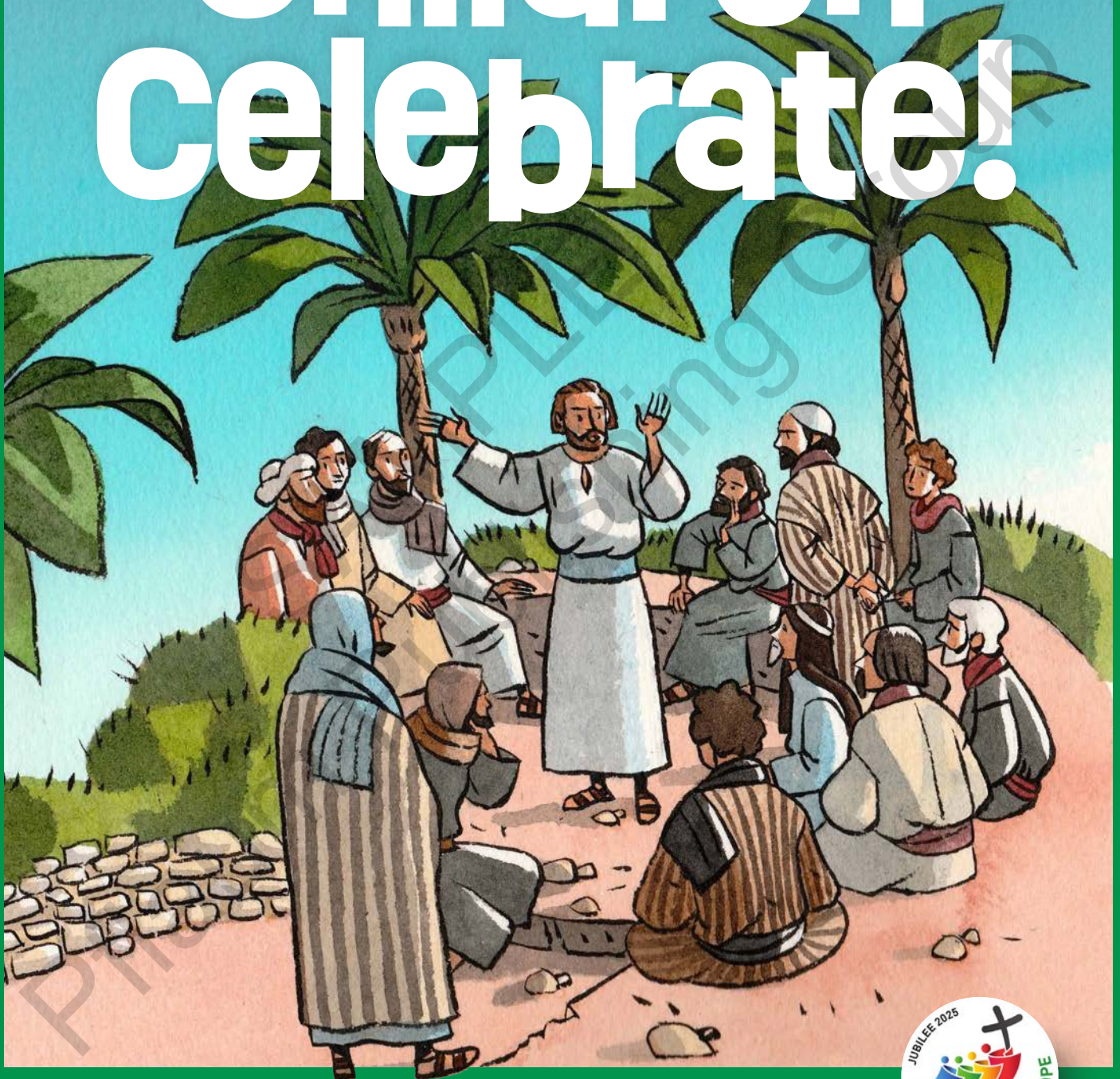


NEW! WEEKLY GOSPEL
REFLECTION VIDEOS

LITURGY OF THE WORD WITH CHILDREN

Children Celebrate!



Spring 2025 (Year C)

FEBRUARY 23, 2025 | SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
through **MAY 18, 2025** | FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Written by Sr. Alice Ann Pfeifer, CSA

Edited by Blue Willow Publishing Works

Design by Jeff McCall

Scripture Illustrations by
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The Readings

The readings cited are the readings that the children heard at the Sunday Liturgy. 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.



Bonus Activities

The last three pages of this book offer bonus activities intended for use by children who are pre-readers or beginning readers. They can be used at any time during these spring months, as children learn foundational truths of our faith in the Lent and Easter seasons.

Weekly Gospel Reflection Videos

Available to subscribers of *Children Celebrate!* Visit <https://bit.ly/3uxvsxR> 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.

MARCH 9, 2025 + FIRST SUNDAY of LENT

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Today's Readings

Deuteronomy 26:4–10

Psalm 91:1–2, 10–11

Luke 4:1–13

We Pray

Jesus, help us to always follow God's rules. Help us be more like you. Amen.

The Word of God This Week

Jesus Faces Temptation

Jesus went into the desert for forty days, where he was tested by the Devil. The Devil told Jesus to turn stone into bread. Jesus answered, "No one lives only on food." Then, the Devil told Jesus to worship him and he would make him powerful. Jesus answered, "Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!" Finally, the Devil dared Jesus to jump from the top of the Temple. Jesus said, "Don't test the Lord, your God."



Scan here for this week's Gospel Reflection, Saint Spotlight, and more.





**SCAN
HERE**
for family
resources

Activity

Lent is a time to work at growing into the people God wants us to be. Think about what you can do this Lent. **Finish the words of this prayer card. Say your prayer each day of Lent.**

Dear God,
Help me to be _____ during Lent.

Help me to know _____

Help me to act _____

I thank you for _____

I love you. Amen.

NAME _____



Family Corner

FAITH FOCUS

Self-denial helps us develop the discipline and self-control to live good moral lives. Lent is an excellent time to work on developing more control over our bad habits.

In today's Gospel, Jesus practices self-discipline through fasting and prayer. He knows that if he is to conquer the difficulties ahead of him he must have self-discipline, which does not come from a self-indulgent life.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Read today's Gospel and reflect on areas of your lives that need changing. Here are some ideas:

- Do you complain about small inconveniences? Remember to be thankful for your blessings.
- Do you get easily annoyed when things don't go your way? Think of ways you can remain calm and respectful instead.
- Do you use unacceptable language or call one another demeaning names? Decide to eliminate these bad habits.

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Today's Readings

Acts 5:12–16
Psalm 118:2, 4, 13–14
John 20:19–29

We Pray

Lord, like the Apostle Thomas, sometimes our faith is weak. Help us be strong in our beliefs. Amen.

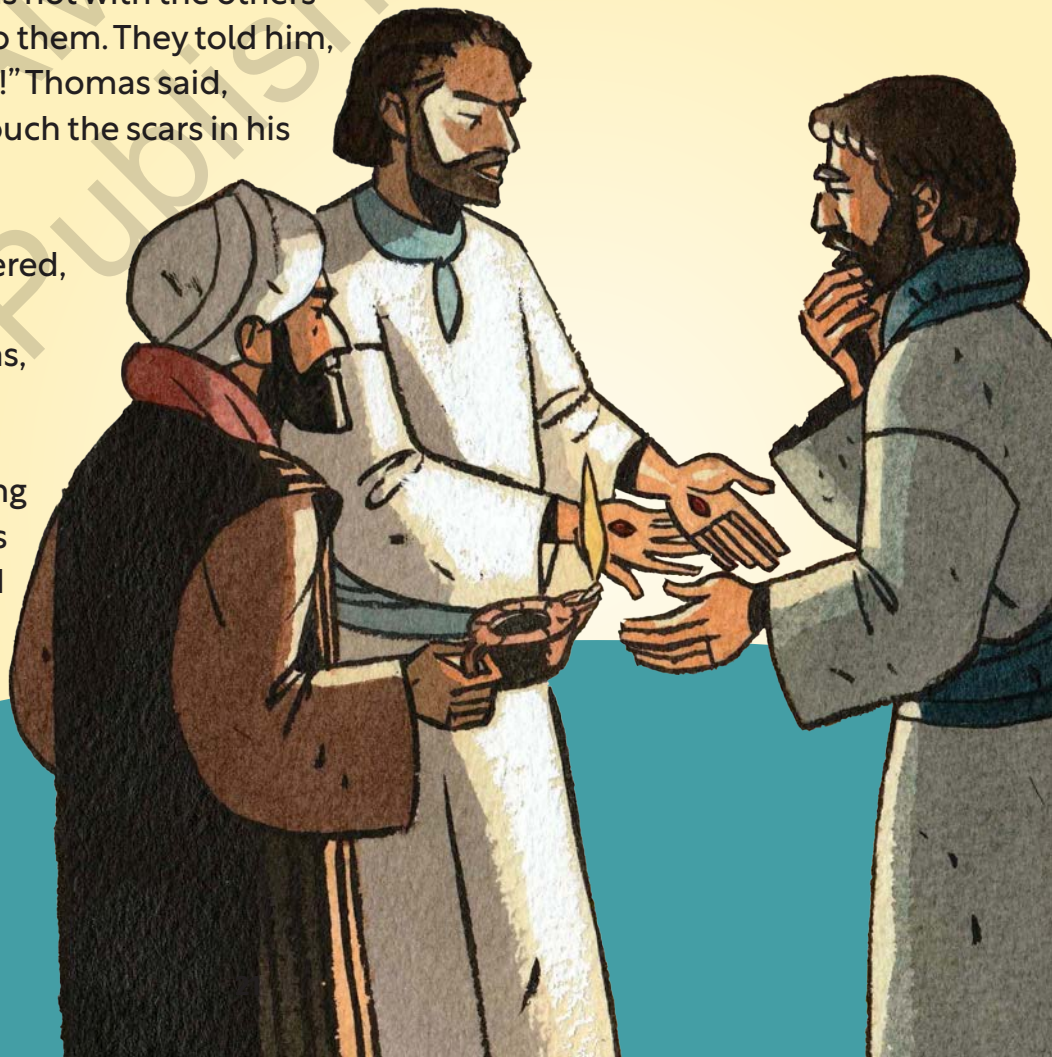
The Word of God This Week



Jesus Helps Thomas Believe

The Apostle Thomas was not with the others when Jesus appeared to them. They told him, “We have seen the Lord!” Thomas said, “I won’t believe until I touch the scars in his hands and side!”

A week later, when the Apostles were gathered, Jesus appeared before them. He said to Thomas, “Put your finger on my hand; put your hand in my side. Stop doubting and have faith!” Thomas answered, “My Lord and my God!”



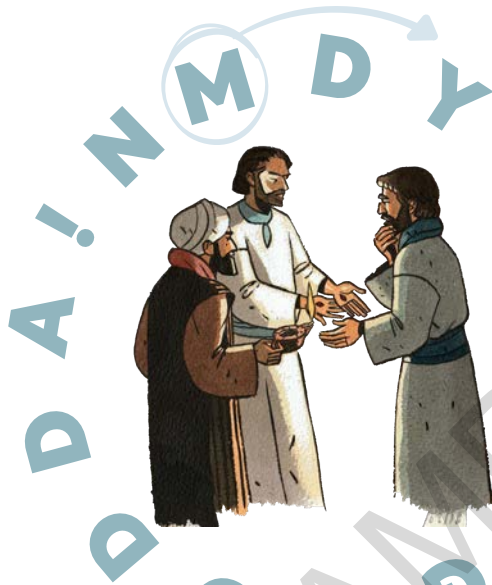
Scan here for this week's Gospel Reflection, Saint Spotlight, and more.

Activity

At first, Thomas doubted. When he saw Jesus, he believed. What did Thomas say to tell Jesus that he believed? **Circle every other letter in the circle. Write the letters on the lines below. Then read what Thomas said.** The first letter has been done for you.



**SCAN
HERE**
for family
resources



M _____

Family Corner

FAITH FOCUS

When Thomas returned to the room where the other disciples had seen Jesus, he found some ecstatic friends. Although he probably wanted to believe what they told him, he found it unbelievable. Jesus returned and gave Thomas proof.

We have all heard about how someone turned their life around or was successful because of someone else's faith in them. We understand what a gift it is to that person. Faith is a gift. Our faith in God is one of our greatest gifts.

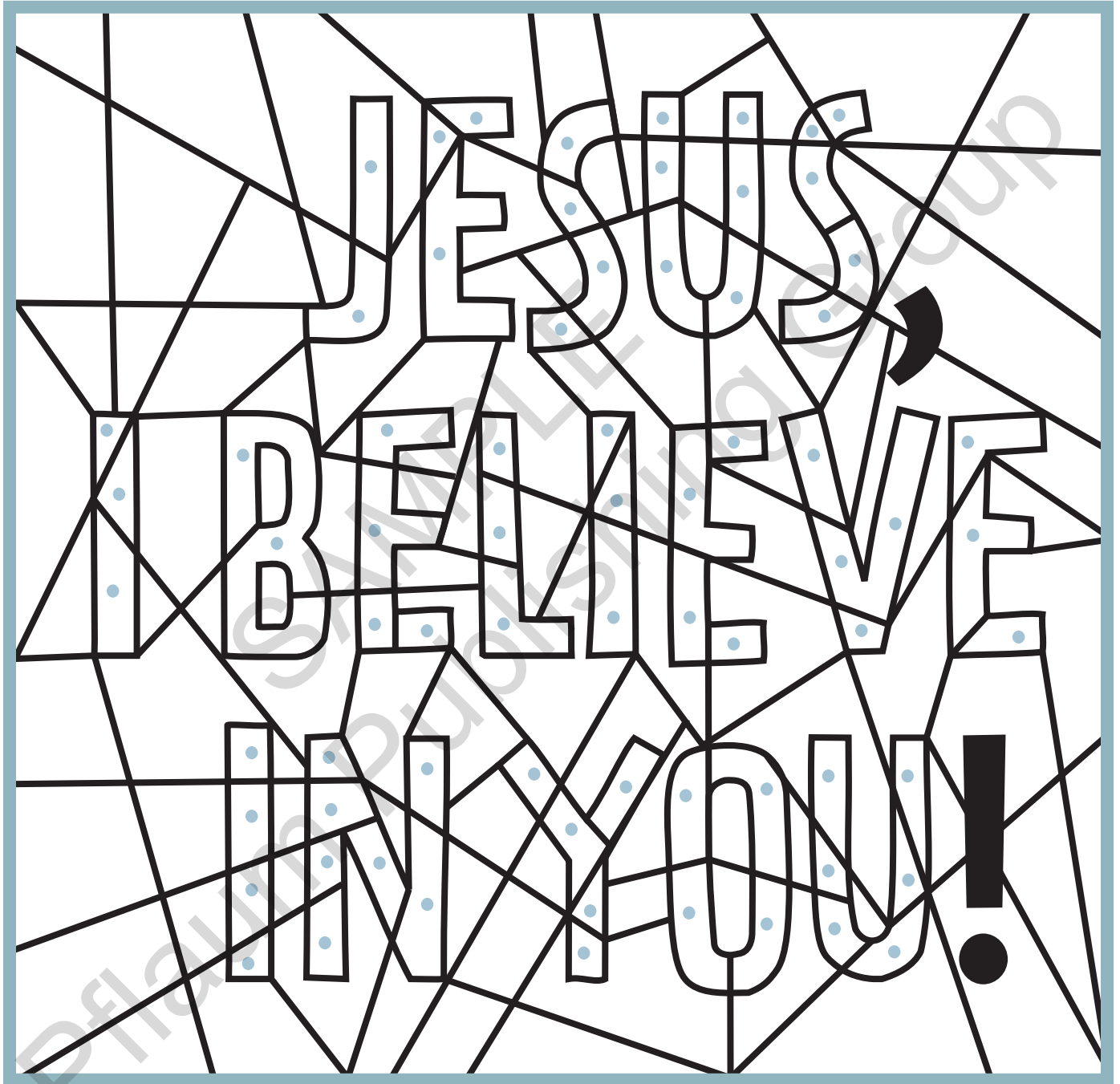
FAMILY ACTIVITY

Go on a religious-objects scavenger hunt in your home. Allow everyone 15 minutes to go through the house and collect as many religious objects as they can—holy cards, medals, statues, rosaries, prayer books, and Bibles.

Then gather to share your findings. Recall from whom you received each object and why. These are the stories of your family's personal faith experience. These are your sacred memories.



Part of the gift of faith is believing in something even when we can't see it with our eyes. **Color the spaces marked with a dot to express your faith. Write the words on the line below.**



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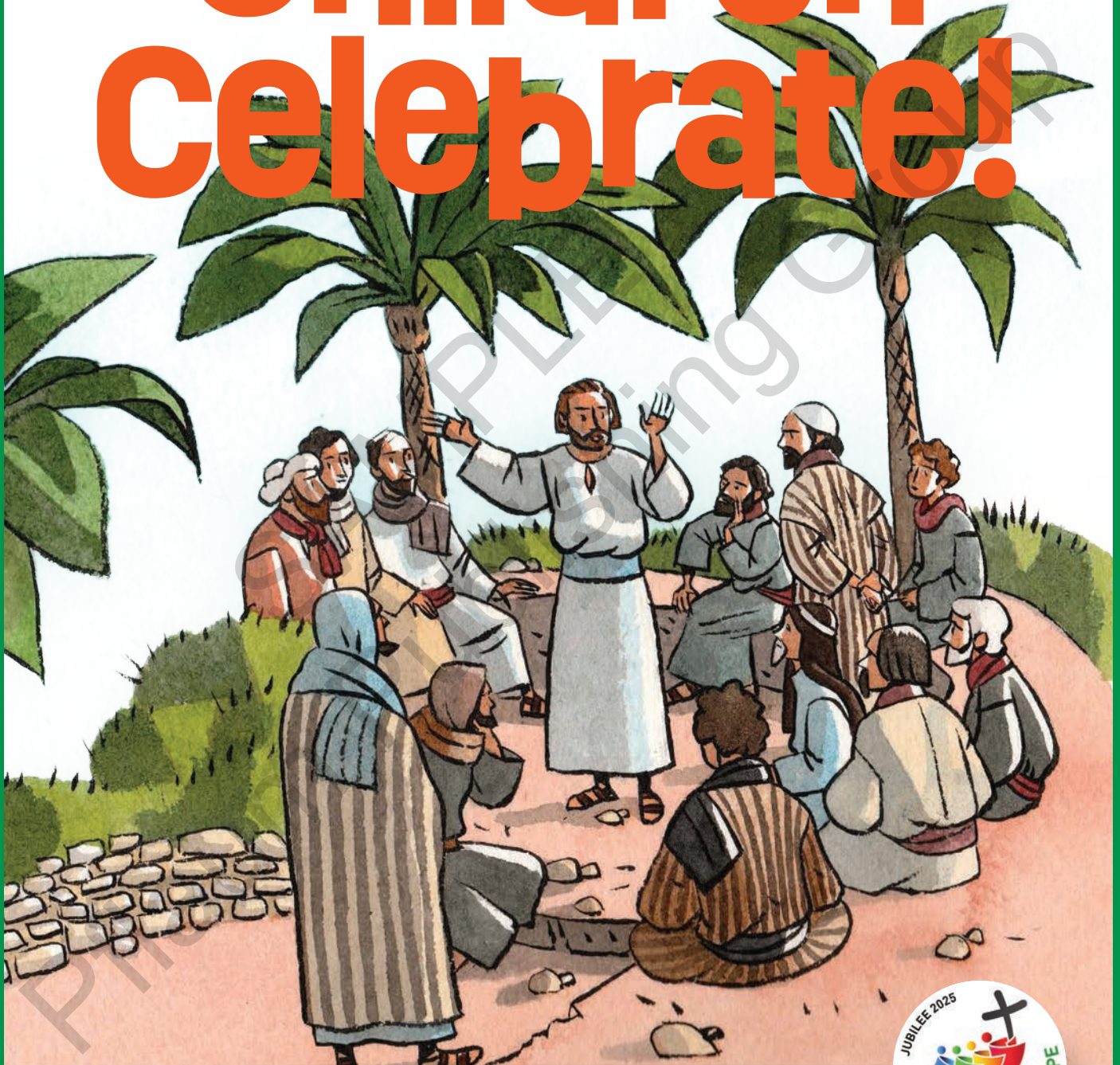
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**NEW! WEEKLY GOSPEL
REFLECTION VIDEOS**

Leader's Guide

LITURGY OF THE WORD WITH CHILDREN

Children Celebrate!



Spring 2025 (Year C)

FEBRUARY 23, 2025 | SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
through **MAY 18, 2025** | FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

LEADER'S GUIDE

Spring 2025
YEAR C

February 23, 2025

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

through

May 18, 2025

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

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Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Written by Sr. Alice Ann Pfeifer, CSA

Edited by Blue Willow
Publishing Works

Design by Jeff McCall

Scripture Illustrations by
Marcelino Truong © Bayard Presse

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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/3uxvsxR> 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.

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.

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This Issue's Themes

DATE	SUNDAY	THEME
February 23, 2025	7TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Jesus Tells Us to Love All People
March 2, 2025	8TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Jesus Teaches About Goodness
March 9, 2025	1ST SUNDAY OF LENT	Jesus Faces Temptation
March 16, 2025	2ND SUNDAY OF LENT	Jesus Is God's Chosen One
March 23, 2025	3RD SUNDAY OF LENT	The Parable of the Fig Tree
March 30, 2025	4TH SUNDAY OF LENT	The Lost Son Comes Home
April 6, 2025	5TH SUNDAY OF LENT	Jesus Acts with Love
April 13, 2025	PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD	Jesus Dies on the Cross
April 20, 2025	EASTER SUNDAY	Jesus Is Risen!
April 27, 2025	2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY	Jesus Helps Thomas Believe
May 4, 2025	3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER	Jesus Appears to the Disciples
May 11, 2025	4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER	Jesus Is the Good Shepherd
May 18, 2025	5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER	Jesus Says, "Love One Another"

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, which is not only helping children hear and understand God's Word but also hearing and understanding 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 62.
- **Children's Connections** explains each week's theme and Scripture message as it applies to children today.
- **More About...** provides additional background 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 to 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 first step for children into spontaneous prayer and can be powerful moments for children.

- **Return to Assembly** provides the leader with a cue 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)*

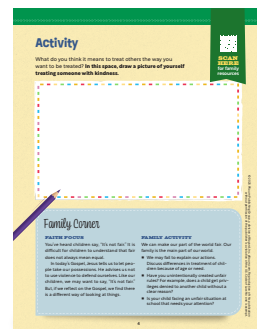
Front Side

- **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/3uxvsvxR> to view the videos for this quarter.
- **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.

Preview the Readings

If you do not have access to a children's Lectionary while you prepare your liturgy, you have three other options for previewing the readings for each Sunday.

- 1 Go to our website (pflaum.com/readings), click on the date you need, and print or download the readings.
- 2 The *Lectionary for Masses with Children* uses readings from the Old Testament and Book of Psalms. A select number of the refrains for the Responsorial Psalms are taken from the *Contemporary English Version* © 1991 by the American Bible Society. Readings from the New Testament are taken from the *Contemporary English Version, Bible for Today's Family: New Testament* © 1991 by the American Bible Society. The CEV can be purchased at stores and at americanbible.org.
- 3 Go to americanbible.org. Scroll over BIBLE RESOURCES. Scroll down and click on BIBLE SEARCH. Under the search box, click on Search Options. Select CEV Contemporary English Version (US Version). Enter the book, chapter, and verses that you need, such as Luke 15:11–32.

Where Do I Begin?

Your first step to prepare a Sunday session should be to pray for guidance. "Prepare with Prayer" opens each week's background material. It will help you begin to focus your mind and open your heart to God's message. Remain in prayer as long as you like.

Read the Scripture and background material in their entirety. Although the story may be familiar, you may see it with new eyes when challenged to lead a reflection on it. The background material will give you an idea of the social and historical context behind the Scripture.

Gather and write down your thoughts for the reflection. Look at them and meditate on them for a while. Certain themes or ideas will come through. Create an outline for your reflection based on these ideas.

Be sure to read through the Prepare the Meeting Space and The Liturgy of the Word sections well in advance so that you are not taken by surprise by any preparations you should have made or items you will need on hand. Allow plenty of time to set up and prepare before the session.

What Else Should I Know?

LITURGICAL COLORS

This edition of *Children Celebrate!* begins with the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time on February 23 and ends on the Fifth Sunday of Easter on May 18. Liturgical colors are as follows: Ordinary Time: green, which signifies hope; Lent: purple, to signify penance, and pink on Lataere Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), to signify joy; Palm/Passion Sunday: red, to signify Jesus' suffering; Easter: gold (also white), to signify joy.

MOVEMENT

Introduce movement wherever you feel it could be appropriate in the liturgy. Young muscles cry out to be used often, and this physical need causes the restlessness that some adults find irritating. Even the simple act of lifting their arms in prayer or carrying some small object to the front of the room can give children a refreshing but orderly break from being in one position for too long.

Trust Yourself

Finally, remember that *Children Celebrate!* is a complete resource that you can trust to be liturgically sound while also being creative. Nevertheless, you are the leader and you must be comfortable with what you want to do each week. Feel free to use (and trust) your own ideas as well.

There is no limit to what God can work through each of us. Your time with these children will have God's blessing and will be immeasurably fruitful. Enjoy!

Today's Readings

Deuteronomy 26:4–10
 Psalm 91:1–2, 10–11
 Luke 4:1–13

Prepare the Meeting Space

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

- a Lectionary
- a battery-operated candle
- a music player and a recording of instrumental music or the suggested Gathering song

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

“**LOVE God**” (*Seeds CD-2, Track #21*) or “**The Great Commandment**” (*Promise & Good News CD-2 Track #18*)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

“**Lenten Gospel Acclamation**” (*Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #23*)



Jesus Faces Temptation

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

It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praise to your name, Most High, To proclaim your love at daybreak, your faithfulness in the night, With the ten-stringed harp, with melody upon the lyre. For you make me jubilant, Lord, by your deeds; at the works of your hands I shout for joy. (PSALM 92:2-5)

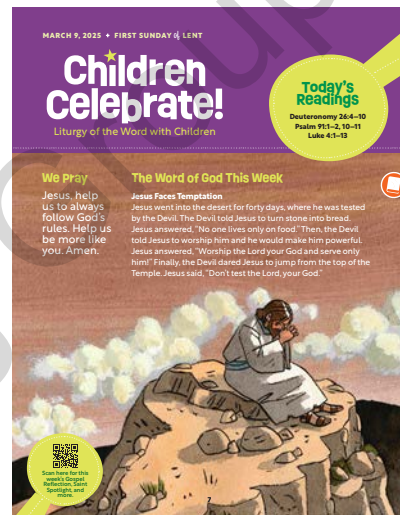
Scripture Background

Today's First Reading comes from Deuteronomy, traditionally thought to be authored by Moses, although most certainly edited and added onto by later priests and scribes.

The teachings in Deuteronomy are, in effect, Moses' last will and testament before his death and his people's passage into the Promised Land. He reminds them always to remember what God has done for them in freeing them from slavery in Egypt.

In today's passage, Moses commands the people, after they settle down and become farmers, to offer God the first fruits of their harvest each year. Gifts of grain, fruit, and vegetables will show their gratitude both for the abundant harvest and for the freedom and prosperity of life in the Promised Land. In modern times, devout people offer God first fruits of other kinds—a percentage of each paycheck or cash gift they receive, a portion of each new day they are allowed to live, and so forth.

In the Gospel, Jesus confronts the Devil in the desert. In the New Testament the Devil is sometimes called Satan, sometimes



Beelzebub, but the meaning is always the same. He is the evil one who opposes God and God's purposes in the world. Traditionally it is believed that the Devil became aware of Jesus' special relationship to God at the time of Jesus' baptism, when a voice from Heaven and a manifestation of the Holy Spirit revealed his true identity. After that, the Devil resolved to short-circuit Jesus' mission and message, but, time and again, he failed. Jesus was the new Adam destined to succeed where the old Adam had not.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

Today's joyful gathering activity is meant to put the Lenten theme of prayer and sacrifice into its proper context, for our prayers and sacrifices mean little if they do not arise from hearts overflowing with joy. The children's dancing will be an expression of joy, so expect a few giggles during this activity.

The Gospel readily lends itself to a creative form of presentation. Consider enlisting the aid of two costumed teens or adults to pantomime the Gospel as you read it aloud to the children. As always, be sure to practice the presentation of the Gospel in advance with your two helpers.

If time allows, you might spend some time during the homily offering the children ideas for different kinds of sacrifices they might make during Lent: gathering and selling aluminum cans for the poor, giving up candy so that a poor child can receive an Easter basket, giving away a favorite toy each Sunday of Lent, once a week picking up litter on the school playground or in the neighborhood, every day asking Mom or Dad if they need help with the housework.

The sooner the children begin to learn the lessons of service and sacrifice, the happier they will be in life. (Studies show that teens who regularly give their time to worthy causes have higher grade point averages, greater self-esteem, and more resiliency in the face of hardships.)

More About ...

The Catechism on Acts of Penance

- "The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways." Holy Scripture and the early Fathers of the Church recommend, in particular, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. (no. 1434)
- The highest form of penitential prayer is participation in the Eucharist. "It is a remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sins." (no. 1436)
- "Reading Sacred Scripture, praying the Liturgy of the Hours and the Our Father—every sincere act of worship or devotion revives the spirit of conversion and repentance within us and contributes to the forgiveness of our sins." (no. 1437)
- "The seasons and days of penance in the course of the liturgical year (Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church's penitential practice." (no. 1438)

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps children learn about Jesus temptation in the desert and ways to practice self-control, through a prayer, a summary of the Gospel, and a creative activity.

Distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

Leaflet Activity

This week, children learn about the ways to implement their own small sacrifices throughout Lent, and implement an increased focus on prayer during this time.

Dear God,
Help me to be _____ during Lent.

Help me to know _____

Help me to act _____

I thank you for _____

I love you. Amen.

NAME _____



that your Son, Jesus, did for us when he lived among us, suffered, died, and rose again from the dead. During the next 40 days, may we grow in love for him and for one another. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: Today's First Reading contains instructions from Moses, the man who led the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. Moses says that in order to show God their gratitude, the people must always remember to give back to God some of the good things they receive in life.

Read Deuteronomy 26:4-10. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

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

LEADER: Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.

CHILDREN: Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.

LEADER: *Read Psalm 91:1-2, 10-11.*

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: In the First Reading, we learned about offering sacrifice as a way to praise and thank God. Offering sacrifice means giving up something valuable to honor God or to help out people in need. In the Gospel, we will learn that after Jesus' baptism, he went to the desert to offer God the sacrifice of not eating for forty days.

The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your spirit.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

After the children have assembled in the worship area, tell them that today you will begin with joyful dancing in praise of the Lord. This activity, however, will have an interesting twist. The children should start dancing any way they wish as soon as the music starts, but at various times the music will be stopped and when it is, all dancers must freeze in place. For a few seconds everyone will hold his or her "position of praise" and, just for fun, look around the room at everyone else's pose. Then when the music starts again, everyone resumes dancing.

Collect

LEADER: *Invite the children to bow their heads. Then pray:*

Loving God, there are many different ways to praise you and thank you. Today we begin the holy season of Lent, a special time of year when we remember all

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of Luke.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read Luke 4:1-13. Then say, “The Gospel of the Lord.”

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Use the following outline for a short talk:

- ❶ Three times the Devil tempted Jesus to sin, but each time Jesus just said no.
 - The first time, the Devil wanted Jesus to use his miraculous powers simply to satisfy himself, but his powers were meant to be used for others.
 - The second time, the Devil wanted Jesus to fall down in worship before him, but only God in Heaven deserves worship.
 - The third time, the Devil wanted Jesus to jump off the roof of the temple just to see if God would save his life, but it is wrong for anyone to test God’s love. It shows a lack of faith.
- ❷ Jesus was strong against the Devil because he had just spent 40 days praying and offering sacrifices to God.
 - Every year during the season of Lent, we spend 40 days offering God extra prayers and sacrifices.
 - We do this so that we, too, will be strong in the face of temptation.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith, and respond to each statement with, “I believe in God.” I believe in God the Father almighty, who sent us Jesus to free us from sin.

CHILDREN: I believe in God.

LEADER: I believe in God the beloved Son, who showed us how to say no to the Devil and yes to God.

CHILDREN: I believe in God.

LEADER: I believe in God the Holy Spirit, who leads us to holiness during this holy season of Lent.

CHILDREN: I believe in God.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Let us pray to the Holy Trinity, asking that the love of the Trinity that we receive will overflow into the lives of everyone we know and love. Our response to each petition will be a little rhyme:

We sacrifice, we pray / All through Lent, every day.
For our Holy Father, the Pope, and all leaders of the Church, let us pray to the Lord

CHILDREN: We sacrifice, we pray / All through Lent, every day.

LEADER: For one another and for each of our families, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: We sacrifice, we pray / All through Lent, every day.

LEADER: For people who are slaves of sin, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: We sacrifice, we pray / All through Lent, every day.

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Let us pray. Loving God, you sent us Jesus to be an example for us. Just as he offered you special sacrifices and prayers during his 40 days in the desert, may we offer you the same during these 40 days of Lent. We pray through 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.

Today's Readings

Acts 5:12–16
 Psalm 118:2, 4, 13–14
 John 20:19–29

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a white or gold cloth, place:

- a Lectionary
- a battery-operated candle
- a crucifix draped with a colorful kerchief

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

Gathering: **“God’s Love Is…”** (Seeds CD-2, Track #11) or **“New Life”** (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #1)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

“Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia” (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

Jesus Helps Thomas Believe

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

The joyful shout of deliverance is heard in the tents of the righteous:

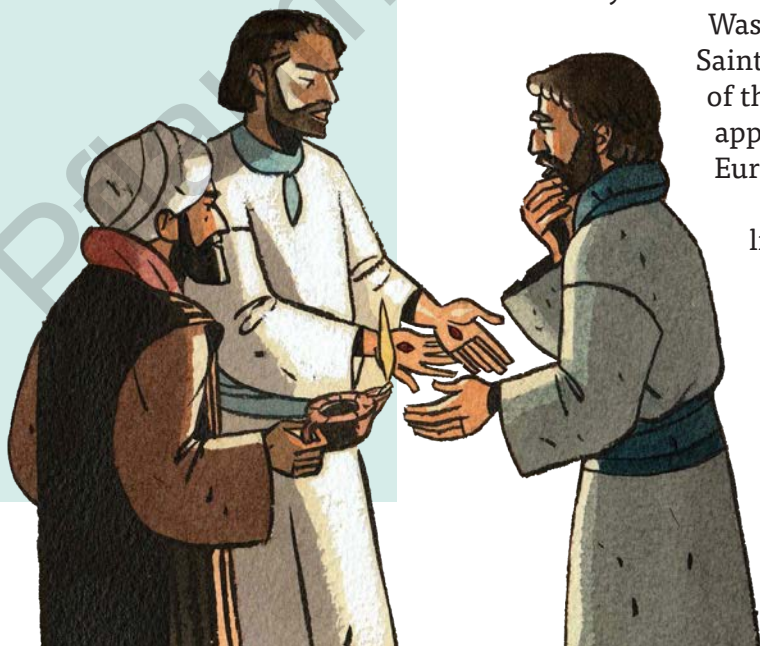
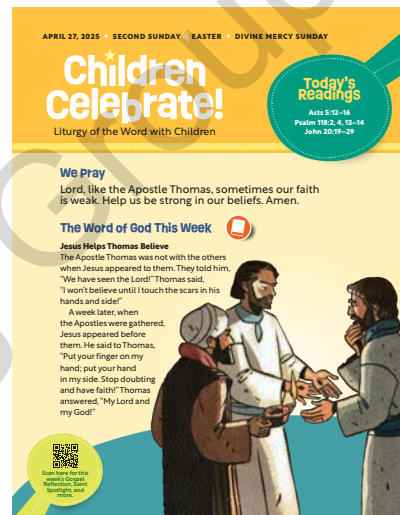
“The LORD’s right hand works valiantly; the LORD’s right hand is raised; the LORD’s right hand works valiantly.” I shall not die but live and declare the deeds of the LORD. (Psalm 118:15–17)

Scripture Background

Today’s passage from Acts is one of three summary passages in the book’s early chapters. In these, the author presents wonders and miracles as “usual, typical, and continued” in the day-to-day life of the early Church. (See chapter 45, page 175, of *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*.) It seems that during critical times in Church history, God did indeed use extraordinary means to spark people’s faith.

Was it an accident that the miracles connected with Saint Padre Pio’s life occurred during the worst war of the Second World War, or that the Virgin Mary appeared at Fatima during the havoc wreaked on Europe during the First World War?

Today, some may wonder why we should believe that Jesus’ Resurrection really happened. How about considering the way the Apostles changed in the days following Jesus’ Death? They went from hiding fearfully in the Upper Room to crisscrossing the Roman Empire on missionary journeys. In the face of torture and death, they actively promoted a controversial new faith. Why?



Chapter 20 of John shows the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Pentecost as events that all happened on the same day—the very first Easter Sunday. John’s account is not intended to contradict the synoptic Gospels’ suggestion that these were separate incidents happening on different days. Rather, John is making the point that the three phenomena are closely related theologically. All were the result, as it were, of a single burst of divine activity on behalf of humankind. Alleluia!

CHILDREN’S CONNECTIONS

“Jesus loves me, this I know/’cause the Bible tells me so.” These words from a favorite children’s hymn foster an attitude necessary among believers of all ages. Because the Bible tells us so, we believe that Jesus’ suffering, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension achieved for us redemption from sin and life everlasting. “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:13)

In addition to the Good News we read in the Bible, long centuries of Church history tell us something more. Occasionally, in certain special places and times, God blesses believers with mystical experiences and miraculous answers to prayer. And again occasionally, God allows saints and saints-in-the-making to experience times of spiritual dryness that somehow serve the greater good. Not even Saint Teresa of Calcutta was completely free of extended periods of desolation. Yet God never abandoned her. Her experiences mirrored those of the concentration camp prisoner who wrote, “I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining.”

The purpose of today’s gathering activity is to help children see that it is not just in the realm of faith that we believe in things we ourselves have not seen. We believe that kangaroos leap across the outback of Australia and that penguins waddle across the snowy reaches of Antarctica—not because we have been to those places and seen those things but because we trust the testimony of those who have.

More About ...

The *Catechism* on the Risen Body of Christ

- “By means of touch and the sharing of a meal, the Risen Jesus establishes direct contact with his disciples. He invites them in this way to recognize that he is not a ghost.” (no. 645)
- While bearing the scars of his Passion and Death, the risen body of Christ “possesses the new properties of a glorious body.” No longer is he “limited by space and time but able to be present how and when he wills.” (no. 645)
- “Christ’s Resurrection was not a return to earthly life, as was the case with the raisings from the dead that he had performed before Easter... These actions were miraculous events, but the persons miraculously raised returned by Jesus’ power to ordinary earthly life. At some particular moment they would die again.” (no. 646)

USING THE CHILDREN’S LEAFLET

The Children’s Leaflet for this week helps children learn about Jesus’ appearances after his Resurrection and Saint Thomas’s doubt, 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.

Leaflet Activity

This activity will help the children reflect on believing in Jesus.



M Y
L O R D
A N D
M Y
G O D

4. "Let's high-step like flamingos." (Florida)
5. "Let's run fast like cheetahs." (Africa)
6. "Let's waddle like penguins." (Antarctica)
7. "Let's scamper like monkeys." (Africa, Latin America)
8. "Let's fly like parrots." (Africa, Latin America)

Collect

For the opening prayer, listen to, sing, or read the words of one of the suggested songs (see page 46).

Light the candle for the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: The First Reading tells of the many people long ago who came to have faith in Jesus through the wonderful words and deeds of his Apostles.

LEADER: Read Acts 5:12–16. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Lead the children in a game of "Follow the Leader." Walk around the room while calling out the names of various exotic animals, then imitating them. Some examples are given below. Gradually lead the children to the worship area and invite them to sit down. For each of the animals you imitated, ask these questions:

- *Have you ever seen a [name the animal]? Where?*
- *Where does that animal live in the wild?*

Point out that we know about these animals from other people who have seen them in the wild and have told the rest of us about them. We do not have to personally travel to Africa to know that Africa has elephants. In the same way, we know about Jesus from believing the words of people who knew him personally and told us about him.

Animals to imitate (and their native habitats)

1. "Let's lumber like elephants." (Africa, India)
2. "Let's gallop like wild mustangs." (American West)
3. "Let's jump like kangaroos." (Australia)

Responsorial Psalm

Before beginning the psalm, announce the response.

LEADER: Alleluia.

CHILDREN: Alleluia.

LEADER: Read Psalm 118:2, 4, 13–14.

Gospel Acclamation

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

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: Last week's Gospel was about Jesus' disciples seeing the empty tomb on the first Easter morning. Listen now to hear what happened later that same day.

The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of John.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read John 20:19–29. Then say, “The Gospel of the Lord.”

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Ask if the children have any questions. Answer them and then base a short talk on the following ideas:

- ❶ Sometimes because of our faith we get to see wonders and miracles.
 - The first Christians, for example, saw sick people cured by Saint Peter’s shadow.
 - The first disciples saw Jesus suddenly appear in a room without walking through the door.
- ❷ Sometimes we must believe even without seeing any wonders or miracles.
 - Saint Thomas should have believed that his friends had seen the Risen Jesus; he should not have said, “I’ll believe it only when I see it!”
 - Do you remember Jesus’ words to Thomas when finally he appeared to Thomas, too? (If no one remembers, read aloud verse 29 of the Gospel.)
 - In other words, believing is a blessing!
 - Jesus was talking about us here in this room today: we are specially blessed if we believe in him without seeing him.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand now for the Profession of Faith and respond to each question with the words, “I believe in God.” I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth.

CHILDREN: I believe in God.

LEADER: I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only son, our Lord, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

CHILDREN: I believe in God.

LEADER: I believe that on the third day Jesus rose again from the dead and ascended into Heaven; from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

CHILDREN: I believe in God.

LEADER: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

CHILDREN: I believe in God.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Because we are blessed by God with the gift of faith, let us show that faith by asking God for all our needs. Our response to each petition will be the words of Saint Thomas in today’s Gospel: “You are my Lord and my God!”

Risen Lord, be with the leaders of the Church every day of their lives, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: You are my Lord and my God!

LEADER: Risen Lord, be with the leaders of all nations of the world, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: You are my Lord and my God!

LEADER: Risen Lord, be with us in our homes and our families, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: You are my Lord and my God!

LEADER: Risen Lord, be with the sick and the downcast, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: You are my Lord and my God!

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Let us pray. Loving God in Heaven, truly your Son Jesus is our Lord and our God. Without him, our lives would be full of doubt and fear. Thank you for giving us the wonderful gift of faith, through 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.

Leader's Checklist

FEBRUARY							MARCH							APRIL							MAY								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
						1							1			1	2	3	4	5							1	2	3
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24		
23	24	25	26	27	28	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30	25	26	27	28	29	30	31						
							30	31																					

SUNDAY	PREPARATIONS /PROPS	MUSIC	LECTOR	SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND	HOMILY PREP	CHILDREN'S LEAFLETS	OTHER
2/23/25 7th OT							
3/2/25 8th OT							
3/9/25 1st Lent							
3/16/25 2nd Lent							
3/23/25 3rd Lent							
3/30/25 4th Lent							
4/6/25 5th Lent							
4/13/25 Palm Sunday							
4/20/25 Easter Sunday							
4/27/25 2nd Easter							
5/4/25 3rd Easter							
5/11/25 4th Easter							
5/18/25 5th Easter							

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