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THEME

2 The Eucharist Is About Celebrating

Focus

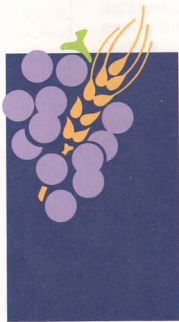
Lead the children to realize that every family reserves special days on which to celebrate the life and love they share with one another. Also lead them to realize that every week they and their families are invited to celebrate Sunday, the Lord's day, with other members of the Christian family.

Reflection

Celebrations are a fact of human existence. They serve a real human purpose, fulfill a truly human need. Margaret Mead, an anthropologist who did extensive comparative studies of culture, wrote:

Celebrations answer the needs of each age: of the youngest child — first enthralled by the lights of candles on a cake or electrically lighted trees; or the older child beginning to remember and to forget his early childhood; of the adolescent hovering between a past that he must leave and a future that is not yet; of young parents, partly caught by memories of their parents; of grandmothers living again in the so different eyes of their grandchildren; of great-grandmothers, living longer than people have ever lived and trying hard to remain in touch with the modern world. A celebration must be a ceremony in which each finds something of his own and all share something together. It must be a community ceremonial if it is to have a place for each of them.

This is something of what the Eucharist is about. From the earliest times, Christians have gathered together to celebrate their call to be a community in and through Christ. The form of the Mass has changed through the years, yet the meaning of the



eucharistic gathering remains the same. In the Eucharist, we join together to celebrate our freedom from selfishness that God, in Jesus Christ, has granted us.

We celebrate our fellowship here and now before Jesus who we believe is present today in the gathered community, in the word, in the bread. And we celebrate our hope that God's absolute love for us, a love that has given us life, will give us "life to the full" — each person's ultimate dream.

All the elements in the eucharistic celebration reinforce the meaning of our gathering. But certain elements, particular rites and prayers, signify in a special way that this gathering is unique. The singing that usually accompanies the entrance procession, the opening dialogue, the greeting by the priest, and the opening prayer set the tone for celebration and establish a bond among the individual worshipers. All these elements work together to give us at the start that sense of harmony so necessary for the celebration of our one life.

Although we can and do celebrate the Eucharist on any day, we have come to identify this celebration in a special way with Sunday. We Christians respond on the Lord's day to Christ's invitation to celebrate our birth to a new life begun in Baptism and nourished now in the Eucharist.

Overview of the Theme

CATECHETICAL SESSION I: Explore Life Experience to discover how celebration is a part of family life and to reflect on its deeper meaning.

CELEBRATION: Experience Christian Tradition by encountering the word of God in Scripture and participating in a special celebration — the Rite of Illumination.

CATECHETICAL SESSION II: Assimilate Christian Experience by realizing that Jesus invites us to gather as one family to celebrate our faith in the risen Lord and by finding ways to share Jesus' light and love with others.

Materials Needed: felt-tip markers or crayons
■ writing materials

CATECHETICAL SESSION I Explore Life Experience

Reviewing

Ask the children to share whatever special things they have done with their families to prepare for First Holy Communion.

Discussing Family Occasions

Ask the children to share stories about special events they celebrate with their families or in their neighborhoods, for example, birthdays or

anniversaries or weddings. Give the children time to describe what they do at such celebrations and how they feel while doing those things.

Then discuss with the children how their families celebrate special days like Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and so on. Pay particular attention to ethnic and cultural details.

Take time to allow the children to share what their favorite celebration is and why.

Explain to the children that Sunday can be a very special day. It is a day we often set aside for fun and relaxation. Many people do not go out to work on Sunday, and they share time and recreation with their families. Recall with the children that Christians call Sunday the Lord's day because Jesus rose from the dead on that day. We celebrate this special event in a special way.

Guide the children in a discussion of what they and their families do on Sunday. Ask questions such as the following.

- Do you do anything special with your family on Sunday? What do you do?
- On Sunday, do you wear anything different or does your family have a special meal?
- Do you remember why Christians go to church on Sunday? (to celebrate the Lord's day as a community of believers)

Summarize the discussion by helping the children to recognize the value of time spent celebrating life's special moments.

2 The Eucharist Is About Celebrating



LIFE EXPERIENCE: FAMILY CELEBRATIONS

Discussing the Picture Story

Have the children open their books to page 10 and look at the photographs. Discuss what is happening in each picture. To emphasize the joy of celebrating together, ask questions such as the following.

- What word would you use to describe all the people in the pictures?
- What day are the people in the first picture celebrating?
- What is it like in your house on Christmas morning?
- What might the girl in the second picture be saying to her mother?

- Did you ever have a birthday party? What did you like best about it?
- Look at the boys in the picture on the top of the page. Why do you think they are happy?
- What do you like to do when you are really happy? How do you celebrate?

Summarize the discussion by helping the children discover why it is good to celebrate with family and friends.

Reading and Writing

Ask the children to turn to page 11 in their books. Read the page with the children and tell them to fill in the spaces provided. Explain that this will make the book their own in a special way. It will

Happy Are Those Who Love to Celebrate Life

My family loves to
have celebrations on
special days.

On those days
we invite special
people to our home.

On my birthday
I would like to invite

God gives us a special day
every week to celebrate.

It is called

This is my drawing of a
celebration I liked.

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LIFE EXPERIENCE: FAMILY CELEBRATIONS

tell their very own story. Give the children adequate time and materials to do this. If necessary, help them with spelling.

When the children have finished, take time to have them share what they have written. Be sure to establish an environment of trust. Share your own story first, then encourage the children to share theirs. Thank them for sharing.

Drawing

Draw attention to the words on the top of page 11, "Happy are those who love to celebrate life." Ask the children to think of a celebration they especially enjoyed. Give them sufficient time and materials to draw a picture of that celebration.

Storytelling

When the children have finished their drawings, ask them to describe what is happening in their picture and tell who the people are. Ask them to tell why this was one of their favorite celebrations. You may wish to tell the children about one of your own favorite celebrations.

Celebrating

Prepare a simple celebration with the children to express the joy you share together. Create a festive atmosphere with whatever you have at hand. You might provide some treat to eat.

Concluding Activities

Singing Teach the children "Celebrating" (Song 2, Side 1, Band 2) on the record *WE CELEBRATE THE EUCHARIST*. If this song is not available you might use another song appropriate for the theme "Celebrating." Provide the children with copies of the words of the song. Have them listen to the song on the record. Then invite them to sing with the record. When they are sure of the words, encourage them to clap while they sing.

Invitation to the Second Celebration Explain to the children that they and their parents will be invited to a celebration. During this celebration they may be given a lighted candle. If so, this candle will be a sign of Jesus in their lives. Jesus brings light and joy to us, and he wants us to share that light and joy with others. If the children receive a candle, tell them that they will take the candle home as a reminder that Jesus is always with them. Check the procedure for this celebration with your program director.

Praying Invite the children to sit or stand in a circle for the concluding prayer. Use words such as the following.

- Lord, you have given us life and love and joy.
(Children repeat.)
- We thank you and we love you.
(Children repeat.)
- To show our thanks we will share our joy with all whom we meet.
(Children repeat.)

As you dismiss the children tell them that you will look forward to seeing them at your next session.

Catechist's Notes

CELEBRATION

Experience Christian Tradition

Rite of Illumination

The second celebration — The Eucharist Is About Celebrating — allows the children and their parents to discover the importance of Sunday, the day of the Lord.

This celebration is based on the Rite of Illumination in the RCIA. During this celebration, if possible, the Paschal candle is lighted, and other candles are lighted from it and given to the children. This ceremony leads us to an understanding of the presence of the risen Lord among us. Jesus is the light of the world. Every Sunday we are called to celebrate our call to carry on the mission of Jesus, that is to be a source of light and love in this world.

After the homily the children will be asked to stand. The celebrant may address them with the following words.

Celebrant: You have been enlightened by Christ. Walk always as children of the light, and keep the flame of faith alive in your hearts. Now, dear children, we invite you to come forward with your parents to receive a lighted candle, a sign of the risen Lord, who invites you to continue your journey in this Christian community.

(As each family comes forward, the celebrant hands their child a candle.)

Celebrant: Bring the light and joy of Christ to everyone you meet.

Child: Yes, I will.

Catechist's Notes

Jesus Is Invited to a Wedding



12

One day there was a wedding celebration in a town called Cana. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there. Jesus was also there with some of his friends.

When there was no wine left for the rest of the celebration, Mary, the mother of Jesus, went to him and said, "Son, they have no more wine." Jesus answered, "Please, do not ask me to do anything about it now. My hour has not come yet." But Mary said to those serving, "Do whatever he tells you."

There were six very large stone water jars nearby. Jesus said to those who were serving, "Fill the jars with water." They filled them to the brim. Jesus told them, "Pour some out now and take it to the headwaiter."

SCRIPTURE: JESUS CELEBRATES WITH HIS FRIENDS

CATECHETICAL SESSION II

Assimilate Christian Experience

Scripture Story

Jesus Is Invited to a Wedding This Scripture story has been chosen to highlight the presence of Christ in celebration.

Sharing the Word of God

Read aloud the story on pages 12 and 13 of the children's book. Encourage the children to listen reflectively rather than to read the words from their books.

Reflecting on the Word of God

Ask the children to retell the story in their own words. As you discuss the story with the children, concentrate on themes that have meaning for their lives. Do not draw attention to historical details. Guide reflection on the story with questions such as the following.

- What happened at Cana?
- Who was invited to the wedding?
- What happened to the wine while the guests were there?
- How would you feel if you invited your friends to a party and ran out of food?

The headwaiter tasted the water that had now become wine. He had no idea where the wine had come from. He then called the bridegroom and said, "Most people serve the best wine first. They save the cheaper wine until the guests have been drinking awhile. You have saved the best wine until the end of the celebration."

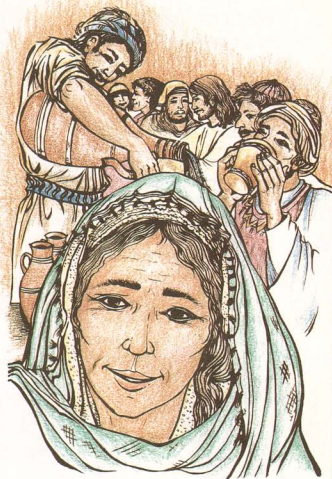
This is the first wonderful sign that Jesus gave to his friends. His friends began to believe in him.

When the celebration was over, Jesus, his mother, and his friends went down to Capernaum and stayed there for a few days.

Based on John 2:1-11

*I rejoiced when I heard them say,
"Let us go to God's house."*

Based on Psalm 121:1



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SCRIPTURE: JESUS CELEBRATES WITH HIS FRIENDS

- How do you think the headwaiter felt?
- What did Mary do?
- What does that tell you about Mary?
- What did Jesus do after Mary spoke to him?
- Was this important for Mary? Why?
- Was this important for the guests at the wedding? Why?
- How do you think the headwaiter felt when he saw the new wine?

Lead the children to see that the presence of Jesus made a difference to the people who were at the wedding. Help the children to name ways that Jesus is present in our lives today to help us.

Responding to the Word of God

Remind the children that God's house is a special place of prayer and celebration. Invite them to pray with you the response to the Scripture story found on the bottom of page 13. Then invite volunteers to offer their own spontaneous prayers. To offer a model for the children, you might say aloud a prayer such as the following.

- Jesus, you were concerned about the people at the wedding celebration because they had no more wine. You turned water into wine for them. You are with us today to help in time of difficulty. We celebrate your presence among us. You are the light of the world.

We Come Together as a Community

There is a special house
in my neighborhood.

We call it a church.

Many men, women, and
children gather there on Sunday
to celebrate the Lord's Day.

They greet one another.
They pray and sing to
the Lord Jesus.

Jesus says,
Where two or three come together
in my name, I am there with them.

Based on Matthew 18:20

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you,
we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ,
only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin
of the world:

have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand
of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

Discussing Family Celebrations

Talk about the things the children do with their families on weekends. Help the children understand how important it is to take time to be together to celebrate the life and love we share. Stress everyone's joy at the presence of those in the family who cannot always be together during the week, for example, fathers and mothers who travel to work, or brothers and sisters who live away from home. Stress also the joy of breaking the work routine of the week, of having time to play, time for visiting relatives and friends, time to share.

Reading

Have the children turn to pages 14 and 15 in their books. Ask the children to read page 14 either silently or aloud.

Explain that every week, Jesus invites us to gather as one family to celebrate our faith in him, the risen Lord. The special place where we gather is called our church.

Ask the children to think of things we do in church to make our gathering together a celebration. (We sing and pray words of praise.) Explain that the Glory to God is a prayer of praise. Sometimes we sing it together, and other times we say it with joyful voices.



MINISTRY: HOSPITALITY AND MUSIC

Discussing the Illustration

Ask the children to look at the illustration on page 15. Explain that this drawing shows the Christian community gathered in church and expressing their faith in song. Review the meaning of the word *ministry* with the children. Put the word on the chalkboard or on a poster for all to see. Ask the following questions.

- What do you see in this picture?
- What do you call this group?
- Is what they are doing important for us? Why?
- What ministries do the following people share to help us celebrate the day of the Lord?
 - choir and musicians (ministry of music)
 - flower arranger (ministry of decoration)
 - ushers (ministry of hospitality)
 - celebrant (ministry of leadership in worship)
 - lector (ministry of proclaiming God's word)
- Look at the Paschal candle. Where is the Paschal candle in our church?
- Do any members of your family perform a ministry for our church? Tell us about it.

Happy Are Those Who Celebrate the Lord's Day

Every week Jesus invites us
to come to a celebration
in God's house.

We are Jesus'
sisters and brothers.
We gather together
as one family.

We come together
to worship God
who is always with us.

This is the day of the Lord.
Rejoice and be glad
when they say to you,
Let us go to God's house!

Based on Psalm 122:1

Here are the names
of some of the people who
join me on Sunday to celebrate
the Lord's Day.

CHRISTIAN PRACTICE: BRINGING JOY TO OTHERS

Reading and Writing

Have the children open to page 16 in their books. Ask them to read page 16 either aloud or silently. When they have finished reading, talk with them about how we worship God together at the celebration of Eucharist. Explain the following parts of the celebration.

- As we gather in church, we sing a song of praise to show our joy at being together in God's house.
- After the song, the celebrant greets us by saying, "The Lord be with you." We answer, "And also with you."

- We pray or sing together the Glory to God.
- The celebrant leads us in a prayer to open our hearts so that we can celebrate together in love and joy.

Direct the children to the writing activity on page 16 of their books. Give them time to write the names of people they meet in church. When they have finished, take a few minutes to talk about what they have written.

Here I am with my family in God's house.

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CHRISTIAN PRACTICE: BRINGING JOY TO OTHERS

Drawing

Have the children look at page 17 in their books. Ask them to read the caption for the drawing activity. Encourage them to draw a picture of what they remember about their experience at the celebration for this theme or at Sunday Eucharist. Give the children adequate time and materials to complete their drawings.

Storytelling

When the children have finished their drawings, ask them to share what they have drawn. Guide a discussion about their work with questions such as the following.

- What is happening in your drawing?
- Where are you in the drawing?
- Who are the people with you?
- What are they doing?
- How do you think people feel when they are gathered together in God's house?

Be sure to compliment the children on the fine work they have done. Thank them for sharing.

Concluding Activities

Memorizing The doctrinal summary for this theme is found on page 74 of the children's book. Ask the children to turn to the summary now. Read the two statements with them. Encourage them to learn the material by heart.

Living the Christian Life Before dismissing the children, reflect with them on things they might do to practice what they have learned.

Put the following on the chalkboard.

- At home
- At school
- In your neighborhood
- At play

Ask the children how they will bring Jesus' light, love, and joy to each of these places.

Praying Invite the children to pray with you. Ask them to be still and remember that God is with them. Have them repeat the response, *Glory to God, glory!* after each short prayer.

- Jesus says, "I am the light of the world."

(Response)

- Lord, help us to follow Jesus who is our light.

(Response)

- Lord, we thank you for Jesus who gives us life and light.

(Response)

Catechist's Notes

Additional Activities

Celebrating Birthdays To acknowledge that birthdays are important celebrations, make a birthday poster with the children's names and birth dates. Print the first name of each child in simple balloon letters under the heading, "Happy Birthday to You." At some time each month, have a brief birthday celebration by inviting the children whose birthdays are in that month, to color in their name on the poster. Then have everyone sing "Happy Birthday" to those children. You may wish to make or purchase birthday cards or small birthday gifts to be given to the children at that time. Summer birthdays can be celebrated at the beginning or end of the year.

Making a Candle Have the children make paper mosaic candles as a reminder that Jesus, the light of the world, lights our way to happiness and peace. Give each child some paste and four pieces of construction paper (a dark color for the background, red and yellow for the flame, and white for the candle). Show the children how to draw a simple candle and flame on the dark sheet. Then have them tear into small pieces the white, red, and yellow sheets. Tell them to paste the white pieces close together and overlapping to form the candle. The red and yellow pieces can be used to form the flame. Suggest that they hang the mosaic candle in their rooms at home to remind them that Jesus, the light of the world, is always with them.

Catechist's Notes