



Sunday Gospel Background

In this parable, an employer goes on a journey and entrusts money to three workers. Two of them double the 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. Help your child look for ways to share these talents as a way to express gratitude for them.

Share Experiences

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

- ☐ **Pray together** "Dear God, thank you for our family. Thank you for making each of us special. Help us learn more about you today. Amen."
- ☐ **Activity • What Will You Try? (page 4)** Have your child open *Good News* to page 4. Point out the activity on the bottom right. Go through it together. Feel free to say which ones you have done yourself and which you might try. Conclude by saying: We don't need to try everything, but it's important that we know our own talents and are willing to use them.
- ☐ **Story • Spelling T-r-o-u-b-l-e (page 2)** Have your child turn to page 2 of *Good News*. Ask your child what is happening in the pictures at the top. Then read the story aloud.
- ☐ **Discuss the *Know* questions related to the story.** Emphasize that Marci was taking an easy way instead of using her talents. **Ask:** How do you use your talents? (Help your child think of ways to use specific talents. Here are a few general ideas to get started: *helping with a sibling, reading extra books, playing hard, learning a new game or activity.*) Summarize by saying that we all have talents—some we might not even realize.

Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Parable of the Talents (page 1)** Before reading, **ask:** What is a parable? *A parable is a story about everyday life. Jesus told parables to teach about God.* Explain that today's Gospel is a parable that Jesus told. Divide the parts of Jesus, Man, Narrator, Amos, Samuel, and Joshua between you and your child. Invite other members of your family to participate, if available. Then proclaim the Gospel by reading the parts.
- ☐ **Discuss the *Know* questions related to the Gospel.** **Answers:** 1. *The man expected the workers to do something with the money he gave them. He didn't want them just to hold on to it.* 2. *Joshua was not brave enough to take a risk with the money. He was afraid the man would disapprove of what he did.* **Ask:** What else could Joshua have done? Why do you think Jesus told this story? *Jesus wants us to know that God expects us to use all the gifts we have and not to deny them or save them just for ourselves.*
- ☐ **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine (page 3)** Read "Using Our Talents." Emphasize that God gives us talents so we can use them to help others and contribute to the life of the community.
- ☐ **Catholic Faith Words • servant, parable (page 3)** The definition of *servant* here summarizes this Sunday's Gospel message: God gives us all gifts. When we use those gifts to help others and do good, we are being servants of God. Read aloud the definition of *parable*. **Ask:** What does this parable teach us about God? *God gives everyone talents. God wants us to use our talents to be his helpers in the world. God wants us to use our talents to help others and to do good.*



- **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 16. Invite your child to find the words *Help Wanted* in green near the bottom of the page.

Together, read aloud the lines of the ad in the box. Help your child understand that a disciple is a follower of Jesus who learns from Jesus and tries to live what he teaches.

Ask: Who is Paul? *Saint Paul is a follower of Jesus. He started many Christian communities in the years after Jesus' Death and Resurrection. He wrote letters to the communities to teach them about Jesus and give them advice about living as Jesus' followers. This help-wanted ad tells us that Saint Paul needs our help to share the Good News about Jesus.*

Discuss what your child could say in the application. Talk about your child's talents and how your child might use them as a servant of God. Encourage your child to complete the application. Then **ask:** If you were Saint Paul, would you hire you? Why?

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

Live the Gospel

- **Gospel Activity • Try a Talent (pages 3–4)** Adjust this activity for home use by turning it into a grab bag game. First, have your child cut out the talent cards on pages 3 and 4. Place them in a bag and have family members take turns reaching into the bag and trying a talent. You might try this at dinner each night for a week, with each family member taking one turn a night. Talk about how some activities are harder to do if we don't have a talent for it and some activities are easier. Emphasize the importance of growing our talents and using them to do good.
- **Closing Prayer** Hold hands together and **pray:** "Loving God, you give us many talents. We thank you for these special gifts. Please help us share our talents with others. Help us use our talents as your servants and followers. Amen."



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. Here, 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:** "God, we praise and thank you for everything you have made, from A to Z." (Take turns mentioning people and things beginning with each letter of the alphabet.) After each one, say "thank you God," together. Conclude with the Sign of the Cross.
- ☐ **Cover Activity • Loving Actions Show Mercy (page 1)** Read aloud the directions for the activity and give your child time to complete it. **Answer:** *mercy*. Help your child make the connection that our loving actions are ways to show mercy to others.
- ☐ **Story • Martin the Shoemaker** (based on "Where Love Is, God Is" by Leo Tolstoy) Read or tell this story:

Once upon a time, a shoemaker named Martin lived in a small town in Russia. Martin was lonely. His wife and only son had died. He felt he had no one left to love and no one who loved him. One day, a friend said, "Martin, why don't you try reading the Bible? I think that will give you hope." That night, Martin read about Jesus healing a sick person, going to Zacchaeus' house for dinner, and bringing a girl back to life. When he closed the Bible, Martin said to himself, "If only I could meet Jesus!" Then he fell asleep.

Martin dreamed that Jesus smiled at him and said, "Martin, I will come to see you tomorrow." Martin woke up all excited. He made sure he had some food to offer Jesus. Then he opened his shop and began to wait for Jesus to come. He kept looking out the window. It started to snow. Martin noticed an old man in a raggedy coat, sweeping the snow off the sidewalks. The man had no gloves, and his shoes were held together with rope. Martin invited him inside for a cup of hot tea and something to eat. The man came in, stayed awhile, and ate three muffins. Martin gave him an old pair of boots and some warm gloves. The man thanked him and went back out to sweep with a smile.

Martin went back to work. The next time he looked up, he saw a woman with a baby. The woman was standing against the wall by his shop, trying to keep out of the wind. She was shivering because she had wrapped her jacket around her baby. Martin said to her, "Please bring your baby in to get warm." While the woman sat by his little stove and warmed up, Martin got a beautiful wool coat from his closet. "Please take this coat," Martin said. "It was my wife's, but she is dead. She would want you to have it." Martin slipped a few coins in the pocket as he helped the woman put the coat on.

"Where is Jesus?" Martin wondered. He locked his door, lit a lamp, and sat down with the Bible. Then he heard a voice calling his name. It was Jesus! Martin jumped up. "Where are you, Jesus?" he cried. A light shone through the window. Just like in a movie or a dream, Martin saw the snow sweeper working, smiling happily because of his new boots and warm gloves. He saw the woman in the coat he had given her. Her baby was tucked inside the coat with his smiling face showing. "I did come to see you today," Jesus said to Martin. "What you did for these people in need, you did for me."



- ☐ **Discuss the story using these *Know* questions:** How did Jesus visit Martin? How do you think Martin's life changed after Jesus' visit?

Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Jesus Teaches the Works of Mercy (page 4)** Proclaim the Gospel by dividing up the reading parts. Encourage your child to listen closely to learn more about mercy and how Jesus wants us to show it to others.
- ☐ **Discuss the *Know* question related to the Gospel.** Then **ask:** How can we show love to Jesus today? Explain that the examples Jesus gives in the Gospel are called the Works of Mercy. A work is something we do, an action. The Works of Mercy are actions Jesus wants us to do to care for other people and show them mercy.
- ☐ **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine (page 4)** Read together "Loving as Jesus Does." Emphasize that what we do for others, we do for Jesus. (Don't forget to read aloud the quote from Saint John Vianney about the Mass too!)



- ☐ **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 45. Call your child's attention to the blue box. Explain that Corporal Works of Mercy are ways we care for the physical needs of others. **Ask:** How can our family do the Corporal Works of Mercy? Explain that we also care of one another's spiritual and emotional needs by doing the Spiritual Works of Mercy. Read aloud the list. **Ask:** How can our family do the Spiritual Works of Mercy? Encourage your child to look for ways to do Works of Mercy every day.

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

- ☐ **Catholic Faith Words • mercy, Works of Mercy (page 3)** Review the meaning of the word *mercy*. Read aloud the definition of *Works of Mercy*. **Ask:** What Works of Mercy did Martin the cobbler do? *He gave food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and clothes to the naked. Even though the people weren't naked, they didn't have enough clothes for the cold weather.*

Live the Gospel

- ☐ **Activity • We Do the Works of Mercy Game (page 2-3)** Read aloud the directions for the game and play it with your child.
- ☐ **Closing Prayer** "Thank you, Lord, for all the good people around us who help us see Jesus in those in need and who reach out to help them. Help us to show our care for others too. Amen."



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Sunday Gospel Background

The beginning of Advent is also the beginning of the Church's year, or the Liturgical Year. In the Gospel, Jesus tells of a man who leaves his servants in charge while he travels. Jesus reminds us to follow his way and do all we are called to do as we wait for him to come again. We might compare it to household chores or homework. If we leave things to the last minute, we might be caught off guard. Some people even make "spiritual New Year's resolutions," to follow Jesus' teachings more faithfully and not put them off.

Share Experiences

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

- ☐ **Pray together:** (If you have an Advent wreath, light the first candle. If not, any candle will do.) "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."

- ☐ **Cover Activity • Make Advent Holy (page 1)** *Advent* means "coming." During the four weeks of Advent, we wait for the anniversary of Jesus' coming at Christmas.

Look at the cover of *Good News* and invite your child to say what is the same and different about this and other calendars. Point out how each Sunday has more candles. **Ask:** What do the pictures remind you of? *Christmas*.

Read the directions at the top of the page together. Use the code on page 2 to write names of those your child wants to pray for. Your child can cut out the strip on page 2 and you can tape it on the side of the calendar. Keep the calendar in a prominent place in your home as a reminder to pray.

- ☐ **Bible Story • Isaiah Tells About God's Love (page 2)** The beauty of his language and the hope in his message make Isaiah the prophet most people recognize. Read aloud this feature with your child. **Ask:** What messages did Isaiah give the people? *God is with us. God is faithful. Don't give up hope. God cares about us.*

Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Jesus Will Come Again (page 3)** Explain that in this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus talks about being ready for him. Proclaim the Gospel by dividing up the parts between you and your child.
- ☐ **Discuss the *Know* question related to the Gospel.** Help your child understand that we can be ready by being kind to others and by doing Works of Mercy. Think of times recently when you've asked your child to cooperate with your family—doing chores, pitching in to help, etc. Use these as examples of ways your child can be ready.
- ☐ **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine (page 3)** Read "We Wait and Hope." Explain that our getting ready during Advent isn't only for celebrating Jesus' birthday at Christmas. Advent is also a time to focus on being ready for whenever Jesus comes again. Refer back to the last thing Jesus says in the Gospel.
- ☐ **Catholic Faith Word • Advent (page 4)** Help your child understand that *Advent*, the weeks leading up to Christmas, is a time of getting ready for the celebration of Christmas and for Jesus' Second Coming at the end of time.

Note: there are two separate topics covered this week in the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook. You can choose to address them on separate occasions if you want.



- **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to the inside back cover (page 57). Give your child a moment to look over the page. Explain that this is a model of the Church Year. **Ask:** Does the Church Year begin on January 1? *No—First Sunday of Advent.* **Ask:** Is the Church Year divided into months? *No—seasons.* Have your child find the Advent arrow and read the paragraph about the Advent season. Explain that each liturgical season has its own color. Advent's color of violet is for waiting and hoping. Have your child color the Advent wedge violet (purple).

You can also talk about Church teaching on Jesus' Second Coming. Have your child turn to page 6 in the handbook. **Ask:** What is the name of the prayer these words in green come from? *Apostles' Creed.* A *creed* is a statement of what we believe. Then turn to page 11 and read the words next to the third blue diamond. Point out that "there" is Heaven. **Ask:** What happens after a person dies? *We are judged on how well we followed God, how we loved.* Read aloud the questions in the first paragraph of that section. The Church calls this the individual (or particular) judgment. Depending on how we have lived, we will go to Heaven, Purgatory, or Hell. Heaven and Hell are forever, but Purgatory is a "stop" on the way to Heaven. **Ask:** What do we call Jesus' coming again at the end of time? *Second Coming.* **Ask:** Will we be alive on earth when this happens? *Nobody knows. Jesus tells us to be ready. At the end of the world, there will be a general judgment when the loving and unloving actions of all people will be shown (revealed).*

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Good News, pages 3-4.

Live the Gospel

- **Activity • My Advent Booklet (pages 3-4)** Help your child separate pages 1-2 from 3-4. Then fold on the dotted line to make the booklet. Read aloud the cover copy. Have your child fill in their name and color the flame of one violet candle. Look at page 2 of the booklet and note the Gospel. Remind your child about ways to be ready for Jesus' coming. Read the poem on page 3 together, inviting your child to guess what letter is missing in each line. **Answers:** 1-A, 2-D, 3-V, 4-E, 5-N, 6-T = *Advent.* Then brainstorm possible Advent practices for this week. Give your child time to write one practice in the space on page 3.
- **Closing Prayer** Turn to the Family Forgiveness Prayer on Page 4. Explain that some important ways we get ready for Jesus are to ask for forgiveness if we have done wrong and to give forgiveness to someone who has hurt us. Say the prayer with your family.



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Sunday Gospel Background

While locusts (grasshoppers) and wild honey may be an off-putting diet, the characters of Isaiah and John the Baptist in this Sunday's Gospel are of great interest to us. Both call us to prepare the way of the Lord. Both refer to the first coming of Jesus at his Nativity, but in this first part of Advent, we are reminded that Jesus will come again at the end of the world. We do not know when that will be, but we are called to be prepared. How? First, by repentance and conversion, or "turning around" the parts of our lives that don't reflect Jesus. Second, by living a life that is forgiving and loving toward others. That is how John and Isaiah told people to prepare for the Messiah, and how we, who live long after he came, prepare for his return.

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 • Our Families Get Ready (page 1)** Ask your child the first two cover questions. Have your child use a pencil or crayon to circle all the ways the family is getting ready for Christmas.
- ☐ **Bible Story • A Boy Named John (page 2)** Have your child turn to page 2 of *Good News*. Explain that today's story is about an important man in the Bible. We will learn about when he was born. We will hear about him later in the Gospel when he is a grown man. Read the story aloud with your child, switching at each paragraph. Assist with difficult words like Zechariah and vision.
- ☐ **Discuss the *Know* questions about the story.** Then ask: Do you know what we call John when he is a man? *John the Baptist*. Explain that he's called that because he baptized people. John was Jesus' cousin.

Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Make a Straight Path for God (page 3)** Read the Storyteller parts and have your child read Isaiah and John. Then ask: Who is God's messenger that Isaiah tells about? *John the Baptist*. Ask: How are their messages the same? *Both men talk about getting ready for God, making a straight path, being sorry for our sins (unloving choices)*. Ask: How can we change and get ready for God?
- ☐ **Discuss the *Know* question related to the Gospel.** Answer: *Jesus*. Ask: How will Jesus be different than John? *Jesus is more powerful because he is the Son of God. Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit*.
- ☐ **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine (page 3)** Read "Baptized with the Spirit." Ask: What does the last sentence remind you of? *The Sign of the Cross*. Explain that these are the names of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. We hear and say these words a lot because our belief in God as Holy Trinity is important to us as Christians.
- ☐ **Catholic Faith Word • Holy Spirit (page 3)** Read the definition together. Help your child name the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity: *God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit*.



- **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 12 and read the heading in the first column together. Then invite your child to consider this scenario: Your team is playing in a soccer tournament. You scored a goal in the first game. Now your family is going to visit your grandparents. You will need a sub for the rest of the tournament. **Ask:** What kind of player do you want the coach to put in as your sub? *The best player, someone who will help the team win.* **Ask:** Do you remember where these words come from? *The Apostles' Creed.* Read the section aloud. **Ask:** What have the Gospels said about the Holy Spirit? *Mary became pregnant with Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' baptism, John says Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit.*

Brainstorm how the Holy Spirit can help us—be honest, be kind, forgive, etc. Optionally, you can print the following on a sheet of paper or a white board: Holy Spirit, help me to--. Then invite your child to draw a picture or write a prayer to finish the sentence.

Conclude praying the Sign of the Cross together. This is our most common way of recognizing the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Good News, page 4.

Live the Gospel

- **Activity • Come, Holy Spirit (page 4)** Have your child turn to page 4 of *Good News*. Read aloud the activity title and directions at the top of the page. Once your child finishes the top activity, read aloud the three lines in the middle of the page. Give your children time to color the four images of the Holy Spirit.
- **Activity • Advent Calendar** Remind your child about the Advent calendar from last week's *Good News*. Talk about the people you have prayed for, and what your hopes are for them.
- **Closing Prayer** Begin by praying the Sign of the Cross. Then pray together the Prayer to the Holy Spirit on page 4 of *Good News*. Conclude with the Sign of the Cross.



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Sunday Gospel Background

In Sunday's Gospel, people ask John the Baptist who he is—the Messiah or a prophet. In response, John identifies himself as a prophet by quoting Isaiah, "I am a voice in the desert, crying out, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'" He declares that he is not the Messiah. He insists that someone more important than he is coming.

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 • Our Parish Gets Ready (page 1)** Look at the cover picture together. It is possible that some or even all of these activities may not be happening at your parish this year. Talk about this with your child. Listen to your child's feelings about this. Point out the word *joy* in the lesson title above the church. Explain joy as a deep-down happiness that lasts. It is being grateful for the good things God has given us. When we have the joy of Jesus in our hearts, bad things that happen can't take that deep joy away. **Ask:** How can you have the joy of Jesus in your heart? What are some things we can be joyful about right now?
- ☐ **Story • Waiting for a Surprise (page 2)** Have your child look at page 2 of *Good News* and guess from the title and top picture what the story will be about. Read the story aloud to your child, or take turns reading aloud each paragraph.
- ☐ **Discuss the *Know* question related to the story.** **Ask:** What would you do if you had a baby fir tree? What would you do to help it grow? If you planted a baby fir tree this spring, what do you think it look would like when you are in high school?

Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • John Prepares for the Messiah (page 3)** Invite your child to look at the Gospel pictures on page 3. **Ask:** Which man is John the Baptist? What did we learn about him last week? Read the Gospel with your child. Then discuss the *Know* question related to the Gospel.
- ☐ **Catholic Faith Word • Messiah (page 3)** Read the definition of *Messiah* together and help your child connect this term to Jesus. Explain that *Christ* isn't Jesus' last name. He would have been known as Jesus ben Joseph, which means "Jesus, son of Joseph" in Hebrew. *Christ* is a title for Jesus that points out that he is the Messiah.
- ☐ **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine (page 3)** Read together "Jesus Is the Messiah."



- ☐ **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 30. **Ask:** What does John tell the people to do? *Make the path straight for the Messiah. Get ready for Jesus.* **Ask:** How can you make the path straight and get ready for Jesus?

Ask: *Do you know what a habit is? What is a good habit? A bad habit?* Explain that people can have both bad and good habits. It's our good habits that will help us be ready for Jesus. Point out that some of our bad habits may be sins. Review the section on sin on page 30 as needed. Then read aloud the first paragraph



under the heading “Virtues.” **Ask:** What are some of your good habits? Examples might include *brushing your teeth, a regular chore, daily prayers like saying grace before meals.*

Explain that the word *virtue* comes from a Latin word for “strong.” Have your child find and underline the word *strong* in the paragraph just read. Reread the sentences in which *strong* is used. Encourage your child to be strong (show muscles)—in saying no (thumbs down) to sins and saying yes (thumbs up) to virtues.

Ask: What can we do when we haven’t been strong against doing what is wrong and sinful? *Ask for forgiveness. Go to Reconciliation.* Invite your child to find the Act of Contrition on page 47. Explain this as a prayer to use when we want to ask God to forgive us. God will give us the virtues to be strong against sin if we ask for them. **Say:** Let’s close our eyes and think of something we’ve done that we’re sorry for. We don’t have to tell each other what it is, but let’s ask God’s forgiveness. Then pray the Act of Contrition together.

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Good News, page 4.

Live the Gospel

- ☐ **Activity • Forgiveness Stories (page 4)** This activity can be adjusted for home use, or for one child, in a few ways. You can have your child cut out the one set of letters on page 4 and use them with the top four problems in the grid. Or, if you have access to a copier or scanner, you can make copies of pages 3 and 4, cut the letter and face squares from the copies, and tape them together. Once your child has cut out the letters, you can take turns reading the problems in the grid, and your child can come up with forgiveness solutions. Once your child has assembled the happy face (or faces), point to the faces and **ask:** What does forgiveness make us feel inside? *Joy.*
- ☐ **Activity • I Can Help (page 4)** For this activity, you will need a sheet of white, yellow or gold paper cut into a square with equal sides. Then, brainstorm ways your family can help others between now and Christmas. Give your child the square sheet of paper and help with the folding instructions on page 4 to create your star. Have your child write your family’s name on the star and how you will help others. Your child can decorate the star and place it on your family Christmas tree or somewhere prominent in your home.
- ☐ **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.”



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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."
 - ☐ **Activity • How Would You?** Ask: How would you explain Christmas to a three-year-old? How would you explain it to someone who has never heard of Jesus? Note that we tell the same story in different ways for different people.
 - ☐ **Story • Jesus Is Born, an adaptation of *The Huron Carol* (pages 2-3)** Have your child open to pages 2 and 3 of *Good News*. Read aloud the title and invite your child to look at the pictures. Ask: What do you think this story is about? *Jesus' birth at Christmas*. Ask: Who is the writer telling this story to? *Native Americans*. Explain that about 400 years ago, Saint Jean de Brébeuf wrote this story to teach Native Americans about Christmas. Relate this to how your child would adjust telling the Christmas story to different audiences.
- Note the box with the pronunciation of the Native American words. These words are from the Menominee language, one of the many nations that have made this carol their own. You might want to practice saying the words together. Read the play by taking parts in turn.
- ☐ **Discuss the *Know* question related to the story.** Then ask: Who else told stories about God in ways the people would understand? *Jesus*. Ask: What do we call those stories? *Parables*.

Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Gospel Warm-Up • Who Is Mary?** If you have a Mary statue or other image of Mary, bring it to your learning space. Ask: Who is Mary? Let your child tell you about Mary. Conclude by saying that Mary's greatest gift to us was her willingness to be Jesus' mother. The Gospel today will tell about how that happened.
- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Mary Says Yes to God (page 1)** Point out Mary and Gabriel in the cover illustration. Read aloud the Leader part and let your child read the Gabriel and Mary parts. Read the parts marked "All" together.
- ☐ **Discuss the *Know* questions related to the Gospel.** Answers: 1. God wants her to be the mother of God's Son. 2. She was just a young girl who planned to get married and live like all the other women. She didn't know what the angel's words meant and what would happen to her. 3. She believed the angel was giving her a message from God and she wanted to do what God asked.

Remind your child that people all over the world choose to say yes to God every day. Invite your child to think about friends all over the world as you sing a song about Mary saying 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."

- ☐ **Catholic Faith Word • Annunciation (page 3)** Print the word *Annunciation* on a sheet of paper or a white board. Read the definition together. Print the words *announce* and *announcement* too. Point out that the three words are similar. **Ask:** What does it mean to announce something? Explain that it takes about nine months for babies to grow in their moms' bodies before they are born. We celebrate the Annunciation on March 25, nine months before Christmas.
- ☐ **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine (page 4)** Read together "Mary Brings Jesus to Us." Help your child understand that, like Mary, we can say yes to what God wants us to do and bring Jesus to others.



- ☐ **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 9. Have your child begin reading aloud under "...born of the Virgin Mary..." and stop after the words "full of grace." Explain that the Immaculate Conception is how God protected Mary from sin from the very beginning of her life in her mother's body. We remember the feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8.

Continue reading aloud from the handbook up to the words "God's plan." **Ask:** What do we call the event of the angel's visit and Mary saying yes to become the mother of God's Son? *The Annunciation, celebrated on March 25.* Finish reading the paragraph, and continue to the first paragraph on page 10. Wrap up by saying that Mary shows us that a human person can be an important part of God's plan for the world. Mary helped bring Jesus to all of us. God calls all of us to share the love of Jesus with others too.

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Good News, pages 1 and 4.

Live the Gospel

- ☐ **Activity • We Learn About Mary (pages 1 and 4)** Have your child open *Good News* so that it lays flat with pages 1 and 4 (front and back) faceup. Your child can follow the directions in red to find out more about Mary, Jesus' mother and the Mother of God. You may wish to do this activity together.
- ☐ **Closing Prayer** Pray the Hail Mary together (page 1 of *Good News*). When you have finished, greet each other the way the angel greeted Mary: "Hail, _____! You are full of grace."



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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."
- ☐ **Activity • We Celebrate Christmas** Share your favorite things about your family celebration of Christmas and invite your child to do the same. It's fine to talk about presents and food and family, but be sure to mention attending Mass, visiting the Nativity scene, and hearing the story of Jesus' birth. Remind your child that Christmas is first and foremost the celebration of Jesus' birthday.
- ☐ **Cover Activity • Journey to the Stable (page 1)** Have your child look at page 1. Read aloud the instructions and provide time to complete the puzzles on the page.

Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Christmas Gospel • Jesus Is Born! (page 2)** The Gospel for Christmas is not in drama form this week. Have your child keep *Good News* closed as you read aloud the Christmas Gospel. Invite your child to fill in key words that you leave out. For example: Mary and Joseph had to go to _____ (your child says: *Bethlehem*) to be counted. Affirm your child for knowing this very important Gospel story so well!
- ☐ **Discuss the Know questions related to the Christmas Gospel.** *Answers: 1. Jesus may have been born in a stable to show that he had come to be a king who cared more about God's people than about being rich and powerful like some kings. 2. Shepherds were not rich or powerful. They lived outside with their sheep, so they were dirty and smelly. They couldn't keep all the Jewish laws, so some people looked down on them. Jesus came for all people.*
- ☐ **Activity • Find the Angels' Message (page 2)** Direct your child to look at the activity on the bottom of page 2 and give your child time to color and discover the angels' message: *Peace*.
- ☐ **Epiphany Gospel • Magi Follow a Star (page 3)** The Gospel text for the Sunday of Epiphany is also not in drama form. Share Matthew's telling of the coming of the Magi. You might take turns reading each paragraph to proclaim the Gospel.

Explain that the word *Magi* is often translated as "astrologers." They were people who studied the stars and signs in nature to find God and God's will.
- ☐ **Discuss the Know questions related to the Epiphany Gospel.** Give your child some clues for answering the second question: *Jesus came for all people—not only the Jewish people. The Magi came from far away and would probably not have been Jews. Since we are not Jews, that means that Jesus came for us too!*



- **Catholic Faith Word • Savior (page 3)** Have your child look back at the Christmas Gospel on page 2 and find the word *Savior* highlighted in yellow. Read aloud what the angel said to the shepherds. Go to page 3 and read the definition of *Savior* aloud together. Point out that the Jewish people had been waiting for the Messiah who would save them—to be their Savior.
- **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine (page 3)** Read together “Jesus Is Our Savior.” Read aloud the quote from Saint John Paul II at the bottom of page 3 about the Blessed Sacrament. If your church is open and it is safe to do so, make plans to spend some time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament during the coming weeks.



- **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to the inside back cover, page 57. **Ask:** How long does Christmas last? Many of us would likely respond that it is one day. Have your child look at the wedge that was colored for Advent. **Ask:** How long was Advent? *About four weeks.* **Ask:** Does the wedge for Christmas look like it’s for only one day? *No. Christmas Time starts on Christmas Day and lasts almost three weeks—until the Baptism of the Lord (January 10 in 2021).*

Read aloud the short paragraph about Christmas. Have your child color the Christmas wedge yellow or gold. While your child is coloring, talk about some of the feasts we celebrate during Christmas Time. You will find some in the paragraph about Christmas on page 18 in the handbook. Encourage your child to continue wishing people a Merry Christmas all through Christmas Time, until January 10.

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Good News, page 4.

Live the Gospel

- **Activity • Nativity Coloring Page (page 4)** Read aloud the directions at the bottom of page 4. Suggest that your child find the eight hidden animals before coloring the page. **Answers:** *Outside, clockwise from top right: bird, cow, sheep, lizard. Inside, clockwise from top right: mouse, horse, fox, bird.*
- **Closing Prayer • Blessing the Directions** The Christmas and Epiphany Gospels tell of people who find their way to Jesus. Invite your child to celebrate all people of the earth in this Native American prayer tradition.

Stand together. Point to each direction as you name it. Direct your child to turn to face that direction as you **pray**: “We turn to the north and **pray**: Loving God, bless the people of the north. We turn to the south and **pray**: Loving God, bless the people of the south. We turn to the east and **pray**: Loving God, bless the people of the east. We turn to the west and **pray**: Loving God, bless the people of the west. We turn back to face one another and **pray**: Loving God, thank you for sending Jesus to save all people.” Your child can respond, “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 • Remember Your Baptism** Share the story of your child's baptism. Share the date, pictures and mementos, who your child's godparents are, and all who celebrated with you. Talk about the name you gave your child and why you chose it. Feel free to share photos from your baptism, too, if you have them.
- ☐ **Cover Activity • We Belong to God's Family (page 1)** Have your child describe the cover photos and identify the occasions on which they were taken. *A Baptism, Confirmation, and First Communion.* Read aloud the paragraphs and questions on page 1.

Point out that the white spaces under the photos are for your child to write in the dates when your family celebrated these sacraments. Help your child fill in these dates.

Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- ☐ **Sunday Gospel • Jesus Is God's Beloved Son (page 4)** Remind your child who John the Baptist is. Then ask: What did John tell the people who asked him if he was the Messiah? *No. I have come to tell people to make the path straight for the one God is sending (the Messiah, our Savior, Jesus). I am not good enough to undo his sandal strap.* Proclaim the Gospel by dividing up the parts between you.
- ☐ **Discuss the Know questions related to the Gospel.** *Answers: 1. God the Father. 2. The Holy Spirit (appears in Gospel as a dove) will help Jesus do his work of gathering followers, teaching, healing—and eventually suffering, dying, and rising from the dead to save us.*
- ☐ **Connecting Gospel and Doctrine (page 4)** Read together "God Is the Holy Trinity." Help your child name the Three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit. Invite your child to look at the photo of a shamrock. Explain that Saint Patrick used a three-leaf clover like this to teach the people of Ireland about the Holy Trinity.
- ☐ **Catholic Faith Word • Holy Trinity (page 2)** Read the definition of *Holy Trinity* together. Assure your child that even the smartest grownups can't understand how One God can be Three Divine Persons. We call it a *mystery* of our faith. God has revealed this to us in the Bible, so we believe it's true even though we can't understand it.



- **Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 21. **Ask:** What were the priest or deacon's words at your Baptism? Help by saying, "I baptize you in the name of . . ." **Ask:** What prayers can you think of that sound like that? *Sign of the Cross, Glory Be to the Father.* Emphasize that we are baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. Have your child read the paragraph under the Baptism heading. **Ask:** How many times can a person be baptized? *One.* **Ask:** Why do you think that is? *We need to be baptized only once because Baptism makes us members of God's family forever.*

Optionally, you can have your child draw an impression of the Holy Trinity. Have your child print the words: *The Holy Trinity* across the top of a sheet of paper. Then invite your child to draw a way to think about the Trinity. Your child might choose to draw traditional images of the Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit (dove, flame, wind, or water). You might remind your child about Saint Patrick's three-leaf clover. Other ideas are water, ice, and steam; an egg (shell, yolk, white); an equilateral triangle, or the equation $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$.

Have your child find page 46 in the handbook and look at The Apostles' Creed. Have your child underline "I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth," "In Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord," and "I believe in the Holy Spirit." Note how much of the Creed is about the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. Direct attention to the words of the Sign of the Cross and the Glory Be to the Father on the same page. Note that they are prayers to the Holy Trinity too.

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Good News, pages 2-3.

Live the Gospel

- **Activity • The Church Welcomes Us (pages 2-3)** Read aloud the activity title and point out the blue path. Explain that this path will lead us through the main parts of a Baptism. Read through the activity together, explaining as you move along. Give your child time to complete the activity—coloring, filling in words, and tracing as indicated.
- **Closing Prayer** Have your child open *What the Church Believes and Teaches* to page 46 for the words of the Glory Be to the Father. **Pray:** "We thank you, Loving God, for making us members of your family. We praise you as the Holy Trinity." Pray the Glory Be to the Father, and end with the Sign of the Cross.



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