

NEW! WEEKLY GOSPEL
REFLECTION VIDEOS

CHILDREN'S LEAFLETS

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Children Celebrate!



Spring 2023 (Year A)

FEBRUARY 26, 2023 | FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

through **MAY 21, 2023** | ASCENSION / SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER



The Readings

The readings cited are the readings contained in the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*. These readings may differ at times from those heard by the adults. They may be shorter, there may be only one reading, plus the Psalm and the Gospel, or the First Readings may be different altogether from those the adults hear. The Gospel most always is the same, but may be the shorter form. The *Directory for Masses with Children* allows for these differences to accommodate the children's level of comprehension.



Activities

The last three pages of this book offer bonus activities intended for use by children who are pre-readers or beginning readers. Here are some suggestions, but all three activities could be used at any time. The first bonus activity brings to mind the Transfiguration of the Lord, which is the Gospel for March 5, 2023, the Second Sunday of Lent. The second bonus activity is based on the Gospel of the Good Shepherd from April 30, 2023, the Fourth Sunday of Easter. And the third bonus activity celebrates the Resurrection of the Lord on Easter Sunday, April 9, 2023 (this appears last to allow for the cut out portion of the activity).



Weekly Gospel Reflection Videos!

Available to subscribers of *Children Celebrate!* Visit <https://bit.ly/3Gea28P> for weekly Gospel Reflection videos. These videos can be used within your Children's Liturgy of the Word program or shared with parents and families to view at home.

Typesetting by Cassandra Waung and Michelle Gerstel
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Illustrations by Cathy Bruce

All Gospel summaries are based on the *Contemporary English Version, Bible for Today's Family: New Testament* (© 1991, American Bible Society). This is the translation used in the *Lectionary for Masses with Children* (© 1992, United States Catholic Conference), which is approved for use in all dioceses of the United States.



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April 30, 2023

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Today's Readings

Acts 2:14a, 36–41
Psalm 23:1–3a, 3b–4, 6
John 10:1–10



We Pray

Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd.
Guide us every day. Amen.

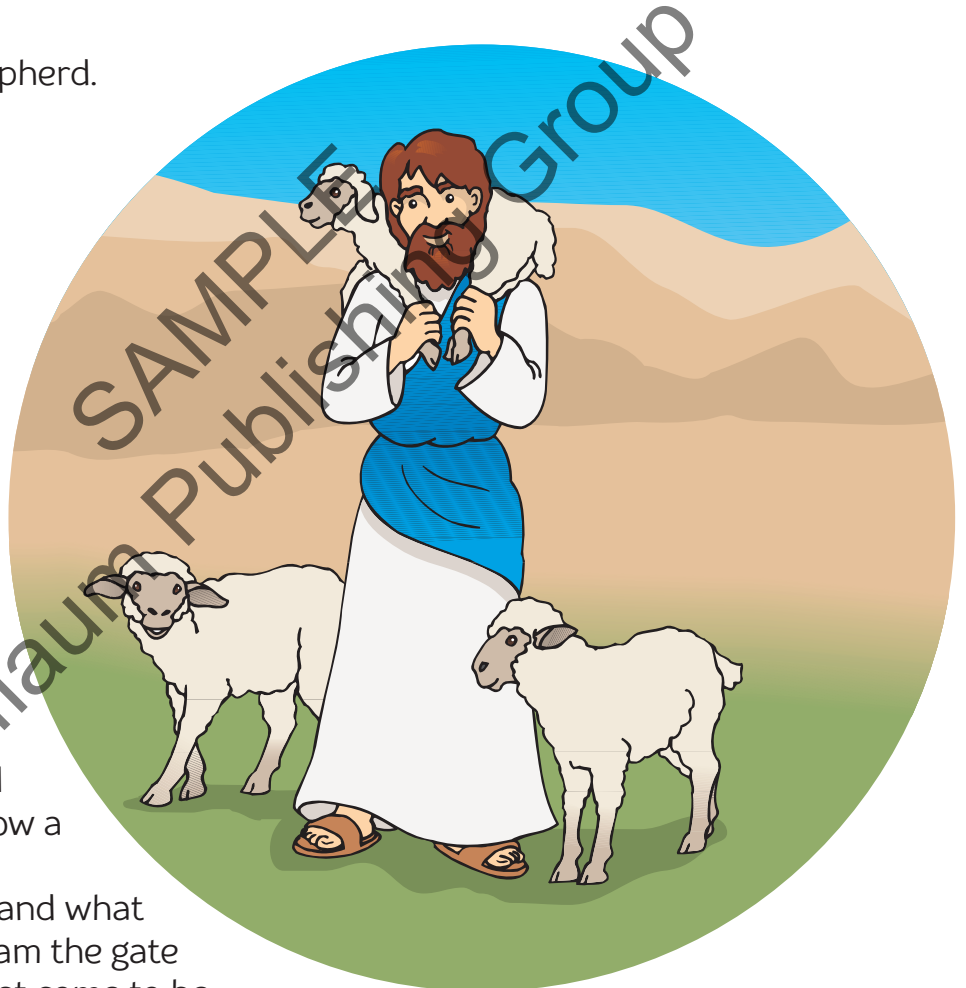


The Word of God This Week

Jesus Is the Savior

Jesus said, "Only thieves and robbers climb over the fence. The gatekeeper always opens the gate for the shepherd. The shepherd calls each sheep by name. The sheep know the shepherd's voice and will follow him. They will not follow a stranger's voice."

The people didn't understand what he was saying, so he said, "I am the gate through which everyone must come to be saved. Anyone who has come before me was false."

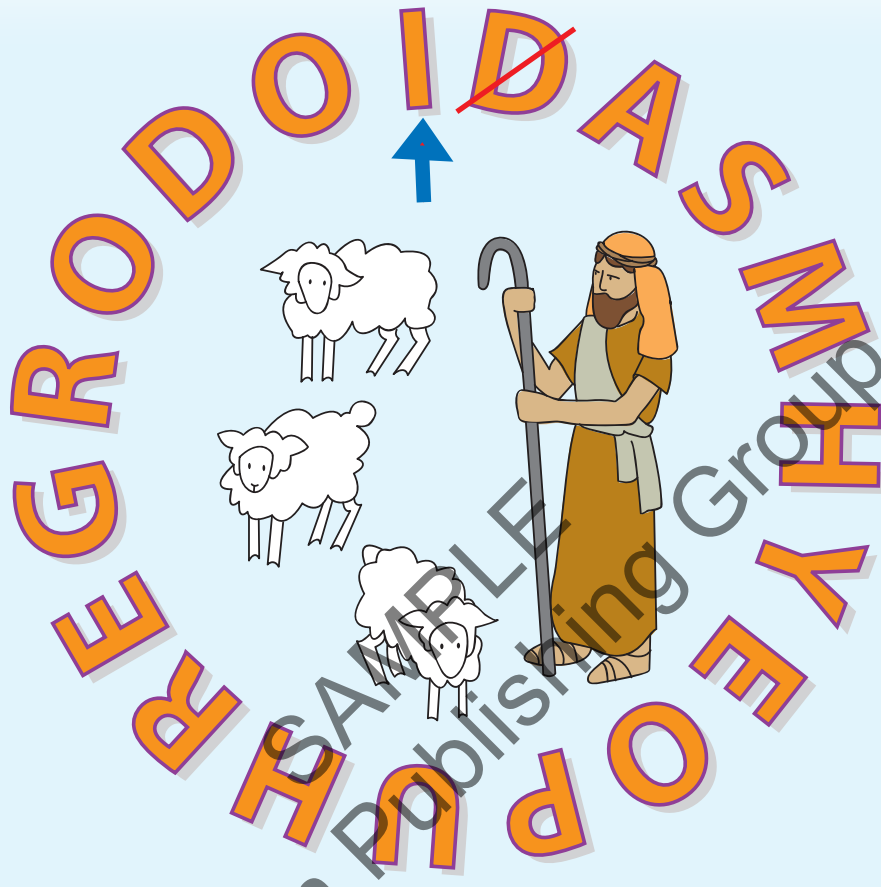


Visit <https://bit.ly/3Gea28P> for this week's Gospel Reflection, Saint Spotlight, and more.

Activity

Beginning at the arrow, write down every other letter to find out what Jesus said in this week's Gospel. Cross out every other letter as you work. The first letter has been done for you.

Scan here
for family
resources.



I

Family Corner

Faith Focus

So often we tell our children not to follow the crowd. We want them to become independent thinkers. So how do we get across the concept of following Christ? Perhaps the best way is to make the mention of Jesus' name and goodness part of our everyday vocabulary. If we give examples of doing things or handling situations as Jesus would, the more meaningful the concept of the Good Shepherd will become.

Family Activity

Cut an outline of a sheep out of construction paper. Keep a supply of cotton balls and a bottle of glue near the sheep. During this coming week, invite each family member to place a cotton ball in the sheep's body every time he or she has done something helpful for others. At a meal or another gathering time toward the end of the week, share some of the good things each family member has done.

NEW! WEEKLY GOSPEL
REFLECTION VIDEOS

LEADER'S GUIDE

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Children Celebrate!



Spring 2023 (Year A)

FEBRUARY 26, 2023 | FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

through **MAY 21, 2023** | ASCENSION / SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Leader's Guide

Spring 2023

Year A

February 26, 2023

First Sunday of Lent

through

May 21, 2023

Ascension/Seventh Sunday of Easter

Additional Resources at Pflaum.com

Sunday Readings

For your convenience, each Sunday's Lectionary readings for the Liturgy of the Word with Children can be downloaded from pflaum.com. It's as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Go to pflaum.com/readings for a list of Sunday readings (updated at the end of each month).
2. Click on the date you want. That Sunday's readings will open in a PDF.
3. Print or download the file.

For more about the Sunday Readings, see the Introduction to this Leader's Guide.

Weekly Gospel Reflection Videos!

Available to subscribers of *Children Celebrate!* Visit <https://bit.ly/3Gea28P> for weekly Gospel Reflection videos. These videos can be used within your Children's Liturgy of the Word program, or shared with parents and families to view at home.

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Children Celebrate! Director's Manual

For an easy-to-follow Director's Manual, go to pflaum.com/liturgy-of-the-word and click on "Bonus Resources" and then "Program Directors." There you will find a manual that outlines practical steps for establishing a program, recruiting and training volunteers, and creating the proper environment and liturgical flow.

In addition, you will learn how to most effectively incorporate *Children Celebrate!* materials into your program. Additional resources are also suggested.

Children Celebrate! Children's Liturgy of the Word – MP3 Album

With joyful melodies, call-and-response segments, and child-friendly lyrics, John Burland's inviting liturgical pieces are perfect for Children's Liturgy of the Word programs. For example, "Go Now and Listen to God's Word" can be sung as children are dismissed from the assembly, and "Yes, Lord, I Believe" is a jubilant option for singing the Creed, helping little ones to profess their faith.

Visit giamusic.com and search "Children Celebrate" to order.

Contents

This Issue's Themes	4
Using <i>Children Celebrate!</i>	5
Introduction	6
First Sunday of Lent	8
Second Sunday of Lent	12
Third Sunday of Lent	16
Fourth Sunday of Lent / Laetare Sunday	20
Fifth Sunday of Lent	24
Palm / Passion Sunday	28
Easter Sunday	32
Second Sunday of Easter / Sunday of Divine Mercy	36
Third Sunday of Easter	40
Fourth Sunday of Easter	44
Fifth Sunday of Easter	48
Sixth Sunday of Easter	52
The Ascension of the Lord	56
Seventh Sunday of Easter	60
Music	64

This Issue's Themes

Date	Sunday	Theme
February 26, 2023	First Sunday of Lent	We Worship God
March 5, 2023	Second Sunday of Lent	Jesus Is the Son of God
March 12, 2023	Third Sunday of Lent	Jesus Is the Messiah
March 19, 2023	Fourth Sunday of Lent / Laetare Sunday	Jesus Cures the Man Who Was Blind
March 26, 2023	Fifth Sunday of Lent	Jesus Gives Lazarus New Life
April 2, 2023	Palm/Passion Sunday	The People Welcome Jesus
April 9, 2023	Easter Sunday	Jesus Is Risen!
April 16, 2023	Second Sunday of Easter / Sunday of Divine Mercy	Thomas Sees Jesus and Believes
April 23, 2023	Third Sunday of Easter	Jesus Appears to the Disciples
April 30, 2023	Fourth Sunday of Easter	Jesus Is the Savior
May 7, 2023	Fifth Sunday of Easter	Jesus Leads and Guides Us
May 14, 2023	Sixth Sunday of Easter	Jesus Sends the Holy Spirit to Help Us
May 18 or 21, 2023	The Ascension of the Lord	Jesus Is Always with Us
May 21, 2023	Seventh Sunday of Easter	Jesus Is Always with Us

Using Children Celebrate!

Children Celebrate! is a complete step-by-step resource for celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with Children. The two components of *Children Celebrate!* are this Leader's Guide and the Children's Leaflets, a book of tear-out, take-home sheets.

Leader's Guide (each week has two parts)

I. Preparation provides the leader with information about the week's Scripture readings and how they relate to children today. Its elements are the following:

- **Today's Readings** cites the exact Scripture readings you will be using that day. (Remember, these readings do not always match the readings chosen for the adults. See more about the readings on page 6.) A theme sets the tone of that day's liturgy.
- **Prepare with Prayer** helps center you on the task at hand. This not only helps children hear and understand God's Word, but also helps you hear and understand God's Word *through* the children.
- **Scripture Background** helps you understand the readings and prepare to break open the Word.
- **Prepare the Meeting Space** gives you suggestions for enhancing the environment for that day's celebration. Review this section a few days before the liturgy.
- **Suggested Music** provides suggestions for appropriate songs during the liturgy. Information on where to find each piece of suggested music is on page 64.
- **Children's Connections** explains each week's theme and Scripture message as it applies to children today.
- **More About...** provides Church teaching about a topic that is related to this week's liturgy.
- **Using the Children's Leaflet** provides brief background information about the take-home sheet.
- **Activity** provides a reproduction of the take-home sheet. Solutions to puzzles are shown as needed.

II. The Liturgy of the Word is a ready-made liturgy specifically written for that week's readings and theme. Its elements are the following:

- **Gathering** helps the children settle into their places. Playing appropriate background music, or singing a song provides a transition into an attitude of prayer.
- **Collect** sets the tone for the worship experience.

- **Focus Statements** for each of the readings help you give the children a key idea to listen for and help them better understand the theme of the readings.
- **Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation** provide liturgically appropriate responses for the children to use.
- **Homily** gives you starter ideas for interesting, creative, and relevant reflections on the Gospel.
- **Profession of Faith** is a simple and interactive declaration of what we believe as Catholics.
- **Prayer of the Faithful** are the prayers for the needs of the world, the Church, and the community. These are often a common introduction for children into spontaneous prayer, and can be powerful for children.
- **Return to Assembly** provides the leader with cues to prepare the children to rejoin the main assembly and to remind them to take home a Children's Leaflet.

Children's Leaflets (each leaflet is two-sided)

Front Side

- **Today's Readings** gives the Scripture citations for that Sunday's liturgy.
- **We Pray** is a short prayer for children based on the week's theme.
- **The Word of God This Week** is a summary of the day's Gospel story.

Back Side

- **Activity** provides an entertaining way to reinforce the Gospel message.
- **Faith Focus** highlights how the Gospel message can pertain to the family.
- **Family Activity** provides practical suggestions to families on how to put the Gospel into action at home.

Weekly Gospel Reflection Videos

- **How to access the videos:** Visit <https://bit.ly/3Gea28P> to view the videos for this quarter (loaded monthly).
- **What's included?** Each weekly video includes a Gospel Reflection, Saint Spotlight, Closing Prayer, and Reflection Question.
- **Promote:** Share these videos with those assisting with Children's Liturgy of the Word for use during your program, as well as with parents and families.

Introduction

What is Liturgy of the Word with Children?

Liturgy of the Word with Children is a worship experience geared especially for children. It mirrors the worship experience of the larger community, with a style that is engaging and interactive. Jesus himself recognized that children have a pure spirituality, and he made them the primary spiritual model for all believers.

Liturgy of the Word with Children is not formal religious education, nor is it intended to be a substitute for attendance at religious education sessions. Rather, it should be considered a partner to religious education programs. Both are important for a child's spiritual development, just as continuing faith formation and growth in spirituality are important for adults.

The Word of God has a message that is as relevant and fitting for children as it is for adults. The children, however, often fail to hear the message simply because the adult vocabulary is beyond their comprehension. Liturgy of the Word with Children offers an experience for the children to hear Scripture in words they understand and to share their own understanding of God's Word.

Celebrating the Liturgy of the Word in this way is an empowering experience, giving children a foundation for understanding and appreciating Scripture. Over several years, the children not only become comfortable with hearing and discussing God's Word but also gain an understanding of and appreciation for their liturgical heritage as Catholics.

When and how do the children leave the assembly?

The celebration of the Liturgy of the Word with Children follows the same structure as the Liturgy of the Word for the entire assembly. In fact, it begins with the Introductory Rites, which are celebrated in the large assembly, where the children are seated with their families.

After the Introductory Rites, the presider invites any children wishing to participate to join the leader and proceed to the worship space set aside for them. They return after the Prayer of the Faithful to celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist with the entire community.

What about the readings?

The readings in the children's **Lectionary** sometimes differ from those used in the adult **Lectionary**. When planning liturgies to be used with children, the Church allows some flexibility in the number and choice of readings on Sundays and feast days.

According to the *Directory for Masses with Children*, "If three or even two readings appointed on Sundays or weekdays can be understood by children only with difficulty, it is permissible to read two or only one of them, but the reading of the Gospel should never be omitted" (Chapter III, No. 42). In addition, because of the difficulty some children may have in understanding certain verses, it is sometimes possible to omit one or another verse from the reading. (For a complete reading of the directives regarding selection of readings, see the *Directory for Masses with Children*, Chapter III, Nos. 41-47.)

In *Children Celebrate!* we follow the readings from the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*, which is approved for use in all dioceses of the United States by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. We determine themes and make suggestions for each Sunday's liturgy based on these readings. For this reason, it is important that you check each week's citations as listed in this Leader's Guide before finalizing your plans for that Sunday's celebration.

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

February 26, 2023

First Sunday of Lent

Today's Readings

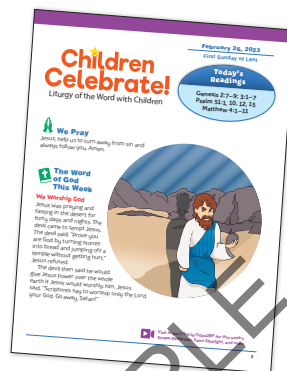
Genesis 2:7–9; 3:1–7
Psalm 51:1, 10, 12, 15
Matthew 4:1–11

We Worship God

Preparation

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.



Prepare with Prayer

I will teach sinners your Law, and they will return to you. Keep me from any deadly sin. Only you can save me! Then I will shout and sing about your power to save. (Psalm 51:13–14)

Scripture Background

Today's reading from Genesis tells the story of Adam and Eve's fall. While their fundamental sin was disobedience, it is interesting to consider the underlying attitudes that led to their sinful action. Pride in being asked for information only they supposedly knew, a certain kind of intellectual laziness that kept them from questioning the snake's authority, and a willingness to hear God slandered all helped entrap the pair. They disobeyed God because their love of God was insufficient. Fast-forward to today's Gospel. In this highly symbolic account of the temptation in the desert, Jesus is tempted three times to sin against the love of God.

First, one must love God with all one's heart. Jesus understands that turning the rocks into bread just to satisfy his own hunger is to let lesser desires diminish the purity of his desire to do God's will in all things. God has not commanded him to work this miracle. Later, as his public life unfolds, Jesus will perform wonders and signs galore, but only when moved to do so by the Holy Spirit.

Second, one must love God with all one's soul. This means giving one's whole life over to God. Again, the devil's suggestion

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a violet cloth, place:

- ▶ a Lectionary
- ▶ a battery-operated candle
- ▶ a cactus or dried flower arrangement

For use during the Gathering:

- ▶ a recorded Gathering song and music player
- ▶ a large stuffed animal (with a bandage on its arm or hand) placed on a chair facing a corner of the room

Suggested Music

See page 64 for more information.

Gathering: "Saying Yes" (Seeds CD-2, Track #8) or "These Ashes" (Promise & Good News CD-1, Track #15)

Gospel Acclamation: "Glory and Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #23)

that Jesus hurl himself off the temple is not something the Father wishes. If and when Jesus risks his life, it will be only for God's glory and at God's behest. Three years later, when the Holy Spirit moves him to enter Jerusalem at a highly volatile time, Jesus will do so without question and with a humble acceptance of all that follows.

Finally, one must love God with all one's might. Might is a word referring to all that one owns. When the devil promises Jesus the world's wealth in return for an act of worship, he is trying to awaken greed in Jesus. God's Son, however, is content with what he already has. Be it ever so humble (for now) Jesus knows there is no wealth on earth like that of his heavenly home.

Children's Connections

Today's Gathering activity uses a pretend interview to tell a simple story. The interview need not be memorized and can be adapted, so long as you stick to its basic three-part structure. Just as many fairy tales feature events happening in threes, Ana's story concerns three rules she has broken. Later, in the Homily, Ana's disobedience will be contrasted with Jesus' obedience.

Some children may strongly identify with Ana. That is why her part in the dialogue should contain no crying or bitter complaining. Instead, she should speak with a straightforward admission of her wrongdoing and acceptance of her punishment. Otherwise, sensitive children may become more distressed than entertained by Ana's story.

Help all the children see that their parents deserve the same obedience and loyalty that Jesus gave his heavenly Father.

The Children's Leaflet

The leaflet for this week helps the children learn Jesus' temptation in the desert, through a prayer, a summary of the Gospel, and a creative activity.

If you distribute the leaflet now and time permits, you may wish to read with the children the summary of the Gospel in "The Word of God This Week" after you have read the Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

Interview Between Ana and Her Babysitter

This pretend interview is between a babysitter (the catechist) and a girl named Ana, who is represented by a stuffed animal with a bandage on it.

Babysitter: Ana, you broke three of your parents' rules after they left yesterday, didn't you?

Ana: Yes. And now I'm really, really sorry.

Babysitter: So why on earth did you do that?

Ana: I wasn't thinking. I let my cousin Jeffie talk me into everything.

Babysitter: What was the first rule you broke?

Ana: Well, Mommy always says, "Don't snack before dinner," and I ate three cupcakes. Jeffie said you'd never notice because babysitters aren't smart.

Babysitter: But I did notice, didn't I? I saw that you were hardly touching your dinner, then I checked the tray of cupcakes and I found six missing—three that you ate and three that Jeffie ate. So what was the second rule you broke?

Ana: Daddy always says, "Don't jump on the beds." But Jeffie thought it would be fun to jump on them, and he told me you'd never notice because babysitters aren't smart.

Babysitter: But I did notice, didn't I? I heard the loud crash when you broke the bed you were jumping on. And what was the third rule you broke?

Ana: Mommy and Daddy always say, "Don't play with matches." But Jeffie said matches aren't at all dangerous the way grown-ups always say they are. He also said you wouldn't catch us because babysitters aren't smart.

Babysitter: Then what happened?

Ana: You came running after I burned myself and I started crying.

Babysitter: That's right, and I put that bandage on your burn. So, today you broke some very important rules, didn't you?

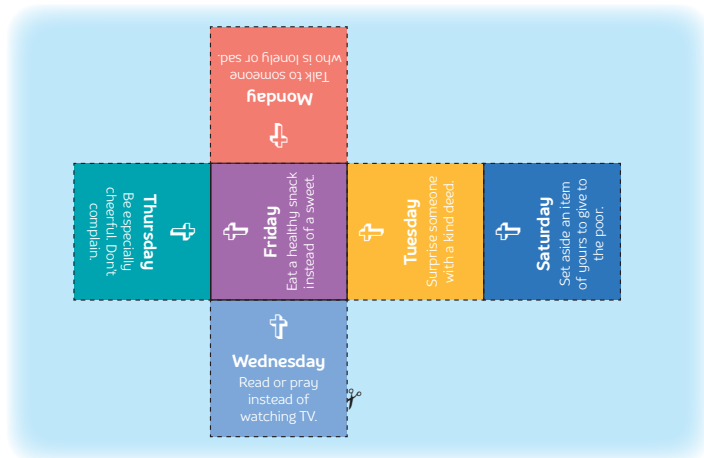
Ana: Yes, and now that's why I have to sit in the corner.

Babysitter: That's right. But before you go back to your corner, is there anything you want to tell all the boys and girls?

Ana: Yes. Always listen to your parents and do what they tell you. They're smarter than you are. They're way smarter than Jeffie! And babysitters ARE smart.

Leaflet Activity

With Lent just beginning, families are encouraged to establish a practice in which they can all participate. The children's activity offers a craft idea that serves as a daily reminder of extra efforts throughout Lent.



The Liturgy of the Word

Gathering

Invite the children to be seated. Point to the corner where “Ana” is sitting and ask the children if they want to know why she is sitting in “time out.” When they say yes, tell them you will go get Ana and have her explain. Then sit down with Ana on your lap and “interview” her, raising the pitch of your voice every time you speak Ana’s lines to differentiate her character from yours, the babysitter. After the interview, return Ana to her corner and begin the Collect.

Collect

Leader: Invite the children to close their eyes, bow their heads and pray. We will keep a moment of silence as we talk to God in our hearts. Let’s think about any rules we may have broken in the past week, and tell God how sorry we are. *(Pause for silence.)*

Leader: Let us pray. Be merciful, O Lord, in your goodness, for we have sinned against your love. In your great kindness, forgive us our sins and make us faithful again. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

Children: Amen.

Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

Leader: Do you know which two people committed the world’s first sin? They disobeyed an important rule of God’s, and this is their story. *Read Genesis 2:7–9; 3:1–7. Then say, “The word of the Lord.”*

Children: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be sung or spoken. Before beginning the psalm, sing or announce this response.

Leader: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Children: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Leader: *Read Psalm 51:1, 10, 12, 15.*

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

Leader: Did you know that Jesus was tempted to disobey God, too, when he lived on earth? Today’s Gospel tells us how he used ideas from Scripture to defeat the devil.

The Lord be with you.

Children: And with your spirit.

Leader: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

Children: † Glory to you, O Lord.

Leader: *Read Matthew 4:1–11. Then say, “The Gospel of the Lord.”*

Children: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Ask the children to be seated.

Homily

Base a homily on the following ideas and questions.

- ▶ Jesus had the power to work miracles, but he knew he was supposed to use it only to help others. When he said that man does not live by bread alone, he meant that there’s something more important than eating, and that’s obeying God. Remember Ana? She thought eating was more important.

- ▶ Jesus is both human and divine and lived in a body that could get hurt just like yours or mine. The Father expected him to take care of himself and not take foolish risks, and that's why Jesus said that it is wrong to put God to the test. Remember Ana? She let Jeffie talk her into some dangerous activities, then ended up breaking furniture and burning herself.
- ▶ Jesus refused to bow down before the devil because he knew he should worship and obey only his Father in Heaven. Remember Ana? She obeyed Jeffie instead of her parents.
- ▶ This week the Church begins observing the season of Lent. We use this time of year to remember Jesus' perfect obedience and to express our sorrow for our disobedience. We repent, or show we are sorry for our sins, by imitating Jesus' 40 days of prayer and sacrifice in the desert.



Profession of Faith

Leader: Please stand for the Profession of Faith. Respond to each question with the words, "I do."

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, whom we are called to love and obey with all our heart, soul, and might?

Children: I do.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who models for us perfect obedience to the Father's will?

Children: I do.

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Holy Spirit, who helps us overcome temptation and avoid sin?

Children: I do.

Leader: Do you believe in the holy catholic Church, the people Christ has gathered to himself to serve and obey God in all things?

Children: I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leader: As we begin our Lenten journey together, let us pray for the needs of our Church and world. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord."

That the words of Scripture and the example of Christ will inspire the leaders of our Church to seek God's will in all things, we pray.

Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Leader: That leaders of all the world's nations will use their power for the good of their people and not for their own selfish desires, we pray.

Children: Hear us, O Lord.

Leader: *Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:*

Heavenly Father, through the perfect obedience of your Son, Jesus, the damage caused by mankind's first sin was repaired. Through his saving work and the Holy Spirit sent to live among us, we are able to overcome temptation and avoid sin. May these days of Lent deepen our belief in these great mysteries of our faith, through the same Christ our Lord.

Children: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Children Celebrate!

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