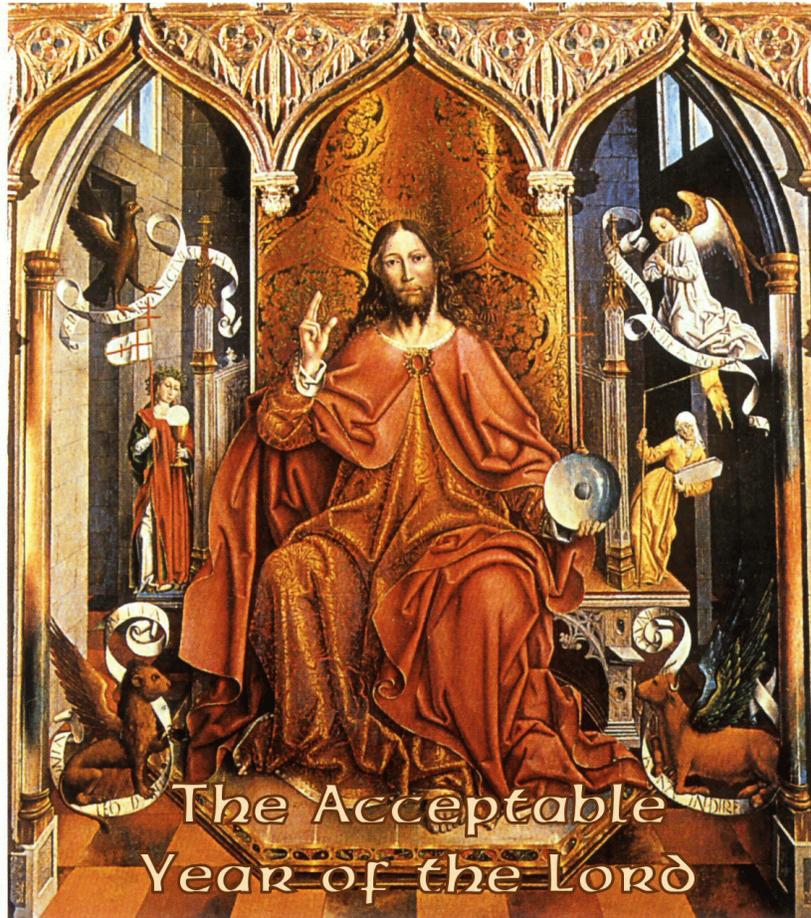


# A. D. The Acceptable Year of the Lord

A. D.



A Sunday School Curriculum  
on the Historic Lectionary

Pax Domini Press

**Teacher's Edition**

**Level 1**

(Invocavit through Pentecost)

*Pax Domini Press*

# A.D. The Acceptable Year of the Lord

## Level 1

### Introduction

#### ***The Acceptable Year of the Lord***

According to the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 61: 1-2), several activities would signal that the Messiah had been anointed by the Holy Spirit to save His people. Among other things, He would *proclaim good tidings to the poor*; He would *heal the brokenhearted*; and He would *open the prison to those who were bound*. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy after He was baptized and began preaching. In His first public proclamation in a synagogue, Jesus opened up to this Isaiah prophecy and declared that this prophecy was about Himself. (Luke 4: 18-19)

The last activity that Jesus quoted from the Isaiah prophecy serves as the title for this curriculum: "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." What is the "acceptable year of the Lord"?

"Acceptable" is the English translation of the Hebrew word used for the sacrifices that the Lord would receive as an "acceptable" offering. If the Lord did not accept an offering, Israel remained in her sins and under God's wrath. If the Lord accepted an offering, it was a blessing indeed. Thus, the promise that the "acceptable year of the Lord" was coming was wonderful news to Israel.

Among the promises given to Israel was that the Messiah would offer an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord, and the Lord would be pleased with His people forever. (Isaiah 56: 7) This sacrifice, of course, was Jesus Himself. Jesus is the acceptable offering to the Lord. The atonement of Jesus, then makes each year an "acceptable year of the Lord."

With the coming of God in human flesh, heaven and earth were united in His Person. God's will is done "on earth as it is in heaven." This union of heaven and earth in the Person of Jesus unfolds a mystery for the Church. Even as Jesus at the same time is Lord of all things and servant of all people, or even as Jesus at the same time fills all things and is localized in specific locations, so does the Church have earthly marks and heavenly marks. It is at the same time the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant.

With regard to time, the Church is at one and the same time an everlasting body, established from the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1: 4; Hebrews 4: 3; Revelation 17: 8), and also a body existing in time, living under the cross. Being a body existing in time, the elements of time are used by the Church for heavenly purposes. Thus, to speak of the "year of the Lord" has eternal meaning. Each year is an annual cycle of the one, acceptable, eternal year of the Lord. So powerful is this understanding of history, that the very designation of the year these past two millennia has been "A.D.", from *Anno Domini*, meaning, "the Year of the Lord." Every year since Jesus' birth has been a year baptized into His name, lifted from the rut of a decaying earth into the glories of the eternal, heavenly year.

#### ***The Historic Lectionary***

The Church received from her Hebrew heritage the practice of an annual cycle of readings. This annual cycle underscores the union between time and eternity. As the Christian gets older "in time" and travels the rocky road that is this earthly life, he nevertheless gets a glimpse of the eternal as he falls comfortably into the annual rhythm of the historic Gospels. What has been going on before him goes on in his life, and it will continue to go on after his life. He is given to be a participant in the life of Christ as reflected in the historically important Gospels. Even for those who use the new "three year series," a trace of this understanding is still reflected in the expectation of Christians to hear, for example, the Christmas story of Luke 2 on Christmas Eve every year. There is a comfort to hearing this story each and every year. The historic lectionary applies this principle to the 52 Sundays of the Church Year.

What of the historic lectionary? Does it deny Christians the opportunity to hear other important Gospel texts? Does it lead to biblical illiteracy because so few texts are used, relative to the three-year lectionary? The answer to this question depends upon what the goal of a lectionary is. Is the goal of a lectionary academic? Is its purpose to teach, say, the Gospel of Mark? Or is it pastoral? That is, is its purpose to embrace the Christian into the life of Christ in a way that has served the piety of the Church for over a thousand years?

It might be noted that, in fact, the historic lectionary does have more of a "devotional" quality to it. The Gospels that make up the historic lectionary often center on Jesus' miracles as opposed to His teachings. By this subtle shift, the hearer is given to take part in the Gospel in a way that is quite special. Whether it's the widow who lost her son, or the nobleman who worships Jesus, whether it's the ruler whose daughter was about to die, or the ten lepers, the Lord speaks to us through these real life characters, and so becomes a real life Lord to us, not just the subject of "Luke's portrayal of Christ."

The historic lectionary assumes that the Holy Spirit had a role in the writing and canonization of the Gospels. Where the newer three-year lectionary takes the academic position that each Gospel must be seen in its own light – thus we have "Matthew's Jesus," or "John's Jesus" – the historic lectionary draws from each Gospel to portray the one Christ. It takes for granted that the Holy Spirit used the individual evangelists each to make a contribution to the full portrayal of Christ.

An analogy might be given: Each Gospel might be called a "snapshot" of Jesus' Person and Work. Even as four photographers may take a snap shot of the same flower from four different angles – each snapshot giving a unique and

beautiful portrayal of the flower – so does each Gospel give a unique and beautiful portrayal of Jesus' Person and Work. Yet, a snapshot remains just that, a two-dimensional picture that, while beautiful, loses out in depth and liveliness. Those who work with three-dimensional graphics know that the only way to add the third dimension to an image is to work several two-dimensional pictures into that one, lively, three-dimensional image. This process is arguably what the historic lectionary does with the life of Jesus. It portrays a three-dimensional picture of Jesus. Further, placed in the liturgical and sacramental context, this picture becomes alive and moving.

Pastors who work with the three-year lectionary might be heard to say, "We're in Matthew this year." Without judging this innocent manner of speaking, it might be noted that the goal of all apostles and prophets in the Scriptures (such as Matthew) is to "decrease, that Jesus might increase." The historic lectionary erases distinctions among the evangelists and allows the preacher and hearer simply to say, "We're in Jesus this year." As the picture on the front of this program shows, Christ is front and center. The evangelists each contribute to the full picture of that which we call, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Finally, just by way of note, because the historical lectionary is just that, *historical*, there are far more hymns, collects, introits, graduals, and other propers that fit these Gospels, because the Church has had centuries to develop them. The pastor who uses the historic lectionary will notice how beautifully connected the collect is to the Gospel, how the collect sets the theme for the day and is answered in the Gospel. He will notice how easily the words of the introit can decorate his preaching, making the whole liturgy not just a patchwork of texts, but a living witness that draws the hearer into the life of Christ.

### **About this curriculum**

Congregations using this material will get (1) workbooks for each student, (2) a teacher's edition for the teacher, (3) chapel service bulletins, (4) extra test/review sheets for the older levels, (5) extra activity sheets for the younger levels, and (6) a memory book (with verses and terms) for all ages.

Teachers should have their rooms equip with *New King James Version* Bibles, hymnals, and Small Catechisms. Each lesson will involve a reading of the Gospel, going over the workbooks, and extra activities. The teacher should study the material beforehand by at least reading the commentary and suggestions that are given in this teacher's edition.

This teacher's guide will first give a general introduction to each lesson and a brief commentary on the theme of the lesson. The guide will then be particularized for the level at hand. An answer key to the various activities will be given in this section.

In order to prepare most properly for this curriculum, the following is suggested:

- a. A time might be established, perhaps once a month, when the Sunday School teachers meet with the pastor. The pastor may review the Gospels for that month and answer any other questions a teacher may have.
- b. The teachers should read the text fully before reading the commentary that follows.
- c. If possible, the teachers might get a copy of the propers (introit, gradual, other readings, collect) for that day and work those into the lesson.

### **General suggestions for teaching Level 1 material:**

- (1) Make up a schedule for each lesson. Some lessons require more time for reading and learning the story, while other lessons may require more time for discussion and activities. For most lessons, the reading and learning of the story should occupy the majority of the time. Few extra activities will need to be planned, and "off topic" discussions may undermine completion of the lesson.
- (2) Assign memory work and give rewards for completing memory work; give parents a copy of verse to be memorized so that they may work with the child.
- (3) Prioritize activities (The following priorities are rooted in the conclusion of education experts that children at this age level learn first in concrete terms and are only beginning to understand abstract concepts.)
  - Ⓒ The first priority in each lesson is the *hearing* (or reading) of the story.
  - Ⓒ The second priority is *understanding the elements and terms* of the story.
  - Ⓒ The third priority is *understanding the theology* (and the liturgical dimension of the lesson).
  - Ⓒ The fourth priority is *doing the activities*.
- (4) Take turns reading to the children and letting them read. Some lessons may require the teacher to read the entire story in the interest of time.
- (5) Review the terms with the children before each story. Find a few key phrases or teachings that highlight the important truths of each Gospel and repeat them several times during the class.
- (6) Print out flash cards with either terms or memory verses written on them.

### **About the Artwork**

Some people wonder about the choice of artwork for *Pax Domini Press* materials. They believe that some artwork may not be suitable for children because it may be too serious, or dark, or ornate, or extravagant, or symbolic. *Pax Domini Press* asks the user of this curriculum to let the artwork stand on its own. Often times when we make judgments about what children like or do not like, we impose our own prejudices upon them. To the child, there is no reason why a particular piece of artwork would look "old" or "Medieval." He does not have the broad experience even to place that artwork into

a context. It's just art to him.

Further, all the artwork of this curriculum was used as a teaching tool for children at *some* time in the past. There is no reason why it cannot be used for children today. Children today are no different than children of yesterday. True, as they grow older and mature, they will be immersed into a culture that is rapid-moving, electronic, noisy, and artistically cartoonish, but at the age to which this curriculum is directed, that development has yet to occur. Beyond that, it is critical in this spinning-out-of-control age that we pass on to our children a heritage that is rich in meaning, reverent, sacred, and timeless. We want to give our children something they grow into, not out of.

This is why *Pax Domini* asks the user simply to let the artwork stand on its own. The artwork can often be used to teach important points in the Gospel, and the teacher will notice with amazement how some of the children will meditate with wide eyes on a piece of artwork that is over 500 years old. They see it not as old and stale, but as a beautiful work that respectfully portrays their Lord.

## The Temptation of Jesus

<b>Week:</b> Invocavit	<b>Theme:</b> Jesus begins His ministry by doing what Adam did not do, defeating the tempter on behalf of all men.
<b>Story:</b> The Temptation of Jesus	
<b>Text:</b> Matthew 4: 1-11	

### Commentary

The problem of humanity began with a temptation. After being created a son of God (cf. Luke 3: 38), Adam did not fulfill his great role faithfully, but gave into temptation. His deed plunged the world into sin, death, and bondage to the devil.

Jesus, having been baptized and declared the Son of God, did what Adam failed to do. He faced the tempter in an area most effected by the curse, that is, in the wilderness, an area of thorns and thistles. Where Eve was tempted at the "belly point" – "she saw that it was good for food" – Jesus set Himself up for this strong temptation also, fasting for 40 days. And it was at that point that the devil comes, tempting Jesus at His point of weakness, His hunger.

Analyzing the devil's temptations helps us in our skills of discernment. We might notice the following about his temptations: (1) He likes to create doubt, as seen in those words, "If you are the son of God." He creates doubt by getting us to question the Lord's thoughts toward us. Are we really children of God? If so, shouldn't such and so happen? (2) He quotes the Scriptures. Yes, the devil is one of the best quoters of Scripture. Throughout the Bible when he appears, more often than not he is quoting something the Lord has said. As in the first temptation, his misquoting of God's Word usually takes the form of "Did God really say...?" Taking teachings out of context, he leads us to doubt or to give up a part of our faith. (3) He attacks at our points of greatest need, even as he attacked Jesus at His point of hunger. (4) He attacks our faith. Should we not be able to leap off a cliff and have the angels catch us? If not, do we truly believe God's Word? Such is the temptation of Satan. (5) He leads us to pride. He offers Jesus his kingdom, if only he would bow down and worship Jesus. Jesus knew that He came to attain a kingdom, but it would come by way of the cross. Satan offers it by way of pride.

Where we fail in these temptations daily, Jesus defeated them each one by one. He is not given to His fleshly desires, for He knows that "man does not live by" such things alone, but by the Word of God. He does not allow Satan to dislodge his faith, as He masterfully responds Scripture to Scripture. And He keeps His eyes set on the mission that the Father had given Him, that is, to die on the cross. He would not attain the kingdom by receiving it from Satan.

### ACTIVITIES:

(1) Color picture from the storybook.

#### (2) **Activities Book: Lenten Sundays**

In the activities book are two pages, one with the verses from which the Latin titles for each Sunday are given, and one on which are the five Sundays in Lent as they are named in Latin. Copy these on cardstock paper, the front with the Latin names and the back with the corresponding verses. The pages should match up perfectly as they are given, so that they can be copied front to back without re-configuring anything. Have the children color the *Invocavit*, *Reminiscere*, *Oculi*, and *Judica* purple (the letters being red, pink, blue, light purple, or white), and have them color *Laetare* pink (with purple or dark red letters). Cut out the cards (before or after coloring). See if they can memorize these words.

#### (3) **Study on the Bible (same activity as previous week):**

The following is a review of last week's study on the Bible. The children should devote several weeks to learning the Bible, so this activity will be done for the next two weeks as well. Review the steps below, and once the children begin to recognize parts of the Bible, play a game with them. See who can first find, for example, a Gospel, or the Psalms.

- First, have them open up the Bibles right to the center. See if they can read which book this is. It should be Psalms. Write out “Psalms” on the board, and have them look for that book.
- Next, have them open up half of the right side of the pages, so that 3/4 of the Bible is opened on the left side. They should be near the New Testament. Write out Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John on the board. See if they can find those books.
- Now, explain to them that the bulk of the Bible on the left side is the Old Testament, and the little part in the right side is the New Testament.
- Teach them that the left side (the Old Testament) was written over a 1000 years and covers over 4,000 years. Then teach them that the right side (the New Testament) was written only over about 60 years, and covers about 100 years.
- Ask them, “Which side does not mention the name of Jesus?” Wait for the answer, “the big part.”
- Now ask them, “Is all the Bible about Jesus?” They should answer “yes.”
- Teach them that prophets Elijah and Moses foretold about Jesus. Teach them that the whole Bible is centered in Christ, even if it does not mention His name. It talks about His birth, death, and resurrection. Teach them that Jesus was God before He became man, so He was in the Old Testament, just not as a man.

**(4) Liturgical Year Study: The Season of Lent**

Perhaps take a field trip to the altar guild room and show the children the different colors for the church year. This field trip might be done before the children color their cards from the Activities Book. A member of the altar guild or the pastor may explain the meaning of the different banners to the children.

**Suggestions**

1. Discuss how Lent is a 40 day period of penitence in which we “follow” Jesus into the wilderness, because we are united to Him in baptism. Plan an offering for the Lenten Season.
2. Emphasize that Jesus is the only One Who could defeat the devil’s temptation. God allows the devil to tempt us also, but He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear. We fail, but Jesus never fails.
3. Teach the children that the devil’s temptations did not end after being in the wilderness. The devil tempted Jesus throughout His days on earth, leading up all the way to the cross.

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**Jesus and the Canaanite Woman**

<p><b>Week:</b> Reminiscere Sunday  <b>Story:</b> Jesus has mercy on the Canaanite woman  <b>Text:</b> Matthew 15: 21-28</p>	<p><b>Theme:</b> Jesus tests a woman to the limit! But by faith she clings to Jesus’ promises, and He answers her.</p>
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**Commentary**

The Canaanite woman had many things against her. She was in a wilderness of her own, even as Jesus was in the wilderness last week, and even as each Christian is in a wilderness through his days of existence in this world. In many ways, our faith life in this world is a test how we respond in faith in the wilderness.

The Canaanite woman was in a wilderness indeed. We might identify four trials that the woman endured in this story: (1) Like Jesus, she faced the powers of darkness, for a demon possessed her daughter. (2) She was not a Jew, and so she might have doubts about whether Jesus was a Savior for her. (3) Jesus’ disciples stood against the woman. (4) Jesus Himself called her a lapdog!

These are certainly strong trials indeed. Yet, they are struggles through which we all endure. We doubt whether Jesus is for us. We may hear God’s voice not as a voice of grace, but as a voice of mocking or derision. The Church, the place of Jesus’ disciples, may alienate us. And we always face the powers of darkness in this world. What, then, does the Canaanite woman teach us about these struggles?

Before this question is answered, it should be noted that Jesus does not intentionally deride this woman. He is testing her faith. He knows He can push her faith to the limits as a way of glorifying Himself through her.

The woman’s faith is great, as Jesus said, because she would not let Jesus be anything other than Jesus. Like the blind beggar, the woman knew that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of David. He knew that He would rule a kingdom in righteousness, which meant that He would be there for her. The woman clung to this “for her,” even against all these antagonistic forces.

What is most remarkable about the woman’s faith is that even against Jesus Himself, she clung to what Jesus was to be “for her.” Similarly, when we face God’s absence or even what seems his mocking silence, we are shown that we may cling to the promises of what Jesus is for us. His cross bound Him, so to speak, to what He must be for us, that is, a Savior who died for our sins. Even in the midst of our gravest doubts, we can know that Jesus is “for us” at the cross.

The woman “tricks” Jesus into giving her gifts when Jesus talks about giving the children’s (the Jews’) bread (His

gifts; Himself) to little dogs (the Canaanites). She says, "Yes, but even the little dogs get the crumbs from the master's table."

This little wordplay with bread should be placed in the greater context of the Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew, bread is not just bread ("man shall not live by bread alone"). Bread, rather, is related to the totality of God's providence, as shown in His daily providence for Israel in the wilderness ("give us this day our daily bread"). Jesus reveals Himself as the One Who provides this bread (in the feeding of the 5,000). And in His providence, we are fully satisfied. But this satisfaction has deeper connotations, for those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness" will be truly filled. Jesus fulfills this righteousness in His person (as seen at His baptism). Of course, at Holy Communion, all these themes are tied together, for in the bread of communion, we are given more than just "bread alone." We are given the full satisfaction of Jesus' providence in His Body and Blood given out for us, in which is the forgiveness of sins, our righteousness.

The Canaanite woman's contribution to this bread theme is important. She shows us that Jesus is bound to give us this bread, namely, Himself, as the direct result of His grace and mercy.

## **ACTIVITIES:**

(1) Color picture from the storybook.

(2) **Activities Book: Dot to Dot**

In the activities book is a dot to dot of a dog begging next to a man praying. Have the children do the dot to dot and then explain that the woman's faith was great because she was not too proud to be a dog begging for food. When we pray, we are like dogs relying completely on our master.

(3) **Study on the Bible (same activity as previous week):**

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(4) **Liturgical Year Review:**

Begin repeating the chronology of Jesus' life in this highly important time of the Church Year:

1. Palm Sunday            Jesus comes into Jerusalem on a donkey.
2. Maundy Thursday     Jesus gives His disciples Holy Communion.
3. Good Friday            Jesus dies on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.
4. Easter                    Jesus rises from the dead and destroys death.
5. Ascension                Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father.
6. Pentecost                Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to give forgiveness, life, and salvation.

**\*\*BEGIN EVERY REMAINING SUNDAY OF THIS QUARTER REVIEWING THIS TIME LINE. THE CHILDREN WILL HAVE IT DOWN TO MEMORY BY THE END OF THE QUARTER.**

## **Suggestions**

1. Explain that dogs in Jesus' day were not considered as affectionately as we consider them. Dogs were an unclean animal.
2. Discuss God's chastening or discipline. Hardships are often God's way of training us to be His children, and we should accept His discipline with joy. Show the children how their own parents will discipline them, but that means their parents love them. The same is true with our heavenly Father.
3. The activity is a dot-to-dot of a dog begging. Connect for the children the dog that Jesus mentions with the man in the picture begging for mercy in confession and prayer.

## Jesus Casts out a Demon

<b>Week:</b> Oculi <b>Story:</b> Jesus Casts out a Demon <b>Text:</b> Luke 11: 14-28	<b>Theme:</b> Jesus is the stronger man who ousts the devil from our souls by His death on the cross.
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### Commentary

Jesus, having cast out a demon, is accused of casting out a demon with the help of Satan. His opponents could not accept that His deeds were the work of the Holy Spirit, so they insisted that it must be by Satan. Jesus answers with a logical argument, "How could Satan's kingdom stand if it is divided?" By these words, Jesus not only proves that He is not in cahoots with Satan, but He also reminds us that this world is very much in Satan's clutches. That is, Satan's kingdom is certainly not divided at all, but is as unified, powerful, and determined as ever.

Jesus goes on to say that, if He is not casting out demons by Satan, He must be doing it by the "finger of God," which is the Holy Spirit, the sign that the Kingdom of God is at hand. He then goes on to explain how the whole dynamic works.

The soul of a man is like a palace. Currently, a strong man rules the palace. This is Satan. The image reminds us of depictions of hell or Hades, where Satan has hold up in his prison the souls of men. That is the state in which we are born. We are in bondage to the devil, and he is heavily armed.

But Jesus is the "stronger man." By His death, His blood wiped out the curse that put us in bondage to Satan, and so He can free us from Satan's clutches. He routs the devil from our soul, and the devil leaves. This happened when He descended into hell.

But, Jesus says, the devil finds seven others more wicked than himself, and he returns. If he finds the stronger man gone, he will come back into the man's soul and shore himself up more strongly yet. Jesus' words are a warning to keep Him in our souls as the stronger man. On our own, we have no power against the devil, but with Jesus, the devil is always routed.

This is the third Gospel, now, where demons or the devil have played a prominent role. Given as they are in the Lenten Season, we are reminded that a great part of our pilgrimage in the wilderness of this world is doing battle against the devil and his legions. On the first Sunday in Lent we learned that Jesus alone defeats the tempter for us. Today, this truth is highlighted. Jesus is the stronger man, and we ought to remain with Him, because where He is is the Kingdom of God.

### ACTIVITIES:

(1) The evening prayer from the Small Catechism goes well with this Sunday's Gospel, as it talks about God's angel protecting us from evil. This prayer is on the bottom of the last page of today's lesson. Read portions of the prayer with the children and have them repeat it. If there is time, have the children draw a picture of God's holy angel protecting them in the space above the prayer. Remind them that every picture of an angel we get from the Scriptures is that of a strong man.

(2) **Activities Book: Coloring**

In the activities book is a coloring project with a small puzzle at the end that the children need not do. Use the picture to emphasize the often-used biblical image that Jesus crushes the devil under His feet.

(3) **Study on the Bible (same activity as previous week):**

The following is a review of last week's study on the Bible. The children should devote several weeks to learning the Bible, so this activity will be done for next week as well. Review the steps below, and once the children begin to recognize parts of the Bible, play a game with them. See who can first find, for example, a Gospel, or the Psalms.

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5. Ascension              Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father.
6. Pentecost                Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to give forgiveness, life, and salvation.

**\*\*BEGIN EVERY REMAINING SUNDAY OF THIS QUARTER REVIEWING THIS TIME LINE. THE CHILDREN WILL HAVE IT DOWN TO MEMORY BY THE END OF THE QUARTER.**

**Suggestions**

1. Explain that demons are fallen angels, who followed Satan in his rebellion against God. Explain that they are created beings, and therefore not more powerful than God. They have power because humans freely give them power regularly. Adam was the prince of this world, but he handed that stewardship over to the devil when he sinned.
2. Explain the difference between false miracles and true miracles. Not every miracle proves that "the finger of God" was at work. There is a marked difference between God's miracles and demonic miracles. The Egyptian magicians were able to replicate many of Moses and Aaron's miracles, but eventually they had to conclude that "the finger of God" was at work in Moses and Aaron.
3. Vividly describe the descent into hell. There, Jesus ransacked Satan's domain, rendering him powerless. Jesus' descent into hell is also a descent into the depths of our fallen souls, where he frees us in our innermost being from the bondage to the devil. In a sense, every Lord's Day is a recycling of His descent into our lives, to rescue us from the bondage to the devil. Make church real for the children by describing the divine service as precisely that event, namely, Jesus is a stronger man beating up the strong man that enslaved them by their sins. In church, He enters into our hearts and sets up shop, and the devil is put to flight.

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**Jesus Feeds the 5,000**

<p><b>Week:</b> Laetare  <b>Story:</b> Jesus feeds the 5,000  <b>Text:</b> John 6: 1-15</p>	<p><b>Theme:</b> In the midst of our wilderness of this world, Jesus feeds us with a miraculous meal.</p>
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**Commentary**

There is a lot of great symbolic value in the placement of this Gospel at this time of the Church Year. We might notice that the previous Sundays in Lent all have the devil as a subject. On *Invocavit*, Jesus battled Satan in the wilderness. On *Reminiscere*, the Canaanite woman had a daughter who was possessed by demons. Last week (*Oculi*), Jesus cast out a demon, and this led to the whole "house" metaphor to describe the battle between Jesus (the stronger man) and the devil (the strong man).

In other words, by this week in Lent, we are getting the distinct impression that life in this earthly pilgrimage is exactly as described by the Book of Revelation (chapter 12: 14-17): *But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Yes, the serpent – the devil – is always attacking the Church while she is in her pilgrimage. Lent itself is a reminder that life in this world is a pilgrimage, and the first three weeks focus our attention on the truth that the devil is part of the whole package that makes life in this world a pilgrimage. He, after all, is the prince of this world of darkness; how can this world be described as anything less than a pilgrimage through this desert drear?

Nevertheless, *Laetare* Sunday reminds us that not all is struggle and battle and suffering. There is solace in the midst of our wilderness wandering. The above text from Revelation refers to the wilderness as the place "where she [the Church] is nourished." And it is this exact nourishment in the middle of a wilderness that brings up the Gospel for today, the feeding of the 5,000. Because of its focus on this reprieve in the midst of the Lenten wilderness, *Laetare* is a "rose"

Sunday, a day on which, while not breaking the Lenten disciplines (and liturgical changes), the joy is brought up a few notches. *Laetare* means “rejoice.”

In the Gospel, we get more lessons in our continuing catechesis on faith. The context of the text is the Passover, which was just around the corner. The Jews, in anticipation of this highest of feast days, would have had the Messiah on their mind, for the Passover was not only a day to remember God’s deliverance of them from Egypt, but a day to look forward to God’s future salvation in the Messiah. Further, Jesus’ use of this moment to do a miraculous feeding of the Jews in the wilderness – much as Moses fed them manna in the wilderness – was also a strong statement about Who He was.

Jesus’ disciple, Philip, was one upon whom this point would not be lost. Philip, it will be recalled, was the disciple who first recognized that Jesus was the One “of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote.” (John 1: 45) We might say that Philip knew Jesus intellectually. He knew all the Scriptures that taught Who He was. He could have answered all the questions right on a catechism test! For this reason, Jesus asks Philip what He should do for all these hungry people. For one so versed in Hebrew history, and who recognized Jesus as the Messiah, it should have been obvious to Philip what Jesus should have and could have done. Like Moses, Jesus could have fed the people Himself!

But Philip fails the test. He is like the lifelong Christian who knows the Bible and the Catechism inside and out, but when a moment of hardship comes, he breaks down crying, “What am I going to do?!” In other words, faith is not merely an intellectual thing, but it also involves trust that God will be true to Who He is. It’s one thing to know Who He is. It is quite another to trust that He will be true to Who He is.

Through this Gospel, Philip and we are trained in faith. Jesus doesn’t angrily dismiss Philip as a hopeless “head religion but no heart religion” hypocrite. Many today set “head religion” against “heart religion” – always speaking favorable of the latter, and usually understanding it as some sort of feeling. We might work with the terms of this dichotomy, but clean it up a bit. A “head religion” that merely understands Jesus intellectually, or knows all the doctrinal answers about Who He is, is polished nicely when it goes hand in hand with “heart religion,” that is, if “heart religion” is understood as trust in God’s providence through Jesus, especially in the midst of our pilgrimage in our own wilderness.

## ACTIVITIES:

(1) Color the picture of the last supper from the storybook. Teach the children that we are in a desert of “sin, death, and the devil.” Jesus feeds us with His supper in the midst of our wilderness.

(2) **Activities Book: Lenten Sundays**

The activity for today’s Sunday is a simple coloring assignment.

(3) **Liturgical Spotlight: Give us this day our daily bread**

Lead the children through the Lord’s Prayer. Point out the petition “Give us this day our daily bread.” Read the Small Catechism’s answer to the question, “What is meant by daily bread?” Afterward, have the children list of all the things that would be included under “daily bread” as these are written out on the board (or a collage might be made from the cut-outs from old magazines). Then, lead the children to understand that the thing they most need for the “support and needs of the body” is that the body rise from the dead one day. This means that the most important “daily bread” they need is Jesus, their Savior. This is why we pray “Give us this day our daily bread” just before Holy Communion. We pray for what we are about to receive, Jesus through the bread of life...eternal life.

(4) **Liturgical Year Review**

Begin repeating the chronology of Jesus’ life in this highly important time of the Church Year:

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. Palm Sunday     | Jesus comes into Jerusalem on a donkey.                               |
| 2. Maundy Thursday | Jesus gives His disciples Holy Communion.                             |
| 3. Good Friday     | Jesus dies on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.              |
| 4. Easter          | Jesus rises from the dead and destroys death.                         |
| 5. Ascension       | Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father.                        |
| 6. Pentecost       | Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to give forgiveness, life, and salvation. |

## Suggestions

1. Set up the story using the background of Israel’s exodus. This story is extremely important for understanding Jesus’ feeding of the 5,000. Read Exodus 16 in preparation and tell the story to the children.
2. Emphasize the idea that life in this world is a wilderness (see Revelation 12: 6), that is, a desert. Discuss with the children the things that make life a “desert drear” as the hymn, *I’m but a stranger here*, goes. Such things would include sin, death, temptation, hatred, war, famine, etc. Remind the children of the connection between the 40 days of Lent and the 40 year wandering of Israel in the wilderness.
3. Do an internet search on the famous painting, “Daily Bread” and show it to the children.

## Before Abraham was, I Am

**Week:** Judica  
**Story:** Before Abraham was, I Am  
**Text:** John 8: 46-59

**Theme:** Jesus is the eternal "I Am," and gives His eternal life out for us.

### Commentary

Again, after a week long wilderness reprieve in *Laetare*, we are back to the devil. This time, the Jews accuse Jesus of having a demon. Why? Because He said that the Jews who did not hear Him were not "of God." To a Jewish ear, this would be lunacy. They were God's chosen people! How could they not be "of God"?

Jesus lays down something new: Those who are "of God" are not those who are born of the bloodline of Abraham, but those who hear Jesus and receive His word. Those who receive His word will never taste death.

This lays down the gauntlet for the Jew. To the Jew, their divine heritage went back to Abraham, to whom God had made the glorious promises of old. As they were born in Abraham's race and circumcised, they could claim for themselves these same promises, namely promises of land and blessing. For this young Jesus fellow – not yet fifty years old! – to undermine this divine heritage and center it rather on His own Person was irreverent in the least or blasphemous at worst. Yet, here Jesus is claiming that Abraham in fact rejoiced to see Jesus' day. How could this be? How could Abraham see Jesus' day, when Jesus was only about 33 years old?

When confronted with this challenge, Jesus lays it out clearly: Before Abraham was, I Am. The obvious meaning of this short statement is radical enough – Jesus is claiming to have been around when Abraham lived – but when we translate these words for our modern ears, they become unprecedented.

We remember that the Lord revealed His name to Moses at the burning bush. When asked His name, the Lord said, "I Am Who I Am." That was His name. The normal name for "LORD" (all caps) that we get in the Bible is a translation of the name "Jehovah" which itself is a Latinization of the name "Yahweh." Yahweh means "He is," and it is based on the name "I Am." The LORD, when referring to Himself at the burning bush, said, "I Am." We, when referring to Him would say, "He is."

By Jesus using this name "I Am", He is in effect saying, "I am the LORD." Now, here again, we need to probe what this means. In the Bible, there is "the LORD," in the sense of "Yahweh," and there is "Lord," in the sense of "master" or "sir" or the common meaning of "lord" (as in "lord of the manor"). LORD, with all caps, is a translation of "Yahweh." Lord, without all caps, is a translation of "Adonai." Psalm 38: 15 is a good use of both words: For in You, O LORD [Yahweh], I hope; You will hear, O Lord [Adonai] my God. This distinction can be lost in the Greek translation, which uses "kurios" to translate both words (from which we get the word, *Kyrie*). It can also be lost in the English translation, when the all-capped LORD is glossed over, or only heard in a reading (we cannot speak "LORD" in all caps!).

The two different meanings can cause confusions. What, exactly, does it mean to confess "Jesus is Lord<sup>1</sup>"? Does it mean, as many believe, that Jesus is "the lord of my life," meaning He is my lord and master, the one I submit to and obey? Or does it mean, as Luther taught, that Jesus is my Redeemer? The former meaning would be supported by *Adonai*, but is Luther's understanding supported by *Yahweh*?

Yes. In Isaiah 45, the Lord says, "To Me every knee shall bow [and] say 'Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength...In the LORD all the descendants of Israel Shall be justified.'" St. Paul draws off this verse when he writes, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and...every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." In other words, St. Paul informs us of what it means to declare that Jesus is Lord. It means that He is the One in Whom "I have righteousness and strength," and in Whom the Church is "justified." This, in short, is what is meant by *Redeemer*, that is, the One Who has brought us back from sin to righteousness (see Luther's Large Catechism, 2nd Article).

The Gospel of John teaches the same thing, but in different terms. Seven times throughout the Gospel, Jesus announces that "I Am" something or another: bread, true vine, light of the world, good shepherd, door of the sheep, the way/truth/life, or the resurrection/life. These statements are nothing less than a revelation of what it means that Jesus is Lord. Each "I Am" statement beautifully unfolds His grace for us.

Two other times in the Gospel of John, Jesus uses "I Am" where it stands alone, and today's is one of those times. He simply says, "I Am," not "I Am X." The other time is when Judas leads the officers to arrest Him. The soldiers ask where Jesus of Nazareth is, and He answers, "I Am." At those words, the Gospel tells us that the men fell back. The episode demonstrates the divine power of the name of God.

What, then, is given to us in the words of Jesus in the Gospel today? He uses "I Am" in the following manner: Before Abraham was, I Am. He is revealing that He is eternal, and that those who keep His word will never see death. Being the Lord, and being therefore at one with God His Father, Jesus can be a source of eternal life for those who believe in Him.

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<sup>1</sup>Throughout this curriculum, the uncapped "Lord" always refers to Yahweh, unless in a Scriptural quote, where the two designations of LORD (Yahweh) and Lord (Adonai) are maintained.

**ACTIVITIES:**

(1) Color the picture of Abraham and the crucified Christ from the storybook. Remind the children that Abraham lived over 1500 years before Jesus. How could he see Jesus? Because Jesus is eternal.

(2) **Activities Book: Jesus Attributes**

In the activities book are three attributes of Jesus. Have the children simply trace these out and learn these words. These are words used to describe Jesus in the Athanasian Creed. Teach the following words in the following manner:

- Uncreated      Everything was created except Jesus. Jesus is NOT created. He is “as old” as the Father. How can this be? Jesus is like the rays of the sun. The rays of the sun are as old as the sun, but yet the sun is the “fount and source” of the rays, and so might be called the “father” of the rays. If Jesus has eternal life, He can give it to us.
- Almighty      Another word for almighty is “omnipotent.” Jesus has “all authority in heaven and on earth.” How does He use this might and power? He uses it to rule everything for our sakes, to rule our enemies for us, and to govern His Church in faithfulness and righteousness. Because Jesus is almighty, we know that “all things work for the good of those who love the Lord.” For the children, they might be reminded that “He’s got the whole world in His hands.” That means that even bad things are used by God for our good.
- Eternal      Jesus is above time. *Eternal* is not the same as *everlasting*. It’s not only that Jesus lives forever and ever and ever (although this is true), but that He looks at every day as if it were one day. This is how Abraham saw Him.

(3) **Liturgical Spotlight: Begotten of the Father from eternity**

Lead the children over the part of the Nicene Creed where it is confessed, “Begotten of His Father before all worlds. God of God. Light of light. Very God of very God. Begotten, not made.” Go over this several times with them so that they memorize it. Explain *begotten* as “being from” or “coming from.” Before the critically important Sundays coming up, this Gospel lays it down that the works of Jesus are not just the works of a man, but the works of God.

(4) **Liturgical Year Review**

Begin repeating the chronology of Jesus’ life in this highly important time of the Church Year:

- 1. Palm Sunday      Jesus comes into Jerusalem on a donkey.
- 2. Maundy Thursday      Jesus gives His disciples Holy Communion.
- 3. Good Friday      Jesus dies on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.
- 4. Easter      Jesus rises from the dead and destroys death.
- 5. Ascension      Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father.
- 6. Pentecost      Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to give forgiveness, life, and salvation.

**Suggestions**

1. A brief session with the pastor, in order to learn more deeply the theology of the divine name, might be in order. The teacher might introduce some of the Hebrew or Greek words for God, especially Yahweh, El, and Kurios. Remind the children of the word *Kyrie*, which is the name for the liturgical prayer, “Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.” It is based on the Greek word for “Lord.” Here is a quick “cheat sheet” for the names of God in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

Language	Word	Meaning	Derivatives
Hebrew	Yahweh Adonai El Elohim	“He is”; LORD lord God gods (or “God”)	Jehovah; “-jah” or “-ia” endings on Hebrew names  El-Shaddai (Mighty God); Bethel (House of God)
Greek	kurios theos	LORD/lord/sir/master God	Kyrie eleison (Lord, have mercy) theology, theophany (-phany means manifest, thus, “divine manifestation”)
Latin	dominus deus	Lord/master God	dominate, dominant deist
English	LORD Lord	Yahweh Adonai	

2. Review the doctrine of original sin. Remind the children that we are under the curse of sin because of Adam’s sin. The curse of sin means that everyone will die. Even babies can die, and this proves that original sin affects people of all ages.

3. Go over the 7 "I Am"'s from John's Gospel: bread, light, door, Good Shepherd, way/truth/life, resurrection/life, vine. Good Shepherd Sunday comes soon, and they will be reviewing this theme again. Today may be a good day to begin learning these "I Am"'s. See if the children can memorize them all.
4. If able, the children may do either of the activities in the activities book. The other is a word puzzle that spells out "eternal" and "life."

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## Hosanna in the Highest!

<b>Week:</b> Palmarum <b>Story:</b> Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday <b>Text:</b> Matthew 21: 1-9	<b>Theme:</b> Jesus is our Savior to whom we cry, "Hosanna," or "Please save us!" He sets Himself for the cross in order to do so.
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### Commentary

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey recalls an ancient prophecy (Zech. 9: 9), which itself recalled an even more ancient prophecy (Gen. 49: 11). The prophecy first begins with Jacob's blessing of his 12 sons. To Judah, he gave the blessing that "the scepter would not depart from Judah," meaning that a king would come from Judah's line of descendants. And then in this context, Jacob says, "Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes." The prophet Zechariah later preaches this prophecy concerning the Messiah, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey."

Both these prophecies set the scene for Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. That He used a donkey was not simply an act of humility, but a bold statement that He was in fact the Messiah. But His use of a donkey is also a statement about humility. Not in a chariot, not in a carriage, not carried by a litter, but the King of kings leads on to death riding on a humble beast of burden.

The cries of the multitudes serve as the basis for a part of the liturgy, the *Sanctus* ("Holy, holy, holy."). They cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna to the highest!" These words are rooted in Psalm 118, part of the "Hallel," a hymn sung during the Passover Feast to which Jesus was going that week. In other words, anticipation was already in the air with the Passover Festival, and with the arrival of Jesus, the Jews who followed Him could not but sing out in to Him with one of the favorite Passover hymns, a part of Psalm 118. He was the one who would fulfill the Passover!

"Hosanna" means "please save us," another *Kyrie*-like prayer which places the suppliant in the posture of one who is ready to receive the Lord's gifts. The cry is also another confession of Jesus' divinity, for He comes "in the name of the Lord," and in addition, only the Lord could "please save us."

The use of these words in the *Sanctus* provides many insights into the Gospel as worked out by the liturgy. These words of the people on Palm Sunday do not stand alone, but serve as the second half of a hymn which begins with words from Isaiah 6: "And one [seraphim] cried to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!'"

The first part of the *Sanctus* are the words of seraphim, the highest angels of heaven; the concluding part are words from the dirty multitude on Palm Sunday. The first part is sung in heaven; the second, on earth. The first part confesses the absolute transcendence and holiness of the Lord; the latter confesses that He has come to His people to save them. In other words, the *Sanctus* is a beautiful canticle which confesses that in Christ (more specifically, in Holy Communion) heaven and earth are brought together in glorious unity. The saints on earth join together, as is said, "with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven." Heaven's door has been opened. Even as Jesus came down from the heights of heaven and began the task of saving His people that first Palm Sunday, every liturgy is a Palm Sunday insofar as Jesus once again comes among His people on earth to bring them the gifts of heaven.

### ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Color the "Hosanna" picture in the storybook. Teach the children that "Hosanna in the highest" was a famous hymn for the people in Jesus' day. It is from the Psalms. If possible, teach the children where "Psalms" are in the Bible. Teach them that this is the biggest book in the Bible. It was the hymn book of people in Jesus' day. It is easy to find simply by opening the Bible in the middle. Teach them that "hosanna" means "Please save us."
- (2) **Activities Book: Hosanna Palm Leaves**  
 Have the children color the branches of the palms in the back of this manual. Copy enough palm leaves to spell out "Hosanna in the highest" (all letters are given for this phrase, for leaves going in both directions). Have them color the branches that spell out "Hosanna in the highest" and display it in the church.

(3) **Liturgical Spotlight: The Sanctus**

Go over the *Sanctus*, the “Holy, Holy, Holy” sung just before the consecration of the bread and wine. Point out how the words from Palm Sunday are sung in this great canticle. Lead them to understand why we use this song here. Through Holy Communion, Jesus is coming into our midst in a very special way just as He came into Jerusalem. Like the people in Jesus’ day, we greet Him by singing the words of the Hallel, “Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord.” Teach them that the first part of the *Sanctus*, the “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabbaoth,” is a song sung by the angels in heaven. We sing the song of angels in heaven and of suppliants on earth, because Holy Communion is where heaven and earth meet.

(4) **Liturgical Year Review**

Begin repeating the chronology of Jesus’ life in this highly important time of the Church Year:

- 1. Palm Sunday            Jesus comes into Jerusalem on a donkey.
- 2. Maundy Thursday    Jesus gives His disciples Holy Communion.
- 3. Good Friday            Jesus dies on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.
- 4. Easter                    Jesus rises from the dead and destroys death.
- 5. Ascension              Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father.
- 6. Pentecost                Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to give forgiveness, life, and salvation.

**Suggestions**

- 1. Spend some time on the word “hosanna.” The “hosa-“ in the word is the same Hebrew word at work in the name “Jesus.” It’s the Hebrew verb for “to save.” The prayer “hosanna” is basically a way of saying, “Please be Jesus for us” or “Please do your name, what you are here to do, for us.”
- 2. Go over the teaching that “Son of David” is another way of saying “Messiah.” Quickly review who King David was. To David was given the promise, “Your throne shall be established forever.” (II Samuel 7: 16) Israel was waiting for David’s dynasty to rise up and bring about the “kingdom of God.”
- 3. Get the children to see the Book of Psalms as a hymn book. Perhaps get in the habit of calling the Psalms “the songbook of the Church” any time a passage from that book is looked up.

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**He is Risen!**

<p><b>Week:</b> Easter  <b>Story:</b> Jesus rises from the dead  <b>Text:</b> Mark 16: 1-8</p>	<p><b>Theme:</b> Jesus rises victoriously over sin and death. He is the “firstfruits” of His brethren, paving the way for our own resurrection.</p>
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**Commentary**

The Resurrection account from the Gospel of Mark is perhaps an unusual pick from among the four Gospels. It is the shortest account, and it ends oddly: “They were afraid.” Mark’s Easter account ends with fear! By what wisdom did the Church over the course of many centuries settle on this version of the greatest event in the Church’s life as the reading for its greatest day?

It actually makes sense. First, Easter is not one week, but the Easter Season lasts seven weeks, and many of the later weeks answer the questions of this first week. Second, the Lord never leaves the Gospel incomplete, so that the Easter event is a “stand alone” event. In other words, He’s not done delivering the gifts of His work. Taken separately, many of the events of Jesus life inspire fear. Fear is created by something that is unusual, or out of place. From His conception by the Holy Spirit, to His walking on water, to His death, to His resurrection, each event on its own would inspire fear, even as the disciples feared Jesus when He walked on water.

The account of St. Mark actually is the perfect one for the liturgical year precisely because it sets up a framework for the later Gospels in the season of Easter. If the Gospel ended with the event of Jesus’ resurrection, we would only have fear and uncertainty. Rather, we need to see Jesus again, and we need to learn what His resurrection means for us. And this is exactly what we get in the next several weeks. And so, in the following weeks Jesus will come back to His disciples and say, “Peace be with you” as the antidote to fear. He will teach us that we need not be sorrowful, for He will send the Holy Spirit. He will show us how we share in His victory over sin and death. Against the fear of wonderment from this first week, the introits for the next few weeks will mandate us to “sing,” “ask,” and “have joy.” All these things are delivered throughout the Easter Season, rounding out what seems a weakness in this first week.

Today, however, we can rejoice in some basic teachings of the resurrection of Jesus, for they teach us about our own resurrections. His was a resurrection not in spirit, but in body, yet His body was glorified. This is a truth that emerges from the details of the resurrection story. Most people do not recognize Him at first, but when He calls their names, then they know Him, or when He breaks bread, He is recognized. In the Church today, we do not recognize Him as He was when He walked on the earth, but we recognize Him the way He makes Himself known to us, in the calling out of our

names (in baptism) and in the meal (in communion).

As to our own resurrections, we will follow Jesus, the firstfruits. We too will rise out of the ground with our same, although glorified, bodies. We share in His resurrection because He shares it with us, having ascended to the right hand and giving out the Spirit of life.

### ACTIVITIES:

- (1) Color the "Easter" picture in the storybook and trace out the words "He is Risen." Be sure they keep the flag white. They may put a red cross in the middle of it, as is traditionally done.
- (2) **Activities Book: Easter Necklace**  
The children may color the egg that says, "He is Risen." If copied on card stock, the children may punch a hole in it and wear it as a necklace during the day or during the Easter breakfast.
- (3) **Liturgical Spotlight: Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands.**  
Go over the hymn, "Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands." If possible, sing it to them or have a pianist play it for them. It can relate to the picture in the storybook on page 27. This hymn actually brings the many Gospels of this entire quarter together nicely (although this might be beyond the understanding of the children; at least go over the verse and talk about the words. Review this hymn again when, for example, *Cantate* Sunday arrives. Remind them of the phrase, "sing to God right thankfully").

Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands, For our offenses given	Good Friday
But now at God's right hand He stands	Ascension; Trinity
And brings us life from heaven.	Pentecost; Judica (He is the eternal "I Am")
Therefore let us joyful be.	Jubilate ("Be joyful")
And sing to God right thankfully. Loud songs of alleluia! Alleluia	Cantate ("Sing")

Describe the image of Jesus dying and being bound by death, but Jesus breaks the bonds of death. Death now has no power over Him. Because Jesus broke through the bonds of death, death has no power over us either. We will die, but it will be more like sleeping than dying.

### (4) Liturgical Year Review

Begin repeating the chronology of Jesus' life in this highly important time of the Church Year:

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. Palm Sunday     | Jesus comes into Jerusalem on a donkey.                               |
| 2. Maundy Thursday | Jesus gives His disciples Holy Communion.                             |
| 3. Good Friday     | Jesus dies on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.              |
| 4. Easter          | Jesus rises from the dead and destroys death.                         |
| 5. Ascension       | Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father.                        |
| 6. Pentecost       | Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to give forgiveness, life, and salvation. |

### Suggestions

1. It is assumed that this day may have Easter breakfasts or other activities. The general tone of today's lesson is more casual. The teacher might bring in a simple craft or art assignment in addition to the simple demands of today's lesson.
2. Make sure the children understand that Jesus rose bodily, but that He is now in a glorified state. He is not different, but glorified.
3. Remind the children that we take part in Jesus' resurrection in Holy Baptism. We died with Him there, but we also rose up with Him there. Remind them that this means we should rise anew to holy living every day.

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**Jesus Breathes on His Disciples**

**Week:** Quasimodogeniti  
**Story:** Jesus appears to His disciples Easter night  
**Text:** John 20: 19-31

**Theme:** Jesus gives His disciples peace through the word of forgiveness, and sends them out to give this peace to others.

### Commentary

The sinner has now been reconciled to his holy God through the atoning, sacrificial Blood of Jesus Christ. Thus, the first words spoken by Jesus after His resurrection to the eleven disciples (who would shortly become apostles) is "Peace be with you." He then shows them the basis for this Word of peace: His hands and His side. The death of Jesus means peace with God for the sinner. This word of peace begins to answer the fear created through Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus does not leave us alone, but sees to the completion of His work through the delivery of His gifts.

Synonymous with the Word of Peace is the Word of Holy Absolution. When Jesus says, "Peace be with you," it's the same thing as Him saying "I forgive you all your sin." He is speaking about peace with God, and through peace with God, peace among one another. This is not peace as the world gives. In fact, Jesus specifically declares that He did not come to bring peace on the earth as the world expects peace (Matthew 10: 34).

It is sin which inhibits peace with God. Sin makes us enemies with God, and we strain against anything having to do with God so long as we are in our sin. But with the Gospel of peace arranged by Jesus' death and appeasement of God's wrath, we now peace with God. In order for that peace to be maintained, the Lord has instituted the Office of the Holy Ministry. It is the task of pastors to bring that "peace which passes all understanding" to God's children. So we have this account of the sending out of the first men in the apostolic ministry. The word *apostle* means "sent one." The Eleven disciples are becoming Apostles. As the Father has sent Jesus, so Jesus is now sending the Apostles (the "sent ones").

We notice that Jesus does not send the Apostles without first giving them what they need: a special "giving" of the Holy Spirit. The Ordaining of the Apostles is the example drawn upon by the Church in the understanding of the Ordination of pastors into the apostolic ministry even today. The Church has always understood that the Holy Spirit is given in a special way in Holy Ordination to those men who are to carry out the tasks of the Office of the Holy Ministry, even as the ordination liturgy calls upon Jesus' words in this Gospel. What are those specific tasks of the Office? They are given by Jesus in our lesson. The Apostles (and the succeeding apostolic ministry) are to forgive the sin of repentant sinners and to retain the sin of those who will not repent.

Pastors today continue in that same apostolic ministry of the forgiveness of sins. It is in Holy Ordination that the Holy Spirit is given by which ministers have the authority to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments. The liturgy shows how the Church has always understood this by the way we respond when the pastor says, "The Lord be with you," and the congregation responds, "And with thy spirit." This was the Spirit that Jesus breathed on His disciples.

### ACTIVITIES:

(1) Color the "Ichthus" in the storybook. Teach the children the various meanings of the *Ichthus*. The *I* means "Jesus." The *ch* means "Christ." The *th* means "God's." The *u* means "Son." The *s* means "Savior." Thomas confessed Jesus as "My Lord and my God." Even though we do not see, we confess Jesus to be the titles of the *Ichthus*. It was one of the earliest confessions of Christianity, which is why the fish has been one of the earliest symbols of Christianity.

(2) **Activities Book: Puzzle**

Copy the puzzle onto cardstock paper. Have the children color and cut out the puzzle in the activities book. The teacher may have to help cut this puzzle out. The picture expresses the scene where Jesus breathes out the Holy Spirit, and with the Holy Spirit, He gives the disciples peace through forgiveness.

(3) **Liturgical Spotlight: Confession and Absolution/"And with thy spirit."**

The confession and absolution are the obvious things to teach based on this lesson. Read the catechism's section on confession, especially those questions, "What is Confession?" "What is the Office of the Keys?" "Where is this written?" and "What do you believe according to these words?" Emphasize phrases like "from the pastor as from God Himself" and "just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself." Connect such phrases to the absolution's words, "In the stead and by the command." These words are all rooted in the Gospel for today. Also, discuss the response to the pastor's "The Lord be with you," which is "And with your spirit." What spirit is this talking about? Based on today's Gospel, the children should know the answer to this question.

(4) **Liturgical Year Review**

Begin repeating the chronology of Jesus' life in this highly important time of the Church Year:

1. Palm Sunday            Jesus comes into Jerusalem on a donkey.
2. Maundy Thursday     Jesus gives His disciples Holy Communion.
3. Good Friday            Jesus dies on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.
4. Easter                    Jesus rises from the dead and destroys death.
5. Ascension                Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father.

**Suggestions**

1. If possible, bring the pastor in to discuss the Office of the Keys.
2. Work with the teaching that the Holy Spirit works through a sound, not through feelings. Jesus teaches, "Blessed are those who believe without seeing." Give some examples. Do the children see the Holy Spirit in baptism? Do they see Jesus' Body and Blood? Have they ever seen Jesus? Ask them why they believe these things. Stress that we believe these things because of the Word of God.

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## The Good Shepherd

**Week:** Misericordia**Story:** Jesus teaches that He is the Good Shepherd**Text:** John 10: 11-16**Theme:** The Lord is His people's Shepherd, and Jesus claims that role. He takes care of His sheep through Word and Sacrament.**Commentary**

The earliest depiction of Jesus in pictures was that of the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd is inscribed in catacombs where Christians would meet for worship. It is perhaps the most enduring and beloved of our images of Jesus. It draws off of Psalm 23, which itself is the most popular psalm. It also fulfills prophecies from Isaiah 40, Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 34, and Zechariah 11.

Why is the image of the Good Shepherd so enduring? Perhaps it is because of what it confesses about ourselves. We are sheep. Sheep are not known for their natural endowments. They are not intelligent animals, and they have no defenses to speak of. They are easy for the plucking by some passing wolf. It would seem surprising that being compared to sheep would inspire such affection, but in fact, that's exactly what a Christian gladly confesses. To be a Christian is to confess that one is helpless and without defense, totally dependent upon the Good Shepherd.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus certainly comes across as a shepherd. People come across as ignorant, wandering, foolish, faithless, and needy. Jesus alone answers the needs of the people in the Gospel, and by derivation, the needs of all of us. He chastises the errant disciples; He defends His people from the Pharisee wolves; He leads His people into green pastures in the feeding of the 5,000 (the Gospel specifically says that the grass was green!); He anoints their heads with the oil of the Holy Spirit through baptism; their cup overflows; and they will live in the house of the Lord forever, a life they have because the Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep.

**ACTIVITIES:**

- (1) Color the "Good Shepherd" picture in the storybook. This picture may look "untraditional" or even childlike, but it is one of the very first depictions of Christ ever, perhaps even the oldest depiction of Christ. It was found in a catacomb of ancient Rome. It teaches that the Church from its earliest days lovingly embraced the image of Jesus the Good Shepherd.

**(2) Activities Book: "I Am" Cards**

Copy the 7 "I Am"s onto cardstock paper. Have the children color and cut out the cards. Then take a trip around the church and tape the cards onto different parts of the church where that *I Am* is going on. (Talk to the pastor before going into the sanctuary, and be sure to clear the church of these cards before the service, unless the pastor allows these cards to help teach the congregation.) The following list may act as a guide:

Good Shepherd	The pastor! (He may enjoy the children pasting this on him!); teach the children that the word <i>pastor</i> means "shepherd."
Door	Baptismal font; the way into the sanctuary between the altar railings. Here is the entrance into the Kingdom.
Way/Truth/Life	Baptismal font; the way into the sanctuary; the pulpit (the Truth); no one gets the Father but through baptism and the preaching of the Gospel.
Light	The pulpit; the lectern; the light of the Word is proclaimed from these places.
Vine	The altar.
Bread	The altar.
Resurrection/Life	The baptismal font; in the font, we take part in Jesus' resurrection.

**(3) Liturgical Spotlight: See activity above**

The activity above is rather involved and will assume the function of the "Liturgical spotlight," teaching many important

details of the liturgical surroundings.

#### (4) Liturgical Year Review

Begin repeating the chronology of Jesus' life in this highly important time of the Church Year:

1. Palm Sunday Jesus comes into Jerusalem on a donkey.
2. Maundy Thursday Jesus gives His disciples Holy Communion.
3. Good Friday Jesus dies on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.
4. Easter Jesus rises from the dead and destroys death.
5. Ascension Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father.
6. Pentecost Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to give forgiveness, life, and salvation.

#### Suggestions

1. Review the story of God appearing to Moses at the burning bush. (Exodus 3) Emphasize that when Jesus says "I Am," He is saying that He is the God Who appeared to Moses. He is the Lord.
2. Paint a vivid picture of what sheep are like. They do not have much in the way of natural endowments, but they are able to discern the voice of their shepherd among many others. In Jesus' day, shepherds would bring their flocks to a common watering hole, and the flocks would intermingle. But once the shepherd called his sheep – and many shepherds would be calling! – his own sheep would recognize his voice and follow.
2. Emphasize the connection between Jesus the Shepherd and his undershepherd, the pastor (a word that means "shepherd"). How does a pastor shepherd his flock? What does he feed it with? What should he do if the sheep err? The pastor may have a necklace or picture that has this shepherd theme; he might be invited to showcase it.
3. Spell out what wolves do: They disperse the flock. They scatter it. They feast upon it. These are false prophets who lure Christ's sheep away from the flock in order to take advantage of them, usually by taking their money somehow or another. Are their false shepherds today who try to get money out of Christ's sheep? Absolutely.

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## Your Sorrow will be Turned to Joy

**Week:** Jubilate

**Story:** Jesus teaches about joy

**Text:** John 16: 16-23

**Theme:** We have sorrow while Jesus is gone, but our sorrow will be turned to joy.

#### Commentary

Here begins a series of six Gospels from the Gospel of John, five of which come from Jesus' "farewell discourse." Jesus gave His farewell discourse on the night that He instituted the Lord's Supper. St. John does not give us an institution of Holy Communion, as do the other three Gospel writers. Rather, he gives a sort of "behind the scenes" look at Jesus' teaching surrounding His last supper.

In other words, four out of the six Gospels after Easter (all six of which are from John's Gospel) come from Jesus' teaching surrounding His institution of Holy Communion. What does this mean? It means that the Church has historically understood the feast of Easter as centered in Holy Communion. Being that every Sunday is a little Easter (as opposed to Easter being a big Sunday), what is true throughout the year is highlighted in these four weeks: *We participate in the Easter joy by joining Jesus at His Supper at the Divine Service.*

Like a many-faceted diamond, the four weeks from the farewell discourse, beginning today, refract the grace of Jesus in glorious and colorful ways. Today's Gospel begins three "-ate" Gospels, *Jubilate*, *Cantate*, and *Rogate*. Latin verbs that ended in "-ate" were imperatives, command words. And so the three words are translated: *Have joy!*, *Sing!*, *And Ask!*. In the face of our deep-seated fear, the Lord does not tip-toe around, suggesting that we might have joy. No, He commands it, or better, He mandates it. That is the only antidote to the systemic fear that we have.

In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches about joy. He says that He is going away. Whether He is talking about His death, or His ascension, or both, we cannot exactly tell based on the text. As with many things that Jesus says, we may look at it as a statement that encompasses all scenarios, including anytime that Jesus is away from us, or perhaps anytime that we are sorrowful because He has not yet vindicated our faith at His Second Coming.

Whatever the case, the teaching is the same: Jesus is going to the Father; our sorrow will be turned to joy; and whatever we ask in His name the Father will give us. These three statements are some of the pillars, in fact, of the liturgy:

(1) As we sing in the *Gloria in Excelsis*, our entire foundation for worship is because Jesus has gone back to the Father and sits at His right hand. Because one of our brothers, Who is holy, is there, He can "hear our prayer" and "have mercy on us." A review of all the things that Jesus is doing for us at the right hand of the Father explains why Jesus can comfort His disciples with His departure. It is indeed good that He returns to the Father. At the Father's right hand, Jesus is interceding for us, forgiving our sins, preparing a place for us, giving out the Spirit of life, ruling all things for the sake

of the Church, and making our enemies His footstool.

(2) All these works of Jesus lead to our joy. Our singing in the liturgy is certainly founded in this joy, and the use of Psalms, hymnody, and song reflects this joy as well. The liturgy is the “new song” we sing, of which we will learn next week.

(3) And finally, throughout the worship we call upon the Father in the name of Jesus, which is to say that worship is Trinitarian. A studied perusal of the liturgy reveals the centrality of the name of Jesus throughout the service, not just standing alone, but in a Trinitarian context. From the “Christ, have mercy upon us” to the “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” and everywhere else, it is not accidental that the Church places so much attention on the name of Jesus. He Himself invites us to ask the Father for gifts in His name, and we receive gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation in His name.

Jesus lays all these teachings down in today's Gospel.

## ACTIVITIES:

(1) Color the “In the Name” picture in the storybook. This picture connects “In the Name” to Holy Baptism. In other words, Jesus teaches, “In that day whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.” In baptism, this is exactly what is happening. We are calling upon the name of the Lord to give forgiveness, life, and salvation for the candidate. The outside streams of the baptismal water should be shades of blue. The middle stream in the picture should be colored red, to remind the children that in baptism, Jesus’ blood cleanses them from all sins.

### (2) **Activities Book: The Right Hand of the Father**

In the next couple of weeks, the children will be learning what great things Jesus is doing at the right hand of the Father for us. To prepare them for these teachings, have them color and cut out the six phrases that describe what Jesus is doing at the right hand of the Father. These may be copied on cardstock, and the children may color them any way they want. Then, have them post their phrases around the picture of Jesus sitting on His throne. This will be a good reminder for them in the next couple of weeks.

### (3) **Liturgical Spotlight: Gifts Given in the Name/Jubilate**

Using page 40 in the storybook, discuss the gifts that are given in the name of the Lord throughout the liturgy. Have the children try to think of places in the liturgy where the name of the Lord is used, or where the phrase, “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” is used. In the first frame, the gift given is absolution (just after the invocation, the confession and absolution is done). In the second frame, the gift given is mercy, and our prayer is heard (sung in the *Gloria in Excelsis*). In the third frame, the gift given is the Body and Blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins (sung after the *Sanctus*). Also, refer back to the hymn, “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands,” in the first verse where we sing, “Therefore let us joyful be.” Show the children that *jubilate* means “be joyful.”

### (4) **Liturgical Year Review**

Begin repeating the chronology of Jesus’ life in this highly important time of the Church Year:

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. Palm Sunday     | Jesus comes into Jerusalem on a donkey.                               |
| 2. Maundy Thursday | Jesus gives His disciples Holy Communion.                             |
| 3. Good Friday     | Jesus dies on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.              |
| 4. Easter          | Jesus rises from the dead and destroys death.                         |
| 5. Ascension       | Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father.                        |
| 6. Pentecost       | Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to give forgiveness, life, and salvation. |

## Suggestions

1. Have the children put the list of things that Jesus does at the right hand of God down to memory. Over the next four or five weeks, the children should be drilled in these things, because they are so important. Every week, the class may begin with the question, “What is Jesus doing for us at the right hand of God?”
2. Discuss joy. Joy is not necessarily a feeling. It derives from the “peace that passes all human understanding.” It is something that transcends bodily sensation, but it resides in the spirit. In the Bible, joy often goes hand in hand with affliction. Present the mystery of our Christian walk, that we have joy even in the midst of our sorrows. Ask the children how this can be so.
3. Teach the phrase, “the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh” to teach them the things that cause sorrow in this world.
4. The other activity found in the activities book involves the children coloring in the crosses in the puzzle. It will spell out “In Jesus’ Name.”

# The Helper

**Week:** Cantate

**Story:** Jesus teaches about the Helper

**Text:** John 16: 5-15

**Theme:** Jesus teaches that it is good that He go to the Father, because then the Helper will come.

## Commentary

This is a rather lengthy commentary, but the truths of this Gospel are many, deep, and varied, especially as they fit in the liturgical year.

Today is the second of the “-ate” Sundays. We are mandated to do something as a response to the Lord’s grace. Last week we were mandated to have joy. This week we are mandated to sing.

The introit for today comes from Psalm 98. It sings, “Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.”

Why do we sing a new song to the Lord? Because marvelous things are going on at His right hand. To speak of the Lord’s right hand is to speak of the place where Jesus is, which is why His ascension to the right hand of the Father is one of the themes (again) of the day.

But first, we need to investigate what this “new song” is. If there is a new song, there must have been an old song. What is this old song? Two possible candidates for this old song work to amplify what makes this new song so wonderful.

The first candidate for the old song is the song that Moses taught Israel from the Lord, in Deuteronomy 31: 18-22: “And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods. Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel. *When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant. Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, for I know the inclination of their behavior today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore to give them.* Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel. (See Deuteronomy 32 for the actual song.)

This is a song of judgment and wrath. The “new song,” then, would be one of forgiveness and mercy. And so, Revelation 5: 9 tells us exactly what this new song is, “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”

This is a song to the Lamb of God, and it focuses on the redemption by His blood. It calls to mind the canticles of the liturgy that focus on the forgiveness given by the Lamb, that is, the *Gloria in Excelsis* and the *Agnus Dei*. The *Gloria in Excelsis* has those words, “Oh Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takes away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.” The *Agnus Dei* has those words, “Oh Christ, Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, hear our prayer.”

A second candidate for the “old song” is found in Isaiah 6, where we hear that the song of heaven is, “And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!”

This song at first glance does not reveal God’s wrath as the song from Deuteronomy did, that is, until closer inspection. It says, “The whole *earth* is full of His glory.” It says nothing of heaven. Why? Because heaven is a closed book to us! Isaiah, upon entering into the presence of God in heaven, could only confess, “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” That’s the only conclusion that we can derive from the “old song.”

But the new song, as we saw from Revelation 5, places God’s people in His heavenly presence, not in fear because of their “unclean lips”, but in peace and joy, “white and clean” (Rev. 19: 14). In the canticle, the *Sanctus* (The “Holy, Holy, Holy”), we notice in fact that it is a new song. It is based on the words of Isaiah 6, but several marvelous elements are added. For example, now that heaven is opened to us, we can confess, “*Heaven* and earth are full of your glory,” where before we could only confess “the earth” is full of His glory. Also, we have the additional phrases given to us by Christ’s advent, namely, the “hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” In other words, in the old song, Isaiah stood in fear, but in the new song, we have a Savior who has answered our prayer for salvation (hosanna!), so that we can stand joyfully in God’s presence.

In the end, we see that all three of the historic canticles of the Church reveal truths about the “new song,” the *Gloria in Excelsis*, the *Sanctus*, and the *Agnus Dei*. They all draw from language and themes from Revelation 5, where we are given a glimpse at the new song.

But there is one more subtle truth conveyed here. Another reference to the “new song” comes from Revelation 14: 3, where it is written, “They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.”

Here, it says that no one could learn that song except God’s elect. Revelation 5 gave us the words, but this verse

says that no one could learn it. How do we account for this inconsistency? It might explain the doxological nature of the liturgy. By “doxological” here is meant that there are no canned words that can “pin” the Lord down to our manipulations or control. No, all we are given to do is proclaim the glory that we “see” by our faith. Our “new song” is not the words from Revelation verbatim, but the new song weaves its way through the entire fabric of the liturgy. Likewise the hymns. Hymns need not be a rote repetition of words from the Bible. There is an evangelical freedom that derives from the Gospel, so that the Church is given to praise the simple truth that it sees by faith, that is, the vision of Christ, the Lamb of God, sitting at the right hand of glory, whose blood cleanses us from all sins and sanctifies us to be a people of God. No single song can articulate this truth totally, yet this truth is ultimately what drives the entire “new song” that we call the liturgy. This is why, on one hand, we can have several settings of the liturgy, while still calling it liturgy; on the other hand, this doesn’t free the Church to do anything it wants. No, everything must flow and stem from the central vision of Jesus, the Lamb, sitting at the right hand of the Father, Whose blood washes us and makes us clean. Worship is not an offering on our part to the Lord, but a doxological confession of what we are given and what we “see” by faith from the Gospel.

Now, the Gospel for today lays down the foundation for what has been said above. Jesus says simply, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.” Again, there is a bit of an ambiguity. Is Jesus talking about going away at the cross and the Spirit that He sent out when He “gave up His spirit” at His death (John 19: 30), or which He gave out after His resurrection (cf. John 20: 22)? Or is He talking about going to the right hand of the Father, and giving out the Spirit on Pentecost? We might answer this question by understanding the giving of the Spirit as an “installment plan.” The totality of Christ’s work, from His conception to His ascension, supplied everything that the Holy Spirit gives, but the fullness of this gift is not realized until Pentecost.

The Gospel says that Jesus will send the Spirit. This verse (and others like John 16: 26) is the basis for the Western Church’s acceptance of the additional “and the Son” in the Nicene Creed. That is, in the Western Church (as opposed to the Eastern Orthodox Church), we confess that the Holy Spirit proceeds “from the Father *and the Son*.” The original Nicene Creed only says, “from the Father.” This issue, split the Eastern and Western Churches in 1054 A.D, the East claiming that the West added words to the Creed. The West might refine its language by saying, “The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through [the sending of] the Son,” but in the end, we do not see the additional “and the Son” as an unjustified addition. When Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit onto the disciples, He was breathing the Word of forgiveness upon them, and here, it is not unbiblical to say that this Word/Spirit was proceeding from Him. To speak of the Word as “proceeding from” the mouth of God is also a biblical way to speak (cf. Deuteronomy 8: 3 and Matthew 4: 4).

We now come to the rather confusing passage: “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

To convict is to show or convince someone that something is the truth, and it often has a negative connotation. We might lay it out simply in these terms: Sin is related to not believing in Jesus; righteousness is related to Jesus being at the right hand of the Father; judgment is related to the judgment of Satan. The Holy Spirit will show us the truth concerning these things. He will teach the Church that the remedy to sin is to believe in the one at the right hand of God, because it is there that our righteousness has been worked out and presented to the Father. And our accuser, the devil, has been judged, so that sin is no longer a matter of breaking commandments, but a matter of not believing in Jesus.

We next come to verses 13-15, which read, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”

This lays out the doctrine of the Holy Spirit beautifully. To put it simply, everything that Jesus has attained by His holy life, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension, the Holy Spirit will deliver to us by the Word. “He will take what is Mine and declare it to you.” What belongs to Jesus? “All things that the Father has.” What does the Father have? Life, and by derivation, forgiveness and salvation (because a sinner cannot participate in the Father’s life without forgiveness). This is why the Holy Spirit is called the “Lord and Giver of life.” He takes the forgiveness, life, and salvation that Jesus has attained for us, and He delivers these gifts to us by the Word.

To round out all the truths of this Gospel as they are nestled into the propers of the liturgical year, the Divine Service is a glorious event of confession and doxology, in which we participate as God’s people before His throne, because Jesus is sitting there and has sent out the Holy Spirit to give us all the things we need in order to be among that holy band of people, all things that He has gained for us by His victory on the cross and through the grave.

## ACTIVITIES:

(1) There is no coloring page in the storybook for this lesson.

(2) **Activities Book: The Words of the Trinity**

The activities book has a picture or symbol of each Person of the Trinity. Have the children color these pictures. Then have them color and cut out the phrases. Use these as a game. Give a child one of the phrases, and see if he can correctly place that work under the correct Person of the Trinity. Do this several times to put it to memory. The

teacher should not be worried about taking some time – even half the class – with this activity. This will teach important teachings from the Creed.

**(3) Liturgical Spotlight: See above/Cantate**

The above activity will teach the children the doctrines of the creed. But before going over this activity, first say the creed with them. Say it slowly, and let them follow along. They will know bits and pieces of it. Also, refer back to the hymn, “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands,” and show them the phrase, “And sing to God right thankfully. Loud songs of alleluia! Alleluia.” *Cantate* means “sing.”

**(4) Liturgical Year Review**

Begin repeating the chronology of Jesus’ life in this highly important time of the Church Year:

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. Palm Sunday     | Jesus comes into Jerusalem on a donkey.                               |
| 2. Maundy Thursday | Jesus gives His disciples Holy Communion.                             |
| 3. Good Friday     | Jesus dies on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.              |
| 4. Easter          | Jesus rises from the dead and destroys death.                         |
| 5. Ascension       | Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father.                        |
| 6. Pentecost       | Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to give forgiveness, life, and salvation. |

**Suggestions**

1. Again, the children should know by memory the list of things that Jesus is doing at the right hand of the Father for them.
2. Discuss the word “chant” a bit. *Chant* is another word that comes from *cantate*. Discuss how song and chant reflect the joy that we have in the Church, that Jesus commands us to have. Another word that may be discussed is *cantor*. The cantor is the one who chants introits and other elements of the liturgy, or leads the Church in liturgical song. Perhaps lead a discussion on what kind of song is appropriate for church (the new song of the liturgy), and what kind is not (the songs of this world, like rock and roll or pop).

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**Ask the Father in My Name**

**Week:** Rogate

**Story:** Jesus teaches us to ask for gifts in His name.

**Text:** John 16: 23-30

**Theme:** Through Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension, we now have access to the Father, to ask Him for gifts.

**Commentary**

This is the third and final of the “-ate” Sundays. The “rogate” comes from Christ’s mandate to ask His Father for gifts in His name. Again, because we are in a natural state of fear and faithlessness when it comes to the mighty operation of God’s grace, the Lord commands us to step up to His grace. We want to recoil at His presence; He commands us to stand up and rejoice in it. Anything less than a forceful command may leave us in doubt.

What Jesus commands is remarkable: that we ask anything in His name to the Father. He says, “whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.” These words are misused when they are understood as a magical formula. It is not as if we merely need to utter “in the name of Jesus” and whatever we want will happen. That’s how magic works, and that use of Jesus’ name is specifically forbidden by the 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment (see the Small Catechism). How, then, are we to understand these words?

Using the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture, we know that we ought not to ask for things “that [we] may spend it on [our] pleasures.” (James 4: 3) What constitutes “our pleasures”? The things of this world. These things, says Jesus, the pagans ask for and receive, but Christians ought to know that the Father will always provide them the things of this world that they need. (cf. Matthew 6: 24-34) Rather, Jesus teaches, we ought to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” (Matthew 6: 33) Those are the things for which we should ask. Likewise, when Jesus is teaching about prayer, He says that the thing for which we ask is the Holy Spirit. He says, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11: 13)

These verses, and the greater context of our Gospel for today, teach us that Jesus is meaning the Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of Righteousness that He brings when He says, “Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.” He’s talking about the Holy Spirit and the things of the Spirit. This truth should undermine any doubt that may arise if, say, we wonder why we haven’t gotten that new car after praying for it in Jesus’ name!

It is a wonderful comfort to know that Jesus is not talking about mere earthly matters, but rather heavenly and spiritual matters, because in the end, those are the things that we ultimately need, even when it comes to earthly matters.

What spiritual things ought we ask for in Jesus' name? We do not need to search for an answer, because the liturgy has answered it. A perusal of the liturgy indicates those things for which we ask in Jesus' name. The whole liturgy is a working out of that Old Testament prophecy, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Joel 2: 32, fulfilled in Acts 2) And so the whole liturgy is rooted in the holy name of the Lord. We think of such phrases as "blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" or "Our help is in the name of the Lord." But the *Gloria in Excelsis*, perhaps, best works out the specific theology of today's Gospel. In this great canticle, we confess that the Lord hears our prayer because Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, and He is the "holy one" and the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Jesus lays this all out in these Easter readings: It's good that He dies, rises, and goes to the Father, because then we can ask for anything in His name, and it will be done for us.

But what exactly do we get? Again, the liturgy answers this question. We get those things that we get in the liturgy, namely, forgiveness, life, and salvation. These are the heavenly things, the spiritual things, that we truly need, that last past the pleasures of this world, and that the Father will freely give to His children.

Jesus then says something rather subtle. He says, "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God."

When we rejoice in the truths of Christ's substitutionary role – that Jesus is our righteousness before the Father by His death and resurrection – we can sometimes get the picture that God is angry toward the whole world, but as long as someone "hides behind" Jesus, He can be in the Father's presence and so be saved. Jesus, in other words, is our face before the Father, Who prays for us, speaks for us, and intercedes for us, and the Father sees only Jesus and loves only Jesus. But Jesus' words quoted above lay God's love out in more clear terms. We stand before God in Jesus' name, it is true, but we nevertheless stand before Him in our own persons. The Father Himself loves *us* through Jesus' name! He loves us because we love Jesus and believe in Him. Jesus is the head, and we are the members, Who as a whole Body stand before the Father. The picture of the 144,000 standing before the throne of God in heaven (cf. Revelation 14) amplifies this point. It is not just Jesus, but Jesus together with the people of God that is gathered together.

Finally, a few words might be stated about the "name of God" theology. In I Kings 9: 3 the Lord says, "I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually."

The house refers to the temple that Solomon built. One of the big themes in the Gospel of John is that Jesus is the temple of God. He is the one in Whose flesh God has "tabernacled" (the true meaning of the "dwelt" in John 1: 14) among us. And Jesus specifically says that His flesh is the temple of God. (cf. John 2: 21) In the verse from I Kings quoted above, we see that in the Old Testament, God put His name in the temple such that His "[His] eyes and [His] heart will be there perpetually." In other words, He will always look with mercy upon those who go to the place where His name dwells. If Jesus is the new temple, and His flesh is the place where God's eyes and heart are present, then there is added depth to Christ's meaning that "in that day you will ask in My name." No wonder, then, that today's Sunday is titled "Rogate," or "ask." In Christ's body, the very body given in Holy Communion, God's eyes and hearts are set mercifully toward us, to answer our prayer.

## ACTIVITIES:

- (1) The children may color both pages 45 and 48. Have them trace out the words "Our Father." The first picture simply reminds the children that much of what they are learning the past few weeks and in the next few weeks is from the night that Jesus was betrayed. These were His words to them at His last supper. The second picture teaches that by Jesus' ascension to the right hand, and because of His death and resurrection, we have access to the Father. We can pray directly to the Father in Jesus' name. The "Our Father" is the prayer that most obviously reflects this wonderful reality.
- (2) **Activity: Maze**  
Have the children find the correct path through the maze in the activities book. As they find the correct path, have them write out in order the letters on the way to the correct path. This is the "way to the Father" so to speak. And the words spell out "In Jesus' name." Teach them that every prayer should end this way because of today's Gospel. The children, if able, might also do the other activity for Level 2. Here, they may write a prayer out and trace in the words, "In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."
- (3) **Liturgical Spotlight: Making the sign of the cross**  
One of the sheets in the activity book teaches the children how to cross themselves. Make copies of this page and give them to the children. Teach them to cross themselves during the times in the service when the name of the Lord is invoked, for example, during the invocation, at the absolution, or during the singing of the phrase, "blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord." Also, review what the Small Catechism teaches about morning and evening prayers.

#### (4) Liturgical Year Review

Begin repeating the chronology of Jesus' life in this highly important time of the Church Year:

1. Palm Sunday Jesus comes into Jerusalem on a donkey.
2. Maundy Thursday Jesus gives His disciples Holy Communion.
3. Good Friday Jesus dies on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.
4. Easter Jesus rises from the dead and destroys death.
5. Ascension Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father.
6. Pentecost Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to give forgiveness, life, and salvation.

#### Suggestions

1. The adoption analogy might help explain today's Gospel. In an adoption, a child takes on a new name, and so has a new relationship with his father. A father will listen to a child who bears his name. In Christ, we bear a new name and are adopted into God's family.

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## He will testify of Me

<b>Week:</b> Exaudi <b>Story:</b> Jesus teaches about the office of the Holy Spirit <b>Text:</b> John 15: 26 - 16: 4	<b>Theme:</b> The Holy Spirit will testify of Jesus, and so will the apostles.
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#### Commentary

"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me."

Today's Gospel, along with several in the previous weeks, gears us up for the theologically important feast days of Pentecost and Trinity. We see, for example, in this verse quoted above a perfect picture of the Trinity which we confess in the Nicene Creed: *The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, sent by the Son*. As stated in a previous commentary, we need not get too hooked up on the fact that the Gospel does not say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son. If we are keeping ourselves strictly to biblical phrases in the Creed, then we would have to stick only with the phrase "proceeds from the Father" as the original Nicene Creed confessed. The Creed, however, is more than a regurgitation of biblical phrases. We use the expression "one substance" for example, which is nowhere found in Scripture, but is supported by it.

Does Scripture, then, support adding the phrase, "and the Son"? Does the Holy Spirit proceed from the Son? If other uses of "proceed" guide us, then we would have to answer positively. Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, and with the Holy Spirit He breathed the Word of absolution. If this event was not a "procession out of the mouth of God" (cf. Deuteronomy 8: 4 and Matthew 4: 4), then what is it?

On the other hand, we certainly would refine our understanding concerning the nature of this procession. In the sense of being the "Fount and Source" of the Holy Spirit, we would look to the Father as the sole Person responsible for this procession. Yet, Jesus is one with the Father, and so procession happens by Him as well. The most refined way, perhaps, to state it is as follows: The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and [by the sending of] the Son. Today's Gospel says as much.

More important for us, however, is what the Holy Spirit does. First off, we might spend a few moments meditating on this title of the Holy Spirit, "the Helper" or "the Comforter." The very fact that Jesus calls Him by this word rather than simply "Holy Spirit" is an act of grace for us. That is, He is named by Jesus as He is directed toward us. In the same way that the Son of God is named after a verb that means "to save" (i.e. the name "Jesus"), so is the Holy Spirit named after another verb that means "to comfort." Called the Paraclete, it is based on the Greek verb, "parakaleo." A review of all the uses of this verb throughout the Scriptures gives a good survey of what the Holy Spirit will do for us, best summed up, perhaps, in two of the most famous uses of "comfort" in the Bible. Psalm 23 has the phrase, "your rod and staff comfort me," and Isaiah 40 (the Old Testament text used in Advent that serves as the basis of the great hymn) reads, "Comfort, yes, comfort My people! Says your God. 'Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the LORD's hand Double for all her sins.'"

By the rod and staff of the Good Shepherd, that is, the preaching of the Word, the days of warfare are ended, and iniquity is pardoned. Comfort is the result, and this comfort is worked by the Helper, the Comforter, Whom Jesus sends.

Finally, the Gospel talks about the apostles and places their role alongside that of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says, "[The Holy Spirit] will testify of Me. And you also will [testify], because you have been with Me from the beginning." Doctrinally and biblically, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is tightly bound up with the doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry. Such is implied in the liturgical exchange, "The Lord be with you...and with your spirit." That is, the congregation is confessing that the Holy Spirit is with the minister in the actions he is doing through the liturgy, namely, preaching the Word and giving out the Sacrament. Confessional doctrine does not separate the Holy Spirit from His work through the Office

of the Holy Ministry. The roots of this truth go back to the first Pentecost. With the giving of the Holy Spirit immediately came the proclamation of the Gospel, baptism, and Holy Communion. (Acts 2)

After stating that the apostles will also testify of Jesus, He prophesies what awaits those who bear witness of Him. "They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service."

To bear witness is to suffer and possibly be killed for the Gospel. The connection between bearing witness and death is nicely conveyed in the word "martyr." *Martyr* is the Greek word for "witness." For us, it means one who dies confessing the faith. In the end, every Christian is a martyr, because each of us will die confessing the name of Jesus.

### ACTIVITIES:

(1) The children may color the shields of the four apostles. These shields display the means by which each apostle died. Teach the children that this is what a "martyr" is. He is someone who dies because he testifies to his faith in Jesus, which each of the apostles did.

(2) **Activities Book: The Testimony of the Apostles**

In the activities book are two coloring pages with words to trace out in the word bubble. Have the children trace out these words and color the pictures. Teach them that these are two ways that the apostles testified to Jesus. Very importantly, the apostles "took what belongs to Jesus" and gave these gifts to us, as Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do. That is the job of the apostles and the job of the apostolic ministers, namely, to take what Jesus has attained by His victory over sin, death, and the devil and hand it over to us. Those gifts are forgiveness, life, and salvation through Word and Sacrament.

(3) **Liturgical Spotlight: One, Holy, Christian/Catholic, and Apostolic Church**

Teach the children the phrase, "one holy Christian/catholic and apostolic church." Teach the children the word "apostolic." It means that the Church is founded on the testimony of the apostles. The children will probably need to learn what "testimony" means. Describe that it simply means, "to say what you have seen or heard." This is what the apostles do: *they say what they have seen or heard*. And the Holy Spirit reminds them of what Jesus did and said, so that the apostles are the foundation of the Church.

(4) **Liturgical Year Review**

Begin repeating the chronology of Jesus' life in this highly important time of the Church Year:

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. Palm Sunday     | Jesus comes into Jerusalem on a donkey.                               |
| 2. Maundy Thursday | Jesus gives His disciples Holy Communion.                             |
| 3. Good Friday     | Jesus dies on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.              |
| 4. Easter          | Jesus rises from the dead and destroys death.                         |
| 5. Ascension       | Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father.                        |
| 6. Pentecost       | Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to give forgiveness, life, and salvation. |

### Suggestions

1. Teach the children what "Helper" means. The Holy Spirit comforts us and helps us by teaching us the Gospel and giving us the forgiveness of sins. Read the explanation of the third article of the Creed from the Small Catechism.
2. A *Google* search on the martyrdoms of the other apostles may amplify the subject that was begun in the lesson. All but St. John were martyred. The teacher need not be too graphic, but there are delicate ways to speak of the various ways the apostles were martyred.

## The Holy Spirit will teach you all things

<p><b>Week:</b> Pentecost <b>Story:</b> Jesus teaches about the Holy Spirit <b>Text:</b> John 14: 23-31</p>	<p><b>Theme:</b> The Holy Spirit reminds us of Jesus' words, and gives us peace.</p>
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### Commentary

Today's Gospel is the last of the five Gospels from Jesus' farewell discourse from the Gospel of John. Pentecost, then, is tied to the previous Gospels, and we get Pentecost correctly when we see it, not as a "new age" of the Holy Spirit, but as a continuation of Jesus' work. It's as if Jesus' farewell discourse spills over from the Easter season into Pentecost, and He remains to oversee this monumental event of the Spirit's coming, lest we run off on our own with the Holy Spirit. Such in fact happens regularly with those doctrines which disconnect the Holy Spirit from Christ's work. Some people, for example, speak of their "spirituality." God, apparently, has an entire regiment of plans, goals, and daily tasks for such

people, and He communicates these plans with them by the Holy Spirit, who whispers quietly in their soul. But is that the work of the Holy Spirit as taught by Jesus?

No. He explains quite clearly what the Holy Spirit will do. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."

Jesus is speaking to the apostles who later (as in the epistle for today) established the Church by the Holy Spirit. We therefore understand the work of the Holy Spirit ecclesiastically, not personally. That means that we do not see the work of the Holy Spirit independently of what He does at Church, which is rooted in the apostolic witness. What things do we possess wherein the Holy Spirit "teaches us all things" and "brings to remembrance all things that Jesus said"? They are the apostolic Scriptures (Old and New Testaments) and the Apostolic teaching (the Creeds). They are also the words of Jesus enacted in the consecration of Holy Communion, in Holy Baptism, and in Holy Absolution. They are the words of Jesus that constitute catechesis. All these things were first established by the apostles (Acts 2), and they continue to be done in the Church.

Certainly, what happens first at the Church spills over into our personal lives. For example, based on our catechesis and based on what we hear preached at the divine service, the Holy Spirit applies these things to our daily circumstances. And Holy Communion certainly spills over into our lives as we have "fervent love for one another." However, we really need to be alert to the misapplications of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in our day, when so many people place the focus on their "personal relationship" with God outside of the institution that He established, namely, the Church. We do the doctrine of the Holy Spirit injustice when we disconnect it from Christ and His Church.

Jesus next speaks of the peace He gives us. We find out exactly what this peace is (see commentary on *Quasimodogeniti* above). It is given out after Jesus' resurrection (John 20: 19-23). It is given with the Holy Spirit, and with Him is given the Word of absolution. In other words, we have peace because our sins are forgiven, and we are no longer enemies of God.

Finally, once again Jesus mentions His return to the Father as a reason for our joy. His return to the right hand of the Father is the foundation for the sending of the Holy Spirit, because at the right hand of the Father, His work of salvation and forgiveness has been exalted, approved, and sanctified. The exaltation of our Savior having been complete, our salvation may now be worked out by the Holy Spirit, Who distributes the benefits of Christ's victory through the apostolic ministry. (cf. Ephesians 4: 8-13)

#### ACTIVITIES:

(1) The children may color the dove and flames on page 56 and color in the word "Pentecost." Have them count the flames to underscore that the Church is "apostolic" and remind them of last week's theme. The 12 flames represent the 12 apostles.

(2) **Activity: The Pentecost Booklet**

In the activities book are six pictures and the masters for a booklet. The children will cut out the pictures and place them at the appropriate page. Here is the order: (1) Easter night, Jesus appeared to His disciples. (2) A week after Easter, Jesus appeared to Thomas. (3) 40 days after Easter, Jesus ascended into heaven. (4) At the right hand of God, Jesus gave out the Holy Spirit. (5) 50 days after Easter, the Holy Spirit comes to the disciples. (6) After the Holy Spirit came, St. Peter preached to the people. The children should finish out the phrases on each page as given by the teacher. If they cannot write, the teacher may have to write in these words before the class.

(3) **Liturgical Spotlight: We All Confess the Holy Ghost**

In the storybook is the third verse of the hymn, "We All Believe in One True God." If possible, learn this rather difficult hymn and sing it for the children, or have a pianist play it for them. Have them learn bits and pieces of it over the next few weeks. Teach the different phrases of the verse through the pictures associated with each phrase. This hymn wonderfully teaches about the work of the Holy Spirit.

(4) **Liturgical Year Review**

Begin repeating the chronology of Jesus' life in this highly important time of the Church Year:

- |                    |   |
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| 6. Pentecost       | Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to give forgiveness, life, and salvation. |

#### Suggestions

1. Review the third article of the Apostles' Creed from the Small Catechism. Relate parts of this article with the Gospel and with the hymn in the activity.
2. Emphasize that the Holy Spirit is best discerned by a sound, not by a sight or a feeling. That sound is the Word of

God, specifically the Word of forgiveness or the Word of the Gospel.