of tooth shapes.  
  
Point out the ruler on the top of page 2; then the handprint and footprint at the bottom left. Have your child cut out the ruler, use it to measure the length of their hands and feet, record the measurements, and add today's date. **Ask:** What are some other ways we can grow? *Knowledge, kindness, love for God, abilities, etc.*

### Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Make a Straight Path for God** Read the Gospel aloud to your child:

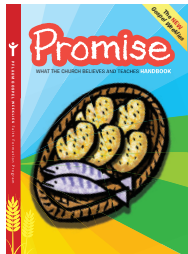
Long ago, the prophet Isaiah wrote about a messenger from God. Isaiah wrote: "God's messenger will shout in the desert, 'Get a road ready for God. Make God a straight path.'" This is just what John the Baptist did. He lived in the desert. He wore a shirt made of camel hair and ate grasshoppers and honey.

People came to him to find out how to get ready for God.

John told them: "I baptize you with water to show you are sorry for your sins. Someone who is more powerful is coming. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

**Ask:** How do you think people could get ready for Jesus back then? How do we get ready for Jesus today?

- ☐ **Word of the Week • Holy Spirit (page 2)** Help your child locate the Word of the Week on page 2. Share this definition: *When Jesus went back to Heaven, he gave us a special helper. The **Holy Spirit** helps us to pray and do what is good.*



- **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 22. Read aloud the title, then **ask**: What are some of the ways that Jesus obeyed his Father in Heaven? *He came to earth as a human child, he preached the Kingdom of God, he showed us the love of the Father, he died on the Cross to save us, he returned to his Father in Heaven.*

Read the paragraphs aloud. Help your child understand that we can choose to obey God every day by choosing to do what is right and good. This is an important way we can get ready for Jesus. Explain sin as freely choosing to do what we know is wrong. It is going against what God wants and disobeying God.

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, pages 3–4.*

## Live the Gospel

- **Saint Story • Our Lady of Guadalupe (pages 3–4)** Explain that a special celebration for Mary is on December 12; the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Read this story:

A long time ago, a poor Aztec Indian in Mexico was walking to Mass. His name was Juan Diego. It was December, and Juan was cold. All of a sudden, Juan heard birds singing and a voice calling him. “Juan,” the voice said. “Little Juanito.” It was a woman’s voice, and she was speaking in the Aztec language. Juan looked up the hill, and there was a beautiful woman with a turquoise cloak full of stars. She had dark skin and dark eyes, just like Juan had.

The woman said, “Juan, I am Mary, the Mother of God. I want you to tell the bishop to build a church here in my honor.”

Juan said, “Mother, he will not listen to me. I’m just a poor Indian. But I will go.” Juan was right. The bishop wouldn’t listen to him. “Go home. Don’t waste my time,” he said to Juan.

When Juan told the beautiful woman he had failed, she asked him to try again. So Juan went to the bishop a second time. The bishop said, “Bring me a sign to prove this woman is

the Mother of God.”

When Juan got back to the beautiful lady, he said, “Mother, you will have to send someone more important.” “I have chosen you, Juanito,” the lady said. “I will give you a sign for the bishop. Gather roses and take them to him.” “But, Mother,” Juan said, “roses don’t grow in December.” Then Juan looked around him. He saw bushes full of roses. He picked so many that he had to use his cloak to carry them. Juan took the roses to the bishop’s house.

“What are you carrying in your cloak?” the bishop asked. Juan opened his cloak, and the roses spilled out. The bishop got down on his knees. Juan looked down and saw a picture of the woman on his cloak.

“I will build a church where the Mother of God appeared to you,” the bishop told Juan. The church is still there today, and Juan Diego’s cloak with the picture of the Mother of God is there too.

Share any thoughts and feelings about the story. Emphasize that the Mother of God asked someone with no power to help her.

Look at the picture on page 3–4. Show how to make the horizontal cut. Then demonstrate how to fold the two pieces to make a booklet. Have your child read the booklet aloud to you.

- **Closing Prayer:** “Our Lady of Guadalupe, please ask your son Jesus to help us grow as his followers. Amen.”



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## Sunday Gospel Background

This Sunday's Gospel again features John the Baptist, who explains that he is not the Messiah people are waiting for. *Promise* does not use this story, sharing instead the part of the Christmas story that tells of Mary and Joseph's preparation for Jesus' birth.

## Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** "Dear Jesus, come into our hearts. Help us know and share your love. Help us be kind and respectful as we make ourselves ready for your Christmas birthday. Amen."
- ☐ **Cover Activity • We wait with joy. (page 1)** Read aloud the title on the cover. **Ask:** What does joy mean? *Joy is a happiness that doesn't go away. Joy comes from knowing God, enjoying what God has done for us, and believing that God always cares for us.* **Ask:** How can we wait for Christmas with joy in our hearts? *Cooperate, be patient, enjoy all the preparations, smile, be kind and loving.* Look at the left side of the page together. **Ask:** What do the six little pictures show about waiting with joy? Give your child time to draw lines between the getting-ready materials and the results.
- ☐ **Story • The Just-Right Christmas Plate (page 2)** Invite your child to read the story, which is in the form of a rebus. Offer help if needed. Or, you can tell the story first and then show your child how to retell it using the rebus. After the story, **ask:** Why was Jon's plate the just-right Christmas plate? How do you think Jon felt when Madeline and David laughed at his plate? Do you think Madeline and David wished they had acted differently? What makes Christmas full of joy—all the presents or the loving ways people act toward one another?

## Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Mary and Joseph Get Ready for Jesus** Read this part of the Gospel about how Mary and Joseph prepared for Jesus' birth.

In the days before Jesus was born almost two thousand years ago, only Mary and Joseph knew how important Mary's baby was going to be. But before the baby came, Joseph had to take Mary on a trip to the town of Bethlehem. Joseph had to write his name in a book because the leader was counting all the people in the country. The trip took three days.

The town of Bethlehem was crowded. Joseph couldn't find

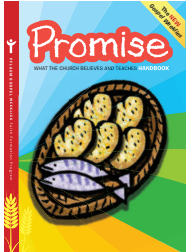
any place to stay except a stable for animals. Oxen munched on hay out of a manger in the cave. In the fields nearby, shepherds watched their flocks of sheep. Lambs nursed at their mothers' sides. The evening was beautiful. Stars filled the sky. Joseph put straw in the manger to make a soft bed for the new baby. Everything was ready for the birth of Jesus. All that was left was waiting.

**Ask:** What did Mary and Joseph do to get ready for the birth of Jesus? How do you think Mary and Joseph felt after their three-day trip? What do you think Mary and Joseph thought as they waited for Jesus to be born?

Explain that we have to wait until Christmas to hear the rest of the story. Talk about some of the ways your family prepares for Christmas—decorations, special foods, and so on. Explain that we also get our hearts ready by saying and doing loving things for



one another. When we obey God by choosing to do the right thing, we are getting our hearts ready for Jesus. Forgiving others and asking for forgiveness are other ways to get our hearts ready for Jesus.



- **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 22. Read aloud the two lines next to the first heart. **Ask:** In what prayer do we say something like this? *Our Father (Lord's Prayer): "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."* **Ask:** Is it easy to forgive someone who hurts you? *No.* Read aloud the next four lines. Explain that Jesus asks us to do hard things—like forgiving people who hurt us, obeying God, and doing what's right. The good news is that he will help us do these hard things!

Teach this simple prayer to pray when it is hard to forgive: "Dear Jesus, thank you for forgiving me. Help me to forgive. Amen."

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, page 3.*

- **Word of the Week • Reconciliation (page 3)** Help your child locate the word of the week on page 3. Share this definition: *Reconciliation celebrates God's forgiveness of our unloving choices.* Explain that most children get to celebrate Reconciliation when they are a little older. You might **say:** "But you already old enough to know when you've done something wrong. When that happens, you can ask God to forgive you."

## Live the Gospel

- **Activity • A Getting-Ready Mobile (pages 3-4)** Gather some supplies: you will need yarn or string cut into five different lengths, and tape. Direct your child's attention to page 4. Identify the shapes as Christmas ornaments. Explain that each ornament shows something or someone ready and waiting for Jesus to come. Turn to page 3 and read the sentences on the ornaments together.

Cut out the ornaments and put them in your workspace. (Make sure to save the leftover section of the page that contains the Family Corner, Word of the Week, and Eucharist Quote.). Show your child how to tape the yarn or string to an ornament and allow your child to do the rest. Tie the ornaments on a dowel rod, clothes hanger, or on your family Christmas tree.

- **Activity • Advent Calendar** Remind your child about the Advent calendar from *Promise* from two weeks ago. Talk about which getting-ready activities have been done and have your child color the three candles.
- **Closing Prayer** "Dear Jesus, we wait for you with joy in our hearts. We like celebrating your birthday at Christmas. Help us share your love with others. Amen."
- **Family Corner (page 3)** Say the family prayer any time throughout the week.



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## Sunday Gospel Background

In Sunday's Gospel, we hear about the Annunciation, when an angel tells Mary that God has chosen her to be the mother of Jesus. Mary agrees to be part of God's plan even though she doesn't see how it can be possible. She says yes because of her great faith and trust in God. Mary helped bring Jesus to us. We bring Jesus to the world through our loving words and actions.

## Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** Come Lord Jesus, come! Mary and Joseph are ready. The crib is ready for you. And we are ready too. Come Lord Jesus, come! Amen.
- ☐ **Story • What Will I Say?** Play a "Yes or No" game to warm up for today's story. Ask silly questions that invite a yes or no response. For instance, **ask:** Do you want me to pour syrup on your head? After a few more questions, **ask:** Do you want Christmas to come soon? Explain that you know a poem about ways to say yes. Pause at the end of each stanza so your child can guess the word(s).

What will I say when my mother asks me to clean up my watercolor mess?

Will I say, "I don't want to do it!" or will I smile and say, "Yes?"

What will I say when my grandpa asks me to help him for just a minute?

I can hide in the closet so he can't find me or I can say, "I'll do it."

What if my brother's stroller needs a push to get him up the hill?

I can make a face when my dad asks for help or I can say, "I will!"

When we're building a house out of Legos—me and Jason and Ann—

and Mom calls from the kitchen, "Will somebody help me?" I will say, "I can!"

Review the poem and **ask:** What words did the child use to say yes?

## Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Mary says yes to God. (page 1)** Identify Mary and the angel Gabriel in the cover scene. **Ask:** What is happening? How does Mary seem to feel in the picture? Share the Gospel:

Mary lived in a town called Nazareth. She was engaged to Joseph, who belonged to the family of David. One day, the angel Gabriel came to Mary.

The angel said, "Hail, Mary, you are full of grace! God is with you."

Mary was afraid and wondered what the angel meant.

The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. You will have a baby

and give him the name Jesus."

Mary asked: "How can this happen? I am not even married."

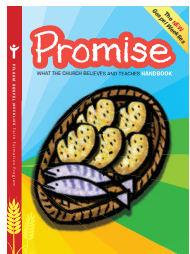
The angel said: "God will send the Holy Spirit to you. Your child will be God's Son. Your cousin Elizabeth will have a baby too even though she is old. God makes everything possible."

Mary said, "I will do what God asks."

Invite your child to look at Mary's face on the cover of *Promise* and think about the news the angel brought. **Ask:** What is Mary thinking? Do you think it was hard for Mary to say yes to God? Why or why not? Why did God choose Mary to be the mother of Jesus?



- ☐ **Word of the Week • Mary (page 3)** Help your child locate the Word of the Week on page 3. Share this definition: *Mary is Jesus' mother. Mary is our mother, too. She hears us when we talk to her in prayer.*
- ☐ **Song • “Mary, Mary Said, ‘Yes.’”** Sing the following song to the tune of “Happy Birthday”:  
Mary, Mary said, “Yes.” / Mary, Mary said, “Yes.” / She would have Baby Jesus. / Mary, Mary said, “Yes.”



- ☐ **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 25. Take turns reading each paragraph. Explain that God gives each of us a guardian angel to watch over us and protect us. Read aloud the three lines that begin “Your angel.” Have your child look at the Prayer to My Guardian Angel, and invite your child to copy the words on a sheet of paper. Your child can decorate it with a drawing of their guardian angel. Point out that the first words the angel said to Mary are the beginning of the Hail Mary prayer. Direct your child to find the Hail Mary on page 29. Pray this prayer together.

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, page 2.*

## Live the Gospel

- ☐ **Activity • My “Yes” Christmas Tree (page 2)** Open *Promise* to page 2. **Ask:** What are ways we say yes to God? Is it always easy? Explain that people say yes to God every day. Every yes is like a present to God.  
  
Point out the gifts at the top of page 2. Identify the word yes. The boxes have yes printed in English and four other languages. Have your child cut out the gift boxes. Your child can then color and decorate the tree on page 2 and glue the yes gift boxes under the tree.  
  
Invite your child to think of God’s friends all over the world as you sing the song about Mary saying “yes” together. This time, replace yes with:  
  
Spanish: “Si” sounds like “see.”  
German, Dutch, Norwegian: “Ja” sounds like “Yah.”  
Japanese: “Hai” sounds like “Hi.”  
Swahili: “Ndio” sounds like “nn-DEE-oh.”
- ☐ **Activity • Magi follow a star. (pages 3-4)** Have your child open to pages 3–4 with page 4 faceup. **Ask:** Who are these people? *Magi (wise men, kings) from far away who came to visit Jesus.* Invite your child to cut out the figures. Show how to roll the figures into cone shapes and tape them. If you have small paper or plastic cups, demonstrate how to wrap a figure around the cup and tape it in place. Place the Magi figures near your Christmas tree or family nativity scene. (You will use them again in the next lesson for the Feast of the Epiphany.)
- ☐ **Closing Prayer** Make the Sign of the Cross and pray the Hail Mary together. End your prayer with the Sign of the Cross.



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## Sunday Gospel Background

The Christmas narrative in the Gospel of Luke emphasizes the humble circumstances in which God took on human flesh. Luke also tells of the great joy with which ordinary shepherds and the hosts of Heaven welcomed this event. Matthew's story of the Magi who seek the new king of Israel shows that Jesus came for all people.

## Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** "Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to be with us. We are so happy! Amen."
- ☐ **Cover Activity • We Know the Christmas Story (page 1)** Have your child tell you what is happening in the cover picture.

## Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Activity • Nativity Scene (pages 1 and 4)** Show your child how to fold *Promise* to make a Nativity scene.
- ☐ **Gospel • God Has Come to Us in Jesus (page 4)** Invite your child to sit at a table or on the floor with the Nativity scene while you proclaim the Christmas Gospel of Jesus' birth:

The ruler of the land where Mary and Joseph lived was named Caesar. He wanted to know how many people lived in his kingdom. Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem to be counted. It was a long trip.

When they got to Bethlehem, Mary said, "Joseph, we must find a place to stay. I think the baby will be born soon." But there were no rooms left. Finally, a kind innkeeper said they could stay in the stable with his animals. While they were there, Mary gave birth to Jesus. She wrapped him to keep him

warm and laid him in the manger.

In the fields around Bethlehem, shepherds were taking care of their sheep. An angel came to them. They were frightened. The angel said, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. In Bethlehem, our Savior has been born. Go to the stable. There you will find the baby lying in a manger." Then many angels filled the sky. They sang "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to people on earth."

Pause and have your child place the Magi figures from the previous lesson into the Nativity scene. Continue reading the Epiphany Gospel—Matthew's telling of the coming of the Magi.

After Jesus was born, Magi from far away came to see him. They saw a special star. They knew it meant that a new king had been born. They followed the star to Bethlehem.

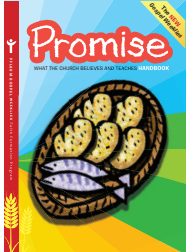
It led them to Mary and Joseph and Jesus. They fell on their knees before Jesus. They gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Note: The word magi is often translated as "astrologers." They were people who studied the stars and other signs in nature to find God and God's will. Over the centuries, we have made these astrologers into kings. Since the Gospel mentions three gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh, we imagine them as three kings. We even give them names and different ages and races. Traditionally, Melchior is old with a gray beard. Gaspar is young, and Balthazar is black.





- **Word of the Week • Jesus (page 3)** Write out the name Jesus on a sheet of paper or white board. Share this definition: *Jesus is God's Son. He is true God. He is also human like us. Jesus' Father is God in Heaven.*



- **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 20. Explain that Jesus belonged to a family like yours. Read aloud the page title. Have your child cover the two paragraphs with one hand. Review the key points in the two paragraphs by reading each sentence aloud and leaving out the last word. Invite your child to fill in the missing words. Have your child complete the activity. **Answer:** *The Holy Family.*

**Ask:** What kinds of things do you think the Holy Family did every day? (Suggest ordinary things families do—eat together, share news, pray, and work.) 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.

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, page 2.*

## Live the Gospel

- **Story • Dear Whiskers (page 2)** Show your child how to unfold the Nativity scene for a moment to look at page 2. If you have a family pet, **ask:** Have you ever wondered what [pet name] is thinking? What do you think [name] would say if he/she could talk like we can?

**Say:** I'm going to read a letter that talks about what a cat might have thought if the cat was in the stable with Mary and Joseph when Jesus was born. As I read the letter, close your eyes and imagine you are the cat in the stable. Think about what you are seeing, smelling, hearing, and feeling in the stable. I will stop a few times as I read the letter to ask: What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear? How are you feeling?

Read the letter from Paws to Whiskers on page 2. This experience is meant to stretch your child's imagination and connect to the Nativity story through the senses.

**Ask:** How did it feel to pretend you were a cat in the stable when Jesus was born? What would you write back to Paws if you were Whiskers and you just received the letter? What questions do you have about what it was like when Jesus was born?

- **Activity • I Can Share the Good News** **Ask:** With whom can we share the story of Jesus' birth? Invite your child to write or draw a simple letter to share the Good News that Jesus is born. You may wish to print the following words on a separate sheet of paper or white board: Jesus, Christmas, Mary, Joseph, stable, Bethlehem, angels, shepherds. Your child can also refer to the Gospel on the back of the Nativity scene.
- **Closing Prayer** Dear God, we are so happy Jesus has come to us! We will try to act like him and be kind and loving to one another. Amen.



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### Sunday Gospel Background

In Sunday's Gospel, John baptizes Jesus in the Jordan River. As Jesus comes out of the water, the Gospel gives us a family picture of the Holy Trinity. The heavens open, a voice proclaims Jesus as God's beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit—in the form of a dove—hovers over Jesus. This is a sign of Jesus being chosen (anointed). God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit are the Holy Trinity. They are united in love. Connect the Gospel to your family life by sharing photos and memories of your child's Baptism.

### Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- ☐ **Pray together** "Thank you, God, for welcoming us into your family. Help us follow you and share your love with others. Amen."
- ☐ **Activity • Introducing . . . My Family** Have your child imagine they are presenting to a classroom. You might have your child tell about your family: how many members, the work you do, where you live, what you enjoy doing together, what makes your family special, etc.
- ☐ **Story • Sarah Becomes Part of Jesus' Family (page 2)** Have your child turn to page 2 of *Promise*. **Ask:** When did you become a member of God's family? *Baptism*. If your child was baptized as an infant, explain that an older child, like the seven-year-old in this story, also celebrates Confirmation and First Communion right after being baptized. Read this story aloud together. Then review the story by **asking:**
  - What sacraments did Sarah celebrate?
  - Whom did she invite to be with her?
  - How did Sarah feel about becoming a member of the Church?

Review the signs and symbols of Baptism by **asking:**

- Why does the priest pour water over Sarah's head? *Water is a sign of life and washing. Sarah's old life and her sins are washed away. She is a new person, a member of God's family.*
- Why does she put on a white dress? *A white garment is a sign that she is putting on a new life as a follower of Jesus.*
- Why does Sarah receive a lighted candle? *It is a sign that Jesus is her light.*

### Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Jesus Is God's Beloved Son (page 1)** Have your child turn *Promise* to its cover and place it faceup as you proclaim the Gospel:

John the Baptist baptized many people in the Jordan River. People wondered if John was the Messiah.

John said: "I baptize you with water. Someone is coming who is much more important and powerful than I am. I am not good enough to undo his sandal straps. He will baptize

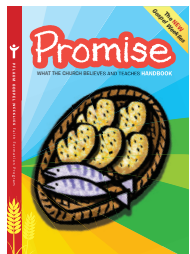
you with the Holy Spirit."

One day, John baptized Jesus. When Jesus came out of the water, the skies opened up. The Holy Spirit came down to Jesus in the form of a dove. A voice spoke from Heaven. The voice said, "You are my beloved Son. I am pleased with you."



Invite your child to color the picture of Jesus' baptism on page 1. **Ask:** Which man is Jesus? Who is the other man? Whose voice came from Heaven? What did the voice say to Jesus? Who is shown as a bird? Help your child understand that the Holy Spirit is not really a bird by using the example of teams called Tigers or Pirates. These images tell us what the teams are like, but the people on the teams aren't really tigers or pirates.

- ☐ **Cover Activity • I Make the Sign of the Cross (page 1)** Pray the Sign of the Cross together, using the words and gestures. **Ask:** What do the words we say mean? *The Father is God the Creator. The Son is Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the One who came to Jesus in the form of a dove at his baptism. We honor these three Divine Persons—God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit—when we pray the Sign of the Cross. They are Three Divine Persons in One God. We call this the Holy Trinity.*



- ☐ **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 13. Read aloud the title. As you read the top two paragraphs, have your child draw a line under the following words: love, holy, God, family. The underlined words will help with the crossword puzzle. Invite your child to look at the words of Baptism in the third paragraph. **Ask:** What prayer is like these words? *The Sign of the Cross.*

Have your child complete the crossword puzzle. **Answers:** Down—1-holy, 4-love; Across—2-God, 3-family.

Use page 14 as a guide to share the story of your child's Baptism.

*Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, page 2.*

- ☐ **Word of the Week • Baptism (page 2)** Help your child locate the Word of the Week on page 2. Share this definition: *Baptism makes us children of God and members of God's family, the Church.*

## Live the Gospel

- ☐ **Activity • We celebrate Baptism. (pages 3-4)** Look at the pictures on page 4 together. Identify the individual pictures as mother, father, baby, the priest, baptismal font, white garment, and candle. Have your child cut out each picture.

Then have your child lay out the pictures on a desk or table. Identify them again, and have your child turn them over one by one to see what is on the other side. The parent figures have two other people on the reverse. These can be the godparents. Invite your child to use the cutouts to tell the story of a Baptism to you.

- ☐ **Closing Prayer** "We thank you, Loving God, for making our family members of your family. Amen." (Conclude by making the Sign of the Cross.)



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