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# 5 Jesus Welcomes the Children

## Background for the Catechist

### A Childlike Faith

Belief and trust in God is the starting point and anchor of a life of faith. In the Bible story for this lesson, Jesus proclaims, "Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it" (Luke 18:16-17). Jesus enjoins us to trust God, his and our loving Father. From our willingness to respond to God flows our whole life of faith.

Jesus describes the faith of those to whom the Kingdom of God belongs as a childlike faith. A person who has a childlike faith acknowledges their dependence on God for their life, for their happiness, for all that is good. Scripture gives us, over and over again, models of such childlike faith, the greatest of whom is Mary.

Jesus places his Father at the center of his life and invites us to do the same. Jesus invites us to have faith in God, who is Abba, our loving, caring, ever-present, unconditionally generous and merciful Father. Jesus' life is a living testimony to God the Father, who lavishes upon us his kindness, grace, goodness and unending love.

### For Reflection

*How childlike is my faith? What might the faith of the children teach me this week as I try to help them grow and see and value themselves as children of God?*

### More Background

For further reading and reflection, see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* §§ 163-165, 301, 305; *Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church* § 27; *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* pages 37, 44, 59.

### About the Children

Remember that young children have a developing notion of right and wrong that is quite different than that of adults. Kindergarteners are still very egocentric. While an adult might see the value of sharing toys or being a good sport even when they are losing, this view of things is often not the perspective from which kindergarteners view their relationship with other people. Cognitively, children still view the world from the perspective that they are the center of the world. We should not jump to the conclusion that they are being intentionally selfish when they do; they are working through a stage of development that is part of every child's social and moral development.

### A Few Suggestions . . .

A child's developing relationship with other people and with God is primarily nurtured by strong positive experiences. It is important for catechists to keep this in mind when disciplining young children and to have developmentally appropriate expectations of children. Foster this development by focusing the children's attention on the positive dimensions of situations. For example, explore with the children how they would feel if these situations happened to them. Ask, "How would you feel if someone shared their cookie with you when you didn't have one?" Or, "How would you feel if some children would not let you play with them?" Avoid publicly shaming children in front of their peers; this hinders rather than fosters a child's developing relationship with other people and with God.

# Lesson Planner

## Faith Focus

Jesus taught that everyone is to live as a child of God. Things we do and say are to show that we are children of God and followers of Jesus.

## Bible Story

"Jesus Blesses the Children" (Based on Matthew 19:13–15, Mark 10:13–16 and Luke 18:15–17)

## Enriching the Lesson

- RCL Benziger *Stories of God's Love* Kindergarten program Music CD and companion Songbook, Song 1 and Song 4
- Visit our kindergarten Web site at [www.RCLBenziger.com](http://www.RCLBenziger.com) this week.

## Chapter Objectives

After this week's lesson, the children should be able to:

- recall the Bible story, "Jesus Blesses the Children."
- appreciate that Jesus loves them.
- identify how to live as children of God.

## Materials Needed

In addition to the general supplies named on page 9 in this guide, you will need the following materials for teaching this lesson:

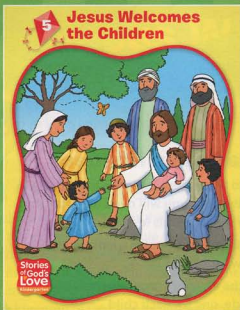
- a closed Bible with a bookmark placed at Matthew 19:13–15
- copies of the activity master on page 161 of this guide, one for each child

## Prayer

God, Father of all,  
you first loved us  
so that we can love you.  
Through the power of the Holy Spirit,  
may I learn a childlike faith  
from the children entrusted to my care.

May I trust in  
your love as they do.  
Amen.





## Jesus Blesses the Children

Jesus had special friends who he chose to be his helpers. Jesus and his special friends, or disciples, traveled from town to town to remind people about the good news of God's love.

Hearing that Jesus was visiting their town, many people hurried to listen to him. They believed Jesus was a great teacher. They wanted to see him and listen to him. Some people asked him questions about God.

Sometimes Jesus answered their questions by telling the people stories. These stories helped people to understand what Jesus was teaching them. One very important thing that Jesus taught the people was that they were to always try their best to live as children of God.

One time when Jesus was teaching the people, parents brought their little children, even babies, to him. They wanted Jesus to touch and bless their children. When the disciples of Jesus saw what the people were doing, they told the people and their children to go away and to leave Jesus alone.

Jesus saw and heard what his disciples were doing, and he stopped them. He said, "Let the little children come to me. You are to learn to love God as these little children love."

Jesus turned to the children. He invited them to come to him. Jesus put his hands on them and he blessed them.

After that Jesus and his disciples went to another place.

BASED ON MATTHEW 19:13-15,  
MARK 10:13-16 AND LUKE 18:15-17

## Welcome

- In the Welcome Center, provide copies of the activity master on page 161 of this guide and crayons or markers.
- Greet the children and direct them to the Welcome Center. Give each child a copy of the activity master. Explain that they are going to make signs to hang on a doorknob. Point out that the word *Welcome* is printed on the sign. Invite the children to color the sign.
- While the children are working, walk among them and explain that Jesus welcomed all people and Jesus asks us to welcome all people too.

## Gather

- Play the gathering song to signal that it is time to clean up and move to the Story Time Area. Invite the children to do the movements that go along with the song.
- Use the RCL Benziger *Stories of God's Love* Kindergarten program Music CD and companion Songbook, Song 4 to teach the children the song, "Let the Children Come to Me." Keep in mind that you will have to sing it several times until all the children learn the words.

## Teach

### Introduce the Bible story.

- Ask the children, "What Bible stories do you remember about Jesus?" Encourage the children to share the stories they can recall.
- Tell the children that there are many stories in the Bible of people coming to see Jesus. Explain that today they will hear about a time when people brought their children to Jesus.
- Show the children the teaching poster or the cover of the children's leaflet and ask them to think about what Jesus might be saying to the people about the children.
- Invite a child to come up and open the Bible to the bookmarked story: Matthew 19:13-15.
- Tell the children to listen closely to discover what happens to the children in the Bible story.

### Tell the Bible story.

Take the opened Bible, place the children's leaflet inside it and read aloud the Bible story "Jesus Blesses the Children" from the For My Family page. Refer to the teaching poster or the cover of the children's leaflet as you read the story.

### Recall the Bible story.

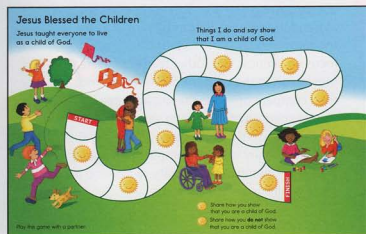
- Help the children recall key details of the Bible story by inviting them to respond to the questions below. Affirm and encourage them as they respond. Always give the children clues if they need help responding.
  - Why did people bring their children to Jesus? (*They wanted Jesus to touch and bless their children.*)
  - What did Jesus say to his helpers? (*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me."*)
  - What did Jesus do? (*Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them.*)
- Summarize by telling the children that Jesus loves them as he loved the children in the Bible story.



### Apply

#### Work on the children's leaflet activity.

- Distribute the children's leaflets and have the children open them. Point out the text at the top of both pages and read it aloud to the children, "Jesus Blessed the Children. Jesus taught everyone to live as a child of God. Things I do and say show that I am a child of God."
- Draw attention to the game board and have the children look at the pictures. Invite the children to describe what is happening in each of the pictures.
- Discuss with the children what it means to live as a child of God. Lead them to think about such things as being a good friend, including others at play, giving their outgrown toys and clothing to the poor, donating food for the poor and so forth.
- Divide the children into pairs and have them play the game.



### Play a game of "Simon Says."

- Explain to the children that when you say "Simon says, 'Come forward,'" they can take a step forward. But if you, only say, "Come forward," they are not to take a step forward. See the examples below:
  - "Simon says, 'Take two steps forward.'" (*Children take two steps forward.*)
  - "Take two steps forward." (*Children remain in place.*)
- Conclude the game by saying, "Simon says, 'Everyone come and gather around me.'"
- After the children have gathered around you, ask God to bless them. Extend your hands over the children and say, "God bless these children. Fill their hearts with your love."

### Connect with the child's life.

Tell the children to take their leaflet home. Encourage them to share the story "Jesus Blesses the Children" and the activity with their family.



### Pray

- Gather the children in the prayer center.
- Introduce the prayer by saying, "Today we will thank Jesus for loving children and for loving us." Explain to them that they will repeat the words of the prayer aloud after you.
- Invite the children to quiet themselves for prayer, using the breathing gestures. (*Pause.*)
- Lead the children in prayer. Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

**Catechist:** Thank you, Jesus, for loving children.

**Children:** *Echo the words of the prayer.*

**Catechist:** Thank you, Jesus, for loving me.

**Children:** *Echo the words of the prayer.*

**Catechist:** Together let us pray, "Amen."

**All:** Amen.



See "Additional Activities" on page 178 in this guide.

# 6 We Are Children of God

## Background for the Catechist

### Created in the Image of God

The human person, created in the image and likeness of God, is the pinnacle of God's creation. (See Genesis 1:27 and Psalm 8:6-7.) Among God's creation, the human person is unique. God, for reasons beyond human comprehension, chooses to create us in his divine image and likeness. He makes us sharers in the very life of God and invites us to live in communion with the Holy Trinity, both now and forever.

The dignity of every human person is rooted in this truth: each human being is sacred, or holy. This dignity and sacredness demand that we treat every person with the reverence that honors and respects that dignity. As we learn to love ourselves as God created and loves us, we learn to show reverence for ourselves and others, as God does.

### For Reflection

*What do I do that shows respect and reverence for myself and others? What might I do this week to help the children grow in their awareness that they are holy?*

### More Background

For further reading and reflection, see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* §§ 355-361; *Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church* § 66; *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* pages 67, 68 and 310.

### About the Children

Coming to understand and appreciate the concepts of likeness and difference is important to the cognitive and social development of kindergarteners. Five- and six-year-olds are usually able to make comparisons by focusing on only one feature at a time. For example, they can look at eye color and identify who has eyes that are "like" their own. Identifying whose eyes are "different" from theirs would be another cognitive step. Even a larger cognitive leap would be to make comparisons between two features at the same time. Very few kindergarteners would find success if asked to understand that their friend can be "like" them because their hair is brown and at the same time "different" from them because their eyes are blue.

### A Few Suggestions . . .

As a teacher of kindergarteners, one of your goals should be providing the children with a successful experience in developing the important concepts of likeness and difference. To put the children on the road to success in this developmental task, start by making comparisons using one obvious feature, such as gender, and have all the children who are the same gender stand together. Continue to focus on likeness with other features before moving on to the concept of difference and then compare only one feature at a time. Expect children of this age to vary in their ability to grasp these concepts of likeness and difference. They will need ample opportunity to practice growing in their ability to develop and successfully use these concepts.



# Lesson Planner

## Faith Focus

God loves us. We are children of God.

## Story

"Chen's Gift"

## Materials Needed

In addition to the general supplies named on page 9 in this guide, you will need the following materials for teaching this lesson:

- paper plates, one for each child
- plastic eyes, yarn and other craft supplies for creating faces
- a closed Bible with a bookmark placed at Psalm 139:14

## Enriching the Lesson

- RCL Benziger *Stories of God's Love* Kindergarten program Music CD and companion Songbook, Song 1 and Song 2
- Visit our kindergarten Web site at [www.RCLBenziger.com](http://www.RCLBenziger.com) this week.

## Chapter Objectives

After this week's lesson, the children should be able to:

- recall the story, "Chen's Gift."
- explain that God created everyone special and we are children of God.
- identify gifts that show God's love for us.

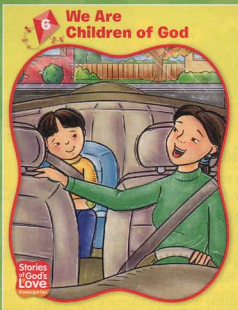
## Prayer

God, our Creator,  
I am wonderfully made  
in your image and likeness.

Send the Holy Spirit  
to deepen my reverence  
for myself and others.

May my words and actions  
show the children how special  
and loved by you they are.  
Amen.





## Chen's Gift

As Chen and his mother were driving home from school, she noticed that he was very quiet. She looked over and saw that he had a sad face. "Why are you feeling so sad today, my son?" she asked.

Chen sniffled and tried not to cry. "Today in school, Sam built a tower higher than anyone else with his blocks. Mrs. Hernandez said it was an excellent tower and we should all look at it. Then we were painting, and Mrs. Hernandez held up Emma's picture to show us." Chen stopped talking and got very quiet.

His mother slowly pulled the car over and parked. She turned off the motor and looked at him. "Chen, look at me. Are you feeling sad because your friends can do so many wonderful things?" she asked.

"It's just that I can't paint or build things like they can. I think everyone likes them better than me," he sniffled.

Chen's mother spoke gently. "Everyone has special talents. Some of us are good at building or painting. But we are not good at everything. You have a special talent too. Do you know what it is?"

"No," he answered.

"Well, I happen to think you are very good at playing with your sister, Lucy. You make her smile and you calm her when she is frightened. You are an excellent big brother. God gave you that special gift."

Chen raised his head a bit and smiled, "I am good at that, aren't I? Hey Mom, let's go. I want to get home and play with Lucy!"

## Welcome

- Greet the children and direct them to the Welcome Center.
- Explain to the children that they are unique. Explain the meaning of the word *unique*. Then say it aloud again and have them repeat it aloud several times after you. Tell them that one way for them to show that they are *unique* is to draw the features of their face on a paper plate.
- Give a paper plate to each child. If possible, provide other materials that are easily available for making details in the drawing, such as plastic eyes or yarn for hair.
- You might wish to provide a mirror so that the children can look closely at the details of their face.
- Invite the children to share their "face" with the rest of the group. Summarize by telling the children that God created each of us special.

## Gather

- Play the gathering song to signal that it is time to clean up and move to the Story Time Area. Invite the children to do the movements that go along with the song.
- Use the RCL Benziger *Stories of God's Love* Kindergarten program Music CD and companion Songbook, Song 2 to review with the children the song, "It Is Good!" This is the song that the children learned in Chapter 1.

## Teach

### Introduce the story.

- Remind the children that last week they learned that Jesus invited the children to come to him. He blessed them and told the people how special children are to God.
- Invite the children to listen to a story about a boy named Chen. Tell them to listen carefully to discover the special gift God gave Chen.

### Tell the story.

Refer to the teaching poster or the cover of the children's leaflet as you tell the story "Chen's Gift."

### Recall the story.

- Help the children recall the key details of the story. Ask:
  - Why is Chen upset when his mom picks him up from school? (*Chen is upset because his friends were better at some things at school than he was.*)
  - What special gift or talent does Sam have? (*building with blocks*)
  - What is Emma's special gift or talent? (*Emma is good at painting.*)
  - What is Chen's special gift or talent? (*Chen is good at playing with his little sister.*)

- Ask the children to name a special gift or talent they have. Point out the gifts and talents of children who have a difficult time thinking of one on their own. Tell the children that each one of them is special.
- Conclude by saying, "God loves us and gives us many gifts. These gifts show us that we are special to God."



## Apply

### Work on the children's leaflet activities.

- Distribute the children's leaflets and have the children open them. Direct their attention to the left page and read aloud the title and text, "God Created Me. I am a child of God. God always loves me."
- Talk with the children about all the people who love them. Summarize by saying, "God loves you too. God will always love you."
- Have the children look at the pictures of the children on the page. Ask the children to tell you something they remember about each of the children. Ask:
  - What are some things these children like to do?
  - Which of these things are the same things you like to do?
- Direct the children's attention to the page on the right. Read aloud the text, "God's love makes me special. These gifts show God's love for me." Point out some things that you have come to know that make each child special.
- Ask the children how it makes them feel to be so special to God.
- Read the rebus aloud. Let the children help you by naming each picture as you come to it.
- Read the rebus again and have the children use these gestures or your own ideas as you read the rebus:
  - heart (*Hold hands over heart.*)
  - hands (*Hold hands up with palms out.*)
  - ears (*Cup hands over ears.*)
  - mouth (*Invite children to laugh aloud with you.*)

**God Created Me**

I am a child of God.  
God always loves me.

God's love makes me special.  
These gifts show God's love for me.

God gave me a for loving

God gave me for helping

God gave me for listening

God gave me a for laughing

God gave me many

Thank you, God.

What are some things these children like to do?  
Which of these things are the same things you like to do?

Pray the rebus.

## Play the game Stand Up.

- Invite the children to play a game with you to help them see that some things about each of them are the same and some things about them are different from one another.
- Have the children stand up when you name something that they think tells about them. Have the children sit down if you say something that they do not think tells about them. You may wish to use this list or one of your own. Make sure that each child will be able to stand up for several of the statements.

Say, "Stand up if you ..."

- have ten toes."
- are a fast runner."
- like to paint."
- like to sing."
- wear glasses."
- like to go swimming."
- like to make things."
- are five years old."
- are six years old."
- are a child of God."

## Connect with the child's life.

Tell the children to take their leaflet home. Encourage them to share the story "Chen's Gift" and the activities with their family.



## Pray

### Gather the children in the prayer center.

- Introduce the prayer by inviting a child to come up and open the Bible on the prayer table to the place marked by the bookmark, Psalm 139:14. Explain to the children that they will pray the words of a prayer from the Bible aloud after you.
- Invite the children to quiet themselves for prayer, using the breathing gestures. (*Pause.*)
- Lead the children in prayer. Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

**Catechist:** I praise you, God, so wonderfully you made me. (Based on Psalm 139:14.)

**Children:** Echo the words of the prayer.

**Catechist:** I praise you ...

**Children:** Echo the words of the prayer.

**Catechist:** Together let us pray, "Amen."

**All:** Amen.



See "Additional Activities" on page 178 in this guide.