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Respecting the Experience of the Child

Understanding the Historical Context



Just for
You!

The Gift of Jesus

Keep in mind that Jesus, the greatest gift of God's love, is the one who makes reconciliation possible. His gift of the Holy Spirit empowers the Church!

Take some time for yourself as you prepare for class. These two pages provide opportunities to read, reflect, explore, and pray. Select the items that best fit your own style of nurturing your spiritual life. These pages are also available as blackline masters in the *Program Director's Manual*.

Words Are Not Always Needed

When we are with the people who know us the best and love us the most, it is sometimes enough just to be together. Silence can be comfortable between close friends and even among family members. We've probably all shared family meals where the conversation was rather "lite fare"! Or maybe you have spent a quiet evening at home with someone when you were both reading silently, sipping tea, and perfectly content.

But how many of us spend time in silence with God, who loves us more than anyone could ever love us? Have you ever found yourself in a quiet place where you felt really close to God? Did you know that this is a very special kind of prayer, even when no "conversation" is taking place?

Sometimes we want to turn to God, but we do not really know what to say. We may feel distant. Or we may be so overwhelmed with a host of needs that we do not know where to begin. Take heart in knowing that words are not always needed. The Scriptures tell us that our Father knows what we need, even before we ask. And Jesus promised to be with us always. He knows our hopes, loves, and joys as well as our fears, pains, and sorrows. The next time you are quietly sipping a cup of tea, know that Jesus is loving you and offering you solace in the silence and the solitude.

❖ Images of the Spirit ❖

Which of the following words or symbols used to portray the Holy Spirit best represents your own understanding of the Holy Spirit? * dove • fire • wind • breath • advocate • comforter • encourager * Give reasons for your responses.

Do Others See Jesus in Me?

In the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25, Jesus urges us to look for the "Christ" in one another and to treat one another as we would treat Jesus himself. Conversely, others may be looking for Jesus in us. Will people see Jesus when they look at you? when they hear you speak? when they see what you do and how you do it?

Just as Jesus is a sacrament of God who represents God and makes him truly present, the Church is called to be a sacrament of Jesus. All of us who are members of the Body of Christ have the responsibility to represent Jesus in the world. Food for thought: What will others learn about Jesus through knowing me?

Note: Consider exploring each of the seven sacraments in the traditional list—Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders—to discover what or who is being revealed in each sacrament.

A Spirit-Filled World

Read your community or Catholic newspaper with an eye to discovering stories about people who use the gifts of the Holy Spirit: knowledge, wisdom, understanding, counsel, piety, fortitude, and the fear of the Lord (See Isaiah 11:2).

Note how these gifts are used to build up the Body of Christ. Which of these gifts have you been given? How is God calling you to use these gifts?

RSVP . . .

"Fan into flame the gift of God which is within you" (Based on 2 Timothy 1:6). In Baptism, you were invited to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Confirmation, you responded to this invitation and were further strengthened to do all that the Spirit calls you to do. As you have grown in the Spirit, perhaps you have discovered that God renews this invitation continually, and you are asked to respond continually. Sometimes this involves emptying yourself or your life of a great deal of clutter to make room for God in your life. The "emptier" we are, the more richly we can be "filled" with the Spirit.

❖ Fill Me, Lord ❖

What clutter can you get rid of in your life to make more room for God?

Lesson Planner

Goals

- To help the children
- Recognize Jesus as a special gift.
 - Learn about the action of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments.
 - Desire to live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Materials Needed

- pencils
- Bible

Catechism References

1091, 1112, 1421, 1468,
1999, 2003

Session Outline



Family Time

- Prior to Lesson 2, parents should have been encouraged to complete the Family Time activity with their children.



Learning Time

1 Discovering God in Our Lives (10 minutes)

- Read the story.
- Share about special people.
- Complete an activity.

2 Meeting God in the Word and Tradition (30 minutes)

- Share the word of God.
- Talk about the story.
- Learn about the Holy Spirit.
- Look at the photograph.
- Unscramble the words and compose a prayer.

3 Living with God in Our Lives (20 minutes)

- Read about the life of the Church.
- Identify Spirit language.
- Pray for new life.
- Review the We Believe statements.
- Use the Family Time box.



Prayer Time

- Celebrate and nurture the gift of new life in Jesus.

Beginning with Family Time



The Gift of Jesus



Whom does your child most like to spend time with? In the activity below, help your child describe what is special about that person. Then share what you believe is special about Jesus. Encourage your child to do the same on the lines provided.

Who Is Special to Me?

1. _____ is very special
to me because _____

2. Jesus is special to me because _____



At the beginning of each lesson, a Family Time page is provided. The material on this page is for the children to complete at home with their parents prior to the classroom session.

You may wish to refer to the Family Time activity during Step 1, which begins on page 12. It may not always be a good idea to refer to this activity at the start of the classroom session because there may be some children whose families have been unable to complete the activity.

The Gift of Jesus

A Special Guest

John was so excited! He could hardly wait to play basketball with Uncle Brad. John hoped that Uncle Brad might show him some new moves.

John's mom was happy too. Brad, her youngest brother, had just started college in the town where she and John lived. They would get to see Brad much more now. She wanted to make his visit very special. She asked John for his ideas.



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1 Discovering God in Our Lives

Reading the Story

Direct the children to open their books to pages 12 and 13. Tell them they are going to read a story called "A Special Guest." Read aloud the first paragraph to them. Then ask for volunteers to read the rest of the story. When the children have finished the story, have them look at the pictures and tell in their own words what is happening.

Sharing About Special People

Ask the children why Uncle Brad is so special to John. Then invite them to tell about the special people in their own lives. Encourage

the children to share what they wrote for the first part of the Family Time activity on page 11.



Teaching Tip

Note the "mistake" that is referred to in the story. You may want to refer back to this in a later session to help the children distinguish mistakes from sin. Also note that this story provides an opportunity to address the role that accountability plays in moral development. In the earliest stages of moral development, children move from a self-centered focus toward a desire to please others.



"Let's make a chocolate peanut-butter cake," John suggested. "It's Uncle Brad's favorite." "Great idea!" Mom agreed. "He'll like that a lot!" John smiled. "Can I help?"

As John and his mom prepared the peanut-butter cake, they remembered the last time they had tried to make a cake together. They had put in too many eggs by mistake. What a mess they had made! This time they were more careful. Still, they were having a wonderful time preparing for their very special guest.

List three things John might say or do to show Brad how happy he is about Brad's visit.

1. (Answers will vary.)
2. _____
3. _____

What three things might you say or do to show Jesus how happy you are to be his friend and follower?

1. (Answers will vary.)
2. _____
3. _____

13

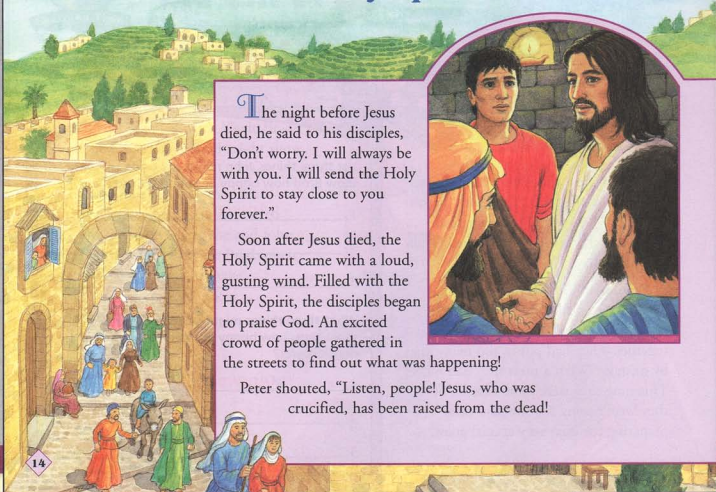
Completing an Activity

Work as a class to complete the activity on page 13. Possible responses to the first part include: *welcome Brad with a hug, speak politely, act respectfully, ask for more basketball tips, invite him to come back.* Give the children time to write several ideas on the lines provided.

Then help the children to appreciate that Jesus is a very special friend who loves us, cares for us, and is with us all the time. Do this by inviting them to share what they know about Jesus or the stories that Jesus told. Then complete the second part of the activity. At this time, you might want to invite the children to share what they wrote for the second part of the Family Time activity on

page 11. Lead them to know that because Jesus is so special to us, we want to do all the good things that he asks of us.

Jesus Gives Us the Holy Spirit



The night before Jesus died, he said to his disciples, "Don't worry. I will always be with you. I will send the Holy Spirit to stay close to you forever."

Soon after Jesus died, the Holy Spirit came with a loud, gusting wind. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples began to praise God. An excited crowd of people gathered in the streets to find out what was happening!

Peter shouted, "Listen, people! Jesus, who was crucified, has been raised from the dead!"

2 Meeting God in the Word and Tradition

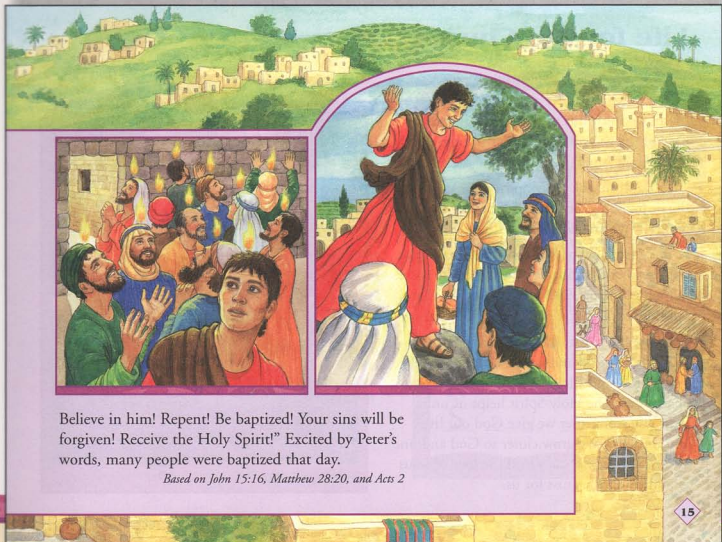
Sharing the Word of God

Use the Glossary on pages 59 and 60 either before or after sharing the Scripture story to help the children understand the words *disciple* and *repent*. You might also want to help them recall the definition of *Church*. Note that the words *sin* and *forgiveness* are included in the Glossary. The children will learn more about these in a later session.

Ask the children to follow along in the student text as you slowly read aloud the story on pages 14 and 15. Be sure to read with expression so that the children will sense the sadness of Jesus' farewell to his disciples and the subsequent excitement of

Pentecost. Pause after each paragraph to help the children imagine each scene.

After the first paragraph, ask: **Where do you think Jesus is going after he finishes talking to his disciples?** (Jesus is at the Last Supper. He will soon die on the cross and rise from the dead.) After the second paragraph, ask what questions the children would have if they were in the streets of Jerusalem that day. Just before the third paragraph, explain that Peter is the leader of the disciples. After this paragraph, ask the children if they have ever been so excited about anything. As time permits, allow them to share about these exciting events.



Believe in him! Repent! Be baptized! Your sins will be forgiven! Receive the Holy Spirit!” Excited by Peter’s words, many people were baptized that day.

Based on John 15:16, Matthew 28:20, and Acts 2

Talking About the Story

Invite the children to look carefully at the pictures on pages 14 and 15. Then divide the class into three groups and assign each group one picture to explore. Ask each group to look carefully at the facial expressions in the picture, to tell what is happening, and to guess how the people are feeling. Point out to the children that just as the people who were baptized in the Scripture story received the Holy Spirit and their sins were forgiven, so did their own Baptisms celebrate the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Life for the Church

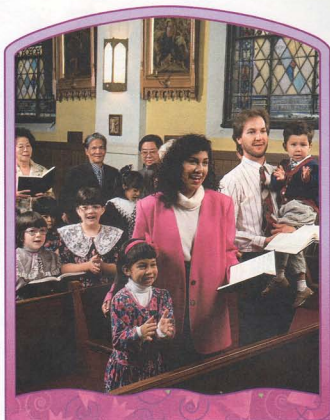
Just as the Holy Spirit filled Jesus' followers with wonder and praise at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fills us with new life today! One of the ways the Holy Spirit brings new life to the Church today is in the sacraments.

In Baptism, the Holy Spirit gives us new life in Jesus. We become members of the Church. We are part of God's family.

In Confirmation, the Holy Spirit makes our Baptismal faith stronger. We will learn to share our faith in Jesus by serving others. The Holy Spirit helps us tell others about Jesus' love.

In the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit changes our gifts of bread and wine into the gifts of Jesus' Body and Blood. The Holy Spirit also changes us. The Holy Spirit helps us unite with Jesus. Together we give God our lives and our love. We grow closer to God and one another. We show the world the love of Jesus who died on the cross for us.

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Learning About the Holy Spirit

Before the children look at pages 16 and 17, review the meaning of *sacraments* with them. (See the Glossary, page 60.) Then have them look at the photograph on page 16. You might ask: **What are the children doing?** (*Answers may vary: singing, clapping hands, praying, praising.*) **How do you think they feel?** (*Happy, joyful*) Help the children to see that in this photograph, people are at Mass. They are growing closer together as God's family just as we grow closer to members of our own families when we gather together for special celebrations. Tell the children that at this celebration they are praying with Jesus,

who died on the cross for them.

Ask the children to follow along in their books as you read aloud "Life for the Church." Each time you get to the words *Holy Spirit*, direct the children to say these words with you. Then challenge the children to be detectives. Ask them to work in pairs or small groups to find eight things on pages 16 and 17 that the Holy Spirit does. Instruct them to underline those eight things in their books. Then review the answers together as a class.

Use the Glossary on pages 59 and 60 to review the meaning of the words *Pentecost*, *holiness*, and *sin*. You may also want to review the four sacraments mentioned on these pages.

As Catholics, we try to live the same way Jesus did. We can ask the Holy Spirit to guide us. The Holy Spirit helps us make good choices that keep us close to God and one another. We call this holiness.

Sometimes we say or do things that turn us away from God and others who love us. We call this sin.



When we have hurt one another, the Holy Spirit helps heal our friendships. Reconciliation is a sacrament of healing. In the Holy Spirit, we can hope that God will make things right again.



Unscramble the letters in the flames to complete the three words below. Use the words to begin a prayer. Invite the Holy Spirit to bring new life to your family, school, and parish. Share your prayer with a classmate or family member.

C o m e ,
H o l y
S p i r i t

17

Looking at the Photograph

Use the details in the photograph on page 17 to tell a story about someone who has become separated from God or others. Call on the children to suggest ways that persons can become reconciled. Help the children to see that the mother in the photograph is trying to help two sisters make up after a fight. Emphasize that God's word tells us that God has a purpose and a plan for all things to work out for good. God's word also tells us that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God (See Romans 8:28–39).

Unscrambling the Words

Point out the scrambled words on the flames of fire on the bottom of page 17. Tell the

children that when they unscramble the words, they will discover the beginning to a very special prayer. Direct the children to write the words on the lines provided.

Composing a Prayer

After the children have unscrambled the words in the flames of fire, gather the children in a circle and ask them to help make up a class prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to bring new life to their school, parish, family, and themselves. This can be done orally. Or if you prefer to have the prayer written down, print it on posterboard. Invite the children to decorate it at a later time and hang it on a school bulletin board. If possible, have the prayer printed in the church bulletin.

Living in the Spirit

Living in the Spirit means following Jesus and believing Jesus is with us. It also means celebrating the sacraments with the family of the Church and listening to God in prayer.

Jesus is with us today through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Grace is the gift of God's love and presence in our lives that helps us live as Jesus taught.

We ask the Holy Spirit to help and guide us. When we sin, the Holy Spirit helps us to be sorry. When we make good choices, the Holy Spirit helps us to be holy.



Check each item below that someone who is living in the Spirit might say.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1. "I know that God loves me." | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. "God is too busy to care for me." |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2. "I pray to Jesus every day." | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5. "People at my parish care about me." |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3. "Let's be friends again!" | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. "I will never tell her I'm sorry!" |

18

3 Living with God in Our Lives

Reading About the Life of the Church

Ask the children to recall the promise Jesus made to the disciples the night before he died (*to be with them always*). Then read the text on page 18. After the first paragraph, tell the children that God is with them when they gather as a class, as a parish, or with their families. After the second paragraph, be sure they understand that God's grace is a gift they receive when they celebrate the sacraments. In Reconciliation, the Holy Spirit gives them the grace to make the right moral choices.

Identifying Spirit Language

Tell the children that people who live in the Spirit use language that is kind, hopeful, and trusting. They don't complain, blame other people, or say things that are mean or unkind.

Then direct the children's attention to the activity at the bottom of page 18. Ask them to listen as you read each entry and to check each item that someone living in the Spirit might say. Read with emotion to help the children understand each entry. Note that items 4 and 6 should not be checked.

A Prayer for New Life

Thank you, Father, for your Son, Jesus,
who died for us.

Thank you, Jesus, for the Holy Spirit,
who brings us new life.

Thank you, Holy Spirit, for guiding us
and helping to make us holy.

Help us to live as your children, God.

May we receive the gift of new life that
you promise to all those who live
in your love.

Amen.

Family Time

Invite each family member
to describe how a special
follower of Jesus he or she
knows lives a life of
holiness in the Holy Spirit.

We Believe

- In his life and death,
Jesus showed us
God's love.
- Jesus gives us the
Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit
brings us new life.
- In the sacraments,
the Holy Spirit makes
us holy.

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Praying for New Life

Remind the children that Jesus is with them always. Ask them to breathe slowly and deeply three times as they think about how close Jesus is to them. Then invite them to pray with you the "Prayer for New Life" on page 19. You may want to have the children read the greeting part of each line, "Thank you, Father," with you. Then you could read the rest of each sentence. Everyone can read the last two lines together.

Reviewing the We Believe Statements

Remind the children that the statements in the We Believe box summarize what they

have learned in this lesson. Have the children read the statements to themselves. Then ask if they have any questions.

Using the Family Time Box

Encourage the children to use the Family Time box at home with their families. Invite them to share with their parents what they have learned about living in the Spirit. You may want to send a note home with the children to encourage their families to complete the Family Time activity for Lesson 3 before the next classroom session.

Ending with Prayer Time



We Remember and Celebrate

Today, we remember and celebrate our new life in Christ. God gave us this gift of new life at Baptism. We live this new life in the Holy Spirit, who helps us grow strong in our faith.

God's word tells about helping new life to grow. Let us listen to the story Jesus told about the Sower and the Seed from Matthew 13:3–9. We will respond:

"The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest."

Come forward to receive a potted flower seed. When we return to our seats, we greet one another with a hug or handshake and say,

"Be filled with new life!"



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What Are We Celebrating?

The aim of this celebration is to give the children a ritual experience that celebrates the gift of new life in Christ that is strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit and to encourage the community to always be open to this gift and to nurture it.

Where Do I Begin?

Read page 20 of the student text. Review

page 50b of this guide on making the most of this prayer celebration. Then read Matthew 13:3–9 and prepare to tell the story in your own words. To prepare for Sharing Time, also read Matthew 13:18–23.

What Do I Need?

Potted seed for each child • Bible or *Lectionary for Masses with Children* • students texts • recorded music (optional)

Let us read responsively from Psalm 65.
The response is: "The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest."

*Our God, you take care of the earth
and send rain to help the soil
grow all kinds of crops.
Your rivers never run dry,
and you prepare the earth
to produce much grain. (response)
Wherever your footsteps
touch the earth,
a rich harvest is gathered.
Desert pastures blossom,
and mountains celebrate. (response)
Meadows are filled
with sheep and goats;
valleys overflow with grain
and echo with joyful songs. (response)*

It's As Simple As . . .

1. Inviting the children to pray.
2. Introducing the celebration.
3. Reading the parable of the Sower and the Seed, or telling the story in your own words.
4. Encouraging the children to talk about the parable with you.
5. Praying Psalm 65 together.
6. Distributing the potted seeds.

What About Music?

You may want to play recorded music or sing a song from the hymnal during the celebration.

Sharing Time

As you talk about the parable of the Sower and the Seed with the children, you might ask them: **What is necessary for the seed to grow? What is necessary for God's gift of new life to grow in us? If the seed produces flowers or food, what does God's new life in us produce?**

Additional Suggestions

Invite the children to decide if they would each like to nurture their seeds at home and keep the flowering plant there or if they would like to keep the seedlings in the classroom and then use them to beautify the school or church grounds.