

# We Belong to God

Year 1

**Please note:** this file is an archived version of what we had posted on the old website (with a few formatting changes).

## **Theme 1: Welcome!** (*Guide pages 42 - 49*)

### **Aims:**

- To help the children become aware that they are welcome in the group
- To create a sense of belonging to the group through shared experiences

**For the Catechist:** It is important to establish the sense of belonging to this circle of friends who will be sharing a variety of experiences this year. Gathering in a circle is a symbol that will often be used as they discover the sense of belonging to God and to the whole Christian Community. In this first theme concentrate on everyone's belonging to the group and identifying each other there.

Reflect for yourself on the feeling of being a stranger in a group. There are various actions we do to welcome strangers and make them feel part of the group, smiles, greetings, gestures, name identification, sharing food, etc. You will want to welcome the children so that each feels they are in a warm, safe place where they belong. Isn't that what we in the Church want everyone to feel? As a catechist, you get this special opportunity to share that welcoming experience with these little ones.

**Preparations:** Make a copy of the words of Song #2 as a welcome poster with the words: "Hello, Hello. I'm glad you are here. Hello, hello. It's great to have you near." Make another round poster with the word "Welcome" in large letters with enough space for their name tags, (and a self portrait or next theme). Make round name tags with one child's name printed on each. Your parish should also provide a small notepad for each child.

**Come and Gather:** Have the song playing in the background as the children arrive. Greet each child and direct them to gather into a circle with you around the "Welcome" poster with their names placed randomly around the word. Begin with a brief focussing prayer such as "Let us begin now 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen' without discussion. Chat with them briefly about how nice it is to gather on this occasion and how you look forward to everyone getting to know this new circle of friends. Take a picture frame to pass around so each person can hold it in front and say "Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_ and I like to \_\_\_\_". Then have them get their names from the circle, decorate them, and paste them around the word "Welcome" to make a display for your gathering space. Sing part of the song together using the words on the poster.

**Come and Listen:** Share the story from your guide pages 46 - 47. Discuss how Anne felt and if they ever felt like that. Compare to their feelings in your group and how you all can help everyone feel safe and belonging.

**Come and Do:** Give each a small notepad which will become their "Belonging Book" for the year. Explain that they will gather memories in it throughout the year. Have each draw a memory of today's gathering.

**Come and Go:** Have each child share their artwork briefly. Discuss all the experiences they have had that show how important each is to this circle of friends. Invite them all to come every day to continue to grow as a circle of friends. Present each with their "We Belong to God" books with words like, " (Child's name), take this 'We Belong to God' book. It is yours to treasure and enjoy all year." Discuss pages 6 & 7. Look at and read the Remember, "We welcome each other as friends." Have several take turns repeating the Remember verse. Invite them to take home their Belonging books and their We Belong to God books to share with family. Close with "Let us go in peace and Remember ,We welcome each other as friends" and make the Sign of the Cross.

- If you intend to invite parents for Theme 3, send invitation (Blackline #5) home today.

## **Theme 2: We Belong** (*Guide pages 50 - 55*)

### **Aims:**

- To express belonging to one another
- To grow in awareness of belonging to family and friends

**For the Catechist:** In this theme the children will deepen their sense of wonder about themselves and deepen the sense of belonging by relating it to their belonging in family. Belonging is a gift we receive by being received and becoming bonded as to family, to friends, and to God.. Belonging gives us an identity and a source of life. When we belong, we become more open to each other and to God. This belonging is basic to our belonging to Christ as is celebrated in Baptism, "making us members of the Body of Christ". We belong to Christ; we belong to and with each other in the Christian Community. Without talking about God, continue to develop the sense of belonging.

**Preparations:** You will need a piece of oval-shaped paper for each child. Also a stamp ink pad or some paint and a dish with several layers of paper towels to make a pad to make thumb prints.

**Come and Gather:** ‘Let us begin In the Name of the ..."Sing together Song #2 "Hello. Hello. Pass around a hand mirror and invite each to express what they see in the mirror, comparing facial features. Give each a small oval shape piece of paper and invite each to do a self portrait. Discuss. Add these to the name poster from last theme.

**Come and Listen:** Tell or read a story about a family. Maybe you could use the story of baby, Lillian O'Connor, who was born in March with a defective heart and needed a new heart by transplant. Their parents live in Stratford and work in Charlottetown. The family spent five months in Toronto while baby Lillian was cared for in the Sick Children's Hospital. Finally another little sick baby died and the doctors were able to transplant that baby's heart into Lillian so she can live. Friends of the family sent many donations and did many kind acts to support the family until they were all able to return to their home in August. We are all hoping and praying that Lillian will continue to grow and have a happy, healthy life.

**Discuss the story:** Who was in the family? Where do they live? What do they do together? Who is in their circle of friends? What hopes does the family have? Help the children to think about similarities and differences in families, but how important it is to belong to a family. Discuss their own families and their hopes for their families.

**Come and Do:** In the Belonging Books, have each make a thumb print family. Use a thumb print for each family member. Decorate each one. Listen to Verse one of Song #4 "I Belong" while working. Its words are "I belong, I belong. I know that I belong. I will sing this special song. ‘Cause I know that I belong. At home I have a family. People who care for me. I feel glad and I feel free ‘Cause I know that I belong."

**Come and Go:** Gather in your circle and talk again about friends and family and the things they do together such as work and play and care for each other. Have the children name signs of their belonging to families.

Look at and discuss the pictures and ideas on pages 8 and 9 in their books "We Belong to God." Practise the Remember verse. Listen to and dance around to Song #3 "Circle of Friends." Close with the blessing, "Go in peace and Remember "It is good to belong to a circle of friends and we do belong in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen"

- Remind the children to take home both books to share what you have done together with their families.

### **Theme 3: We Celebrate** (Guide pages 56 - 63)

#### **Aims:**

- To celebrate our belonging with family and friends

**For the Catechist:** A celebration of an event is to express our joy over something that has happened. The celebration intensifies the initial experience and increases our appreciation and joy. We celebrate special events and occasions and we realize that these are given to us as pure gift rather than of our own creation. In this theme you will celebrate the belonging of these young people in families and as a group. Christians call their celebrations "liturgy," which originally meant a public work or service on behalf of the people. In the New Testament, liturgy is not only divine worship, but also service of God and neighbour. This theme is suggested to be divided into a planning session and later at a different time to hold the celebration. I suggest most parish catechists will not do this. Therefore I suggest that you send the invitations to parents on your first gathering (Theme 1), and request an RSVP on your second gathering (Theme 2), so you can plan activities for this theme considering if there will be parents present. If most can come, I suggest you make a special effort to get all to come so that each child has accompanying family. Enjoy your celebration!

**Preparations:** Prepare materials for Come and Do activities. Other suggestions are provided in your Guide.

**Come and Gather:** Begin with usual opening, "Let us begin in the name of the Father..." Explain that today is a special gathering to celebrate belonging, belonging in families and belonging in this particular group. Ask them to briefly tell about some celebrations they have experienced. (birthdays, Baptisms, anniversaries, coming home, going away, marriages, etc.) Make a little list of things people do at celebrations. (Telling stories, singing, playing games, eating)

**Come and Listen:** Begin the storytelling section by spending some time savouring memories of your first two weeks together, recalling meeting new friends, sharing stories, remember Anne and Lillian, new songs "Hello, Hello" and "I Belong", and entries in your Belonging Books. Listen to Song #4, "I Belong." (Make sure parents share some of their experiences of these weeks of their children's beginning in catechesis, and how their children shared their books at home. Have them join in the songs.)

**Come and Do:** (1) Do a picture puzzle game. (Guide page 61) Cut calendar or magazine pictures in half. Give one half to an adult and the other half to a child. Allow the children to circulate and find their partners. Invite child and adult to introduce themselves and talk about something they like to do at a party. (You could re-distribute these several times to effect more interaction.) (2) Play Musical Knees where each child sit on an adult's knee instead of a chair. (3) If families are present do the Family Crest activity (Guide page 62) using Blackline #6. (4) Enjoy some treats together which hopefully some parents have helped prepare. Ask God to bless your food. (You may want to use Song #15 "Everyone Come and Share.")

**Come and Go:** Look together at pages 10-12 in their books and read over the Remember verse.

Close with a prayer to express gratitude this time together, for the families and for your belonging together in this group and then the blessing "Go in peace and remember to celebrate is to be happy with others."

## **Theme 9: I Am The Good Shepherd** (*Guide pages 106 - 111*)

### **Aims:**

- To deepen the children's appreciation of God
- To recognize God and Jesus in the image of the Good Shepherd

**For the Catechist:** Following the Christmas stories of Jesus' birth we are aware that Jesus gradually becomes revealed to the people as God. The Bible often describes God as a shepherd and Jesus describes himself as a shepherd just as he describes God as shepherd. A shepherd will suffer many hardships in order to protect his sheep.

We cannot name or accurately describe God, but we try by describing certain qualities which we can just imagine what God is like and compare God to images we can comprehend. As we come to know Jesus, we come to know God.

**Come and Gather:** Have the children close their eyes and imagine what God is like. Invite each to share what pictures come to mind when they think of God by a phrase beginning with "God is like..."

**Come and Listen:** The Bible contains stories which help us to understand what God is like. You will share three short stories to illustrate some of these. First is a retelling of the story of David and how he pictured God: Read first story on Guide page 109. The song David wrote starts like this: "The Lord is my shepherd; There is nothing I shall want..." Discuss this story reminding the children that shepherds were a common occupation of people in the time when Jesus lived so everyone would know about the work they did and care they gave the sheep. Explain that Jesus told a story about a shepherd. Then read the parable of the Lost sheep (Luke 15:4-6).

After discussing this story, explain that the next story tells a story about Jesus being a good shepherd. (John 10:2-5, 11, 14-16) Discuss the details.

**Come and Do:** Listen to and learn the song #10, "I will Follow the Good Shepherd." It should be fun for the children to dramatize the story with different ones being the shepherd gathering the sheep, calling them by names, going on ahead with the sheep following, and searching when one gets lost and bringing that one back to the fold.

**Come and Go:** Discuss how we follow the Good Shepherd and how sometimes we are shepherds in how we care for others. Discuss the pictures on pages 28 - 30. Read the text provided. Invite the children to bring their books home and share these stories with family members. Maybe they would like to draw a picture about the shepherd stories in their individual belonging books. Close with the blessing: 'Go in peace and Remember Jesus said "I am the Good Shepherd."

## Theme 13: God is with us

### Aims:

- To savour the Christmas story
- To enter into Epiphany

**For the Catechists:** reflect on how we understand that God chose to be with us in our humanity and that everyone is invited to belong to God's people (Use Guide pp 138-143) Epiphany means revealing..God is revealed in the person of Jesus at this time in four scripture stories: the birth of Jesus, the Magi story, Jesus' baptism, and the wedding feast of Cana. God's love for us has brought God intimately close to us in the very human person of Jesus.

**Come and Gather:** Darken your space as much as possible. Greet children and have them gather in a circle around the prayer table which has the Bible, a large candle, a creche with the baby Jesus present. Music in background #13 if you have it. Maybe you can hum parts of it to set the mood. Do the guided imagery from guide pages 140-141. Discuss the children's impressions and feelings of the imagery. Notice presence of Jesus in creche if you had done preparations before Christmas where the baby Jesus was still not present at the birth which is what we celebrated at Christmas. This is why in Advent we prepare for, while at Christmas we celebrate! Connect also the presence of the lighted candle.

**Come and Listen:** Light some incense, have some oil, and a treasure box containing a suitable number of stars and an Epiphany star to be put on the table. Read from the Bible Matthew 2:1-12. Do a "Ring around this story with references to the star, oil, incense, and treasure chest. If you had no stars from an earlier theme you may want to have a few prepared with simple hopes and wishes written on them or just give each child a star and ask him/her to think of their wish on that star to share. Share their wishes and say an informal prayer...*(bottom of page 141)*

**Come and Do:** (Role play??) or have children draw their own impressions of the Magi story in their Belonging Books (notepads).

**Come and Go:** Holding their stars, move in a circle to verses 4, 5, and / or 6 of Walking towards Christmas #11. Close with a Blessing "Go in peace and remember "Glory to God in the highest and peace to God's people on earth. (R) Thanks be to God

**Home Connection:** Invite children to share their stars and wishes at home and pages 40-41 of Books, and their drawings.

## Theme 14: God Takes Care of Us

### Aims:

- To explore experiences of caring
- To recognize how God cares for us

**For the Catechist:** For young children the experience of being cared for by a parental figure is central to their identity and sense of security in life. While it is true that some children have not experienced enough care, the basic human need to be parented is not diminished by negative experiences. We want to share the gospel message with the children that God cares for them and provides for them because they belong to God. All of creation is gift; we are surrounded by God's gifts. Jesus shares the good news of how much God loves and cares for us, and when God's kingdom is fully realized there will be no more want. The gospel stories of the Wedding Feast of Cana, the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes and the miracle stories express the abundance of God's love for us. They tell of God's desire for us to enjoy the abundance of gifts available to all living beings.

**Come and Gather:** Discuss how you and the children care for others in your daily lives. List some of these on chart paper. Examples include doing chores at home, visiting the sick or lonely, sharing belongings, taking turns, etc.

**Come and Listen:** Explain that you will read some Bible stories which express the love that Jesus showed to people who needed some caring and that these stories help us to understand the generous loving care God has for people. Do listening gestures and read the story of how Jesus Healed the Blind Man, Mark 8:22 - 26. Discuss blindness and the gift of sight. Next read Luke 13 : 10-13 on Jesus Healing the Crippled Woman. Discuss Jesus' sharing the gift of healing because that is the state which God wants all people to enjoy. If you can take the time read and discuss Feeding the Five Thousand, in John 6: 1 - 13 when God shows God's desire that no one goes hungry in this world.

**Come and Do:** Share in your discussion that when Jesus responded to the blind man, the crippled woman and the hungry people he was sharing God's love with those people. We also show God's love whenever we do kind and caring acts towards other people. Make a poster called "God Cares for us" using the children's drawings or cut out magazine pictures showing caring actions.

**Come and Go:** Discuss the pictures on pages 42 - 43 of their text books. Have them draw a picture of themselves showing God's love to another by some caring act they have done. Share these within the group and invite them to bring home their books and drawings to share with family members. Close with a prayer to thank God for Jesus who helps us to feel God's loving care and for all those who share God's care for us and ask God to help us to always act towards others in ways that they will see how much God loves them. "Go in Peace and remember that Jesus shows that God cares for us." Encourage the children's response, "Thanks be to God."

## **Theme 15: God Takes Care of the World** *(Guide pages 154 - 161)*

### **Aims:**

- To express wonder, praise and thanks for God as creator
- To explore all of creation as a gift from God

**For the Catechist:** Do you have a reverence for all of life? Take time to be aware of the wonder in each gift of the earth. Praise God for such intricate details of creation. In the Book of Genesis, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves over the earth."(1:28) People have exploited the earth. We are in the process of sharing the message to mean that people have a serious responsibility to help create order, justice and peace within creation. We have been given this gift of earth to protect, preserve, and care for. We have the great vocation to be God's agent in the ongoing care of creation. It is as if earth pleads "Watch over the work of God's hands."

**Come and Gather:** Use a world map or globe if you have one. Discuss where you live and how it is in one small part of earth. Go on to discussing the four elements of earth, air, fire and water. These are common elements which are connected to each other and shared by all as the gifts of creation. What happens in one part affects the other elements. Give praise to God for the earth using Song #16 or use the words in rhyming praise, "God made this beautiful world for us, Because God loves us so. In it we can dance and play, And praise God as we grow."

**Come and Listen:** Read the Story of Creation using the text from your Guide pages 157 - 158. Share their feelings, thoughts, and questions about the story.

**Come and Do:** Make an earth collage. Have a large circle drawn on poster paper. Have a second one already cut out of paper the same size or a little smaller. Cut the paper circle into six sections. Divide the children into six groups. Give each group one section of paper to draw or glue on pictures of one of the following: flowers, animals, items to recycle, ways to conserve energy, stars to wish on with wishes, rainbows to keep the earth bright and beautiful. Glue the sections on the first circle to make the Earth collage.

**Come and Go:** Talk about ways the earth is hurting and ways we can help. Put all of this discussion into prayer. Look also at pages 44 - 46 to end with songs of praise for creation. Encourage the children to take their books home and discuss this material with family members. Close with "Go in peace, and remember God made the earth." Encourage the children's response, "Thanks be to God!"

## Theme 16: God Calls Us By Name

### Aims:

- To discover how and why our names are so important
- To appreciate that God loves us and calls us by name

**For the Catechist:** How we use names is so important. When we are called by name we are affirmed. It recognizes that we belong. To speak a child's name values that child who needs to feel secure and surrounded by love. God knows each of us by name, loves us, and calls us to life. We are empowered by the use of our names. Think of the power of the name of Jesus, "For there is no other name...by which we have been saved."(Acts 4:12) The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that our Baptism is conferred "in the name of" God: Father, Son and Spirit. When called upon, the name of God sanctifies us. We receive our name at Baptism. An intense relationship exists between God and the Christian. A name demands respect as a sign of the dignity of the one who bears that name. Names are sacred.

**Come and Gather:** Listen to the song #1, "What's Your Name?" Talk about the song and about how important names are. Talk about times someone might have been timid, lost, afraid and the strength one gets by someone's speaking your name. How important we feel when new friends remember our names or when we hear our name called out in a crowd? Winning a draw?

**Come and Listen:** Read the Annunciation story (Luke 1: 30 - 33) Listen to the song #12 "Mary of Nazareth". Discuss the name Jesus and its emphasis and meaning. Then explain that the Bible tells us something about our names. In the Bible God says to us, (Read Isaiah 43:1) Discuss the passage. Invite them to close their eyes and whisper their own names and remember that God loves them and knows them by name.

**Come and Do:** Do some fun role plays of different ways they may have heard their names called by others noticing tone of voice, facial expression, posture, use of nicknames or use of full names. Give examples and have the children guess the circumstances. Discuss how they may call the names of others in various circumstances. Have a guessing game of the circumstances.

Have the children draw a picture in their individual books of someone special they like to hear call their name. Share these. Emphasize about how this use of names shows belonging...these people belong to us and we belong to them.

**Come and Go:** Look at and discuss the pictures in their text books pages 48 - 49. Encourage them to take their books home and discuss the theme with family members. Talk about the names of the family members and what the names mean and why the names are important. Close with a little ritual of blessing each child by extending your hand over the child and saying, "(Name\_\_\_, go in peace and remember God loves you and calls you by name." Encourage each to respond, "Thanks be to God." Invite someone to give you the same blessing.

## Theme 17: Jesus Shows Us How To Talk To God

### Aims:

- To come to know Jesus' image of God
- To learn to pray the Our Father

**For the Catechist:** Previously you and the children have discussed many images of God.. Jesus' strongest image of God is "Abba" which is Jesus' personal intimate image of God as a Father. Jesus taught his followers to pray the Our Father which is the prayer of the Christian Community. In prayer we talk to God with words, gestures, thoughts, images, and even in silence. It is important that the children learn to talk to God in their own informal ways and to learn prayers of the community so they can join with family and friends in prayer. Praying together in common prayer deepens our sense of belonging to community. Jesus spoke of " my father" and when we unite ourselves with Jesus we call God "our Father." Luke shows Jesus praying before the major moments of his life. His friends noticed this and asked Jesus to teach them to pray. He did teach them the Our Father, but he also told them they did not need many words, "Your father knows what you need before you ask him."

**Come and Gather:** Ask the children to think of an older person to whom they belong in a special way. Ask them to close their eyes and imagine being with that person, how they talk, what they do, how they feel, what does that special person call them, and what special name they call their special person? Think about dads in their lives (or moms if someone has no dad present in their lives) and discuss their relationships with their dads (or moms if necessary). Connect this with the idea that Jesus had a special name for God. When Jesus talked of God, he used a special name that showed they belonged together. He called God "father" in his own Aramaic language which was "Abba." Jesus knew God so well and loved God, he called God Abba. And Jesus tells us "My Father is your father too."

**Come and Listen:** Explain that Jesus talked to God in many ways. Sometimes he talked to God out loud and he used his body like we do such as standing, kneeling, and sitting. When Jesus was in the temple or synagogue which is a place of worship like our church, he would stand and pray out loud with the other people there. Sometimes he went into the desert, or up into the mountain or to a quiet spot by himself to pray. Explain that you are going to read from the book of God's word that tells how Jesus teaches his friends to talk to God. Read Luke 11: 1 - 4. Take some time to learn the Our Father using similar gestures as in your guide page 173. Have the nine prayer parts prepared on chart paper (those on the left side below). Do a matching activity by reading different explanations as given in pink print in your guide (on the right below) and have the children match each to the part of the prayer.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 Our Father, Who art in heaven                               | 1. We are speaking to God as Jesus did       |
| 2. hallowed be thy name                                       | 2. God's name is very special to us          |
| 3. thy kingdom come   | 3. We want everyone to know about God        |
| 4. thy will be done on earth                                  | 4. We ask God to help everyone to live right |
| 5. as it is in heaven   | 5. This is wherever God is                   |
| 6. Give us this day our daily bread                           | 6. We ask God to give us what we need        |
| 7. and forgive us our trespasses                              | 7. Forgive us when we go wrong               |
| 8. as we forgive those who trespass against us                | 8. We promise to forgive those who hurt us   |
| 9. and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. | 9. Protect us from what is bad               |

**Come and Do:** Give each child a copy of Master #14 the "Our Father" to decorate. Discuss what part is their favourite part of the prayer, maybe colour it a special colour.

**Come and Go:** Gather into your prayer circle and pray together the Our Father. Remind them that this is often called the Lord's Prayer also. Now remind the children that Jesus talked to God in other ways too just like talking to a father. Invite each to talk to God about something in their own words. Model some examples from your personal life. Close with "Go in peace and remember Jesus called God Abba / Father" and encourage the response "Thanks be to God."

Encourage the children to take home their books to share pages 52 - 54 with family members and to bring home their copy of the Our Father to pray together and as a gift for their family.

## **Theme 18: Jesus invites Us To A Meal** (*Guide pages 178 - 185*)

### **Aims:**

- To experience meals as an expression of belonging
- To discover how Jesus included everyone

**For the Catechist:** Imagine a banquet table around which God will gather all people. This is an image from Isaiah 25:6 "On this mountain The Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear." Do you believe in this grand plan of God's will? In Ephesians this plan is proclaimed again saying that the plan is revealed in Jesus who gathers all peoples together. Lent is beginning and will be incorporated into these next themes. Change the cloth in your prayer centre to purple and remove flowers or colourful decorations.

**Come and Gather:** Gather the children and say the Our Father together. Repeat the words, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" and ask them if they remember what it means. It means we want everyone to be happy. Have the Bible available and tell the children that you want to tell them a story about a great prophet, Isaiah. Read material from bottom page 180 in your guide and discuss what it would be like to have such a feast with God, why would God want such a feast, and what kinds of feasts they like.

**Come and Listen:** Using your story shawl and with the Bible in hand, share the story of the feeding of the five thousand (Page 181 in your Guide). Discuss story details and their thoughts about the story. Who came to the feast with Jesus? How did they get invited? What table was used? Was anyone left out? Listen to Song #14 refrain and verse two of "God Cares".

**Come and Do:** Connecting the two stories of Isaiah's image of God's feast and the Feast with Jesus with the five thousand, notice that everyone was welcomed.

Imagine if they were preparing a feast. Who would be invited? Where would it be held? How would it be set up? What foods would they have? Have each child draw an image in their individual books of a feast they would plan. Listen to Song #15 "Everybody come and share." Have the children share their drawings telling the who, where, what, how of their feast. Remind them that God wants to gather all people, that no one is excluded in God's plan.

**Come and Go:** Gather the children and have a short discussion about Lent and what they already know. Remind them that it is a time to quietly think, pray, and help others in preparation for Easter when we celebrate God's great love for us and that God is the giver of all life. Each week something new will be added in getting ready for Easter. Today add a purple cloth because purple is the colour for the Lenten season which they will see in church. Look at the pictures on pages 56 - 57 of their books to see some ways and things children do during Lent. Say the little prayer, "Dear God, be with us during this season of Lent. Help us to love and to share more." Encourage the children to share these pictures and their drawings at home with family members and to think about Lent as a preparation time just like a preparation time for a great feast. Close with the blessing: "Go in peace and remember God has no favourites."

## **Theme 19: Jesus invites us to love others as he loves us**

### **Aims:**

- To reflect on ways Jesus shows his love for us
- To hear and respond to Jesus' invitation to love as he loved

**For the Catechist:** God wants to gather everyone. God wants to invite us to a feast where no one is excluded. Jesus gave food to all five thousand. For God's will to be done, people have to show by their actions what God wants for all people. Matthew's account of the Last Judgement is not meant to frighten us, but to help us understand compassion. God's vision is a world with no hunger, thirst, sickness, loneliness, or poverty. A compassionate God needs a compassionate people.

**Come and Gather:** Ask the children if they remember the stories where Jesus shows how God cares for us and welcomes us. Some they have done in precious themes are Jesus blesses the little children, the Good Samaritan, the parable of the lost sheep, Psalm 23, the Annunciation story, the feeding of the five thousand.

**Come and Listen:** You may have a caregiver as a guest to talk with the children about their work. If not you should be prepared to tell them a story of someone who provides care for other people either at a nursing home or elder family members at home. Be detailed about the care required and the demands for time and energy but also gentleness and devotion, love and respect.

**Come and Do:** Spend some time listing ways they can show caring for others. Invite each to select one of these ways they can show care. Have each plan a little mime (act it out silently) to show the way they will care for another. Let the others react and express their thoughts and feelings. (You may rather have them draw a picture in their individual books)

**Come and Go:** Connect the children with the fact that this is the season of Lent when we are asked in a special way to be caring about others. Is there an action that your group could put into effect together? Look at the pictures in their books pages 58 - 59 which show caring for others. Offer some prayers for those people mentioned in your list of ways to show caring. Close with the blessing, "Go in peace and remember Jesus invites us to love others as he loves us ." Remind the children to share this theme pictures and activities with family members at home.

## **Theme 20: God Wants a World of Friends** (*Guide pages 194 - 201*)

### **Aims:**

- To reflect on how difficult it is to love one another
- To see Jesus as someone who accepts us and invites us to become more loving people

**For the Catechist:** In Lent we are encouraged to repair broken relationships and become closer friends with Jesus and with others. Zacchaeus was someone that others found difficult to accept, but Jesus recognized the heart of Zacchaeus and invited him to share a meal together, the greatest experience of a friendship. Zacchaeus changed his way of life because of his friendship with Jesus. Jesus did not find it difficult to love Zacchaeus. We do have difficulty being friends with others sometimes.

**Come and Gather:** Talk about how friends get along and how they sometimes quarrel. Read "Will You Still Be My Friend?" in guide pages 196 - 197. Discuss the details of the story and what they think Joan's response would likely be.

**Come and Listen:** This is a story about Jesus and a man who became his friend. Proclaim the story of Zacchaeus (Adapted version in Guide pages 197 - 198) Ask Who did Jesus open his circle of friends to in the story? Would the other people have welcomed Zacchaeus? How did Jesus show his kindness? What did Zacchaeus do? What did he show by his actions? Look at the pictures in their books pages 64 - 65.

**Come and Do:** Learn the song and gestures of "Let's Share the Peace" #17. Do the song with gestures in pairs changing partners between each action. Have fun.

Give the children paper and have them draw pictures of some friends including someone they may have difficulty being friends with. Entitle it "Jesus Wants A World Of Friends."

**Come and Go:** Remind the children that we are in Lent and Easter is coming closer. At Easter we celebrate light. Talk about the importance of light. What happens when the sun goes down, when the lights go out. Talk about how we are glad to have light so we can see again. It is like being blind and getting sight. Ask if they remember the story of Jesus healing the blind man and how the blind man thanked Jesus and praised God. If you are doing the Lenten basket add a candle

Close with a prayer thanking God for the gift of light to see that we can be friends to everyone. Thank God for the friends they drew in their pictures and ask them to name some of them. Bless the children with "Go in peace and remember, Jesus wants a world of friends." Encourage them to bring home their books and drawings to share with family members at home.

## **Theme 21: Jesus Invites Us To Forgive** (Guide pages 202 - 207)

### **Aims:**

- To explore the need to receive and give forgiveness
- To see Jesus' life as forgiving

**For the Catechist:** Jesus suggests that the action that will cure the world is reconciliation or forgiveness. Reconciliation is the highly-creative way of relating to people, particularly in times when relationships have broken down. In the gesture of reconciliation, one does not retaliate and one does not perpetuate the pattern that has led to the breakdown. Instead, one acts out of abundant goodness. Reconciliation comes about through acts of extravagant love. The creative acts of love of Jesus (Zacchaeus, his accusers) shows the creative love of God. We also have this power of abundant love to forgive.

**Come and Gather:** Discuss how friends get along most of the time, but then about how sometimes there are conflicts. Share some experiences recognizing that it is not always easy to love others, but how God wants us to try. Share also some experiences of making up and being forgiven and how good that feels. Make note of the words in the "Our Father" "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" when we ask God to forgive us and we promise that we will forgive others and try to be good friends with everyone.

**Come and Listen:** Share the story about the woman who washed the feet of Jesus. Use adapted version from your Guide page 205. Discuss the details of the story and how the different characters felt at different times. How did the woman change? Relate the discussion to always going to Jesus knowing he loves us and will forgive us if we do anything wrong and that Jesus' love can help us to change and help us to make friends again with others if something is hurting or broken down in a relationship with someone we know.

**Come and Do:** Have the children illustrate this story or another story they know about Jesus forgiving someone who had done wrong. Have them share and retell the story about their pictures. Write a caption such as "Jesus forgives so we can forgive."

**Come and Go:** Have a little jar of oil with you. Have they ever had oil rubbed on their bodies? Talk about how we use oil to rub on our skin and keep it soft and healthy. Talk about the oil that the woman used and how it was a sign of the woman's love. Point out the use of oils in our church at Baptism and other sacraments such as for the sick and Confirmation and when a man is ordained a priest. It is also used as a sign of being anointed for being a special person.. Relate the discussion to the Lenten season when the Bishop blesses special oils which are taken back to your parish for the priest to use all year.

Look at the pictures in their books pages 66 & 67 to be sure they know the meaning of the pictures to share with family members at home. Listen to Song #17 "Let's Share the Peace" and close with the blessings, "Go in peace and remember Jesus said 'you are forgiven'" Encourage the response "Thanks be to God."

## **Theme 22: Jesus Gives His Life For Us** (*Guide pages 208 - 215*)

### **Aims:**

- To reflect on what it means to love fully
- To see Jesus' life and death as God's love for us

**For The Catechist:** Reflect on the 'crucial' moment when Jesus was lifted up on the cross. At this moment God has entered with the greatest love for all humans because God has entered into the depths of our sufferings. Of course, we also know the results that God overcomes the depth of human suffering by the new life of the resurrection. We who follow Jesus in our lives know and trust in that love for us as individuals and for all human kind. It is our promise and our hope in a world of "absurdities".

**Come and Gather:** How important that this theme is done on Palm Sunday as it is a brief catechesis of Holy Week. This week Christians around the world celebrate the events that took place during the last few days of Jesus' life. He went into Jerusalem and was greeted by people who were very excited to see Jesus. They waved palm branches and shouted 'Hosanna!' "Praise God!" Then later Jesus gathered with special friends to have a special meal with them because he knew he was going to die. He wanted them to know how much he loved them and he wanted to leave something so they would always remember him. Read from bottom page 210 in your guide. Remind the children that his friends continued to do exactly what Jesus had done. They came together and broke bread to remember Jesus. In doing this they trusted God was with them as was Jesus in the bread and wine. This is why we Christians gather on Sunday. We gather with a priest who takes bread and wine, blesses it, and shares it in communion as a sign of God's presence and friendship.

**Come and Listen:** With a cross made of simple wood or of palms, introduce the events that took place after Jesus had shared his special last meal with his friends. Explain that there were people who did not like what Jesus had to say about God. They thought Jesus made himself too important. They got so angry that they had Jesus arrested and put him to death on a cross. Jesus accepted all the things that happened to him because he knew he had always told the truth about God. He even forgave the people who put him to death. He loved all people even those who hurt him because he knew that was how God his father loved.

The cross has become a sign of how much God loves us. On Good Friday, people will bring a cross into the church and we will kneel or touch the cross and remember that it was by dying on the cross that Jesus showed how much God loves us. Talk also about making the sign of the cross many other times to show that we remember Jesus' love, such as at Baptism, at the beginning of Mass, when giving a blessing, at the water fountain entering church, when we pray, before and after meals, etc.

**Come and Do:** Have the children draw pictures of Jesus with his friends at the last supper or of Christians gathered for the celebration of Eucharist. Share and discuss these.

**Come and Go:** Look at and discuss pictures on pages 68 - 72 in their books. Get the children to line up in two crossing lines to make a cross and be quiet for a time to reflect on Jesus dying on the cross and to thank Jesus for his love for us. Practice the words "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." Close with the blessing, "Go in peace and remember...Jesus died for us." Encourage the response, "Thanks be to God."

Encourage the children to bring home their books and share the pictures and theme ideas with family members. Remind them of the Holy Week parish celebrations.

## **Theme 23: Praise God for New Life** (*Guide pages 218 - 225*)

### **Aims:**

- To celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and his new life
- To reflect on the promise of new life after death

**For the catechist:** Prepare for this theme with a white cloth, flowers, and a banner poster with the word "Alleluia." The Church has celebrated the fullness of the life, death and new life resurrected of our God-made-human, Jesus. We are totally united with God in the promise of new life. May we come to believe and hope in the immeasurable love that is at the heart of life.

**Come and Gather:** Listen to some of the Song #18, "We Have Alleluia!" Discuss the changes around your prayer centre that reflect the Easter season. Discuss their memories of the Easter celebrations in the parish and changes at the church. Introduce the word, "Alleluia" which means "Praise God" as the one who gives new life. We will hear this sung often during the whole Easter season which lasts 50 days until Pentecost. Listen to the rest of the song.

**Come and Listen:** Recall that Jesus died on the cross. Imagine how his followers and friends felt when they knew Jesus had been put to death. They were lonely and afraid. Discuss the children's feeling when they suffer from personal loss. Then prepare them to hear a "Good News!" story from the Bible about one of Jesus' friends called Mary. Read from Guide page 221, the adaptation from John 20: 1 - 18. Discuss the story What did Mary think when she saw the stone moved? How did she feel? What would the others think when she told them? How did Mary know the man who spoke to her was Jesus? What did the others think when she said she had seen Jesus? What do you think they did next? Then explain the rest of the Easter story. Jesus came and stood among the disciples who were gathered there. Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you." How would they feel now? What would they do and say? Explain that God raised Jesus from the dead by giving him new life. We call this the Resurrection. We celebrate this new life at Easter because we believe that God gives us also new and eternal life.

**Come and Do:** Do the Caterpillars and Butterflies Option. Explain that the caterpillars climbs onto a branch or shrub and spins a cocoon around itself. Inside the cocoon it changes and eventually emerges as a butterfly. The new butterfly spreads its wings and flies away to live the new life of a butterfly. Compare to the new life Jesus lives after the resurrection. This is the new life we will all share. Mime the actions of the caterpillar as it spins its cocoon, grows inside and changes and cracks the cocoon open and spreads its wings and then flies away in freedom. Consider the signs of new life in nature at this time of year.

**Come and Go:** Look at the pictures in their books pages 74 - 75. Discuss signs of new life in springtime and connect it to our celebrations of the new life of Easter which is reviewed on pages 76 - 77. Invite the children to take their books home to share these ideas with family members. Invite them to talk with their parents about their Baptism and bring in a memento of their Baptism next week. Close with the blessing, "Go in peace and remember, 'the Lord Jesus is risen' Alleluia!" And encourage the response "Thanks be to God. Alleluia!"

## **Theme 24: We Are Born of the Spirit** (Guide pages 226 - 233)

### **Aims:**

- To deepen appreciation of Baptism
- To become aware of new life through water and the Spirit

**For the Catechist:** We were chosen by God to become God's children through Jesus Christ. Baptism initiated us into life with Christ. When the Church baptizes, Christ baptizes. All our actions in the sacraments are the actions of Jesus. The baptized person is truly adopted as a child of God and welcomed into the Christian community. We share the one Spirit; we are one as brothers and sisters with Jesus.

**Come and Gather:** Explain to the children that before Jesus died he promised his friends that they would always remember all the things that he had said and done. He spoke to them about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would always be with them and help them remember Jesus. The Holy Spirit would help them to become more like Jesus. Jesus said to them, "the Holy Spirit will be with you forever." Listen to what Jesus said... (Read from the Bible) "...The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything. And remind you of all that I have said. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." (John 14: 26 - 27)

Discuss Jesus' promise to his friends. Explain that after Jesus left them, they remembered the story of Jesus and they told others so that it would not be forgotten. The Holy Spirit was with his friends making them more like Jesus. Jesus continues to keep his promise to send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to live with us at our Baptism.

**Come and Listen:** Ask them to share any memories or momentos you may have to help in a discussion of what they know about Baptism. Briefly describe the Baptism ritual: Meeting of parents & godparents & child at the door asking "What name do you give your child? (Importance of name) What do you ask of God's Church for \_\_\_? The priest explains to parents their responsibility to share the stories of Jesus and God and to help the child grow in love of Jesus and God. The priest asks parents if they promise to do that. Then the priest asks the godparents if they promise to help the parents to do those things. The priest tells them that the Christian community welcomes them and he traces a cross on the child's forehead and invites the parents and godparents to do the same. The cross is the special sign of Christians that says we belong to Jesus. Then the Baptism takes place when the priest pours water on the child's head saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Then the priest anoints the child with the special oil called chrism which gives the strength for the child to always live as Jesus did. Now the child begins a new life as a Christian so the child is dressed in a white garment and a candle is presented to the child as a sign that they will always walk as a child of light with God's love alive in their hearts.

**Come and Do:** Invite the children to gather in a circle around a large candle to celebrate and thank God for the gift of Baptism.

Opening prayer: Dear God, you gather us in Jesus' name. We thank you for sending us your Spirit. We light this candle and remember that when we were baptised we received the Holy Spirit who has helped us to remember Jesus and to live like Jesus. (Ask the children to repeat the following Creed after you.). We believe that we are the children of God...(Repeat) We believe in Jesus.(Repeat) We believe we are brothers and sisters in Jesus. (Repeat) We believe in the Holy Spirit who gathers us here today. (Repeat) Then continue, "At our Baptism we were given a candle. Its light reminds us of Christ. We have all received Christ. We give thanks and sing. Listen to some of Song #18, "We Have Alleluia!"

**Come and Go:** Look at the pictures in their books pages 78 - 81 to review Baptism and encourage the children to take their books home and share this theme with family members. Give the closing blessing, "Go in peace and remember 'The Holy Spirit is with us forever.'" Encourage the response, "thanks be to God."