

# In The Spirit We Belong

Year 3

**Please note:** this file is an archived version of what we had posted on the old website (with a few formatting changes).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 begin to create a space where all feel comfortable
- To gather hopes and dreams for the year

**For the Catechist:** This year's catechesis focuses on the activity of the Spirit in our lives and on what it means to belong to the Church. There is an overriding thread running through which is that of gathering in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit gathers a parish together on Sunday to become part of the great assembly of God's people. When we come out of ourselves and become part of the group, love is present, God is present, the Church is experienced and built up. God dwells in the midst of all gathered in love. As a catechist you welcome all as Jesus welcomed everyone. Jesus welcomed every person because he accepted that person as a gift made in the image of God. This is so important as we welcome a great variety of children, each a child of God given as a gift for us to know better.

**Preparations:** Prepare a large paper kite, and pegs (parts of popsicle sticks) with the name of each expected child in a container. Have a note book for each child.

**Gathering:** (Welcome to You) Have a large group kite made of paper, with a string and a tail with a "Welcome" printed on it and space for the children to add their names. Have Song #1 "Song of Gathering" playing as you gather. Welcome each child and invite them to gather in a circle around the kite.. Open with "Let us begin 'In the Name of the Father (Sign of the Cross) Play a "Pick a name" game. Pick a name from a container and give a welcome hug or handshake to the first name drawn. Have that child welcome the next, etc. Teach the refrain and verse 1 of the song, and invite them to sign their names on the group kite which will be put on display in your gathering area.

**Listening:** (Summer Eyes) Chat about the fun of summer and the good feelings it can bring. Explain that they will have an opportunity to journey back to summer to remember their special times. Do the Guided Imagery activity (Option 3) from pages 46 - 47 in your Guide. Draw names to take turns sharing some of their memories.

**Doing:** (Home, Sweet Home) Discuss your gathering space with the children and anything you can do to make it comfortable and welcoming and convenient for your different activities. Discuss and make a brief list of "rules" of behaviours that will help everyone get along and care

for one another during the year. Add an item about attendance. Explain that you promise to prepare for your weekly gatherings, and you will like it if they can promise to be present every time you gather. Lead the discussion into your and their hopes and dreams for this year. Give each a small note book which will be their individual Gathering Books. Invite each to draw a kite on the first page and to write and complete the following sentence: "This year I hope I will..... " and decorate their kites. Have soft background music playing.

**Sending Forth (*Dreaming Ahead*):** Get the children to gather again and invite them to hold tightly to their kites because they are going on a magic kite ride. Use the Guided Imagery from your Guide page 49. Allow some time for them to share their dreams. Present them with their books "In the Spirit We Belong" and look at and discuss pages 6-9 and read the Remember verse and discuss its meaning. Each person is created in the image of God and each person belongs here so they can come to know and understand how God is present in each one and in the group gathered. Close with the blessing, "Go in peace and remember we welcome the image of God in each other, and in our group" and "Let us close in the Name of the Father,...| Invite the children to share their books and pictures at home.

## **Theme 2: Dreaming with God** (*Guide pages 50 - 57*)

### **Aims:**

- To explore our hopes and dreams for the world
- To learn about God's dream of gathering all people into one family

**For the Catechist:** Read and reflect on Isaiah 25.6 and Revelation 7.9. Reflect on these passages to imagine God's dream for the world and how we fit into that dream. The image of feasting with God is similar to what Jesus referred to as the Kingdom of God to which we are invited. In this theme we begin references to a tent, the central symbol of this year's catechesis. The early Hebrews used a place such as a tent, a temple, and a tabernacle as the gathering places where God met with the people and divine oracles were pronounced. Overall these symbolized the desire of God to have a dwelling place with God's people. It is in these places the people especially felt the presence of God. So the symbol of the tent is the place wherein dwells the word of God. The Catechism says, "Christ stands at the heart of this gathering of people..." If we can remember this whenever we gather for catechesis and for Sunday Mass!

**Preparations:** Make a tent to symbolize your group's meeting place wherein you will hear the word. I suggest a simple tent form. Suggestion? Make a large circle out of brown bag paper. Make a cut from the edge to the centre. Overlap the paper to form a cone shape. Tape it. Cut a small opening and fold back the edges of the cut to form an opening to the tent. You may decorate it with a variety of colored designs. Of course, you can be more elaborate if you like. See the children's book pages 12-13. Prepare a large paper circle with a happy face in the centre and one small paper circles for each child. Have a notebook for each as their Individual Gathering Book.

**Gathering:** (Dreams for our world) Begin with the usual opening of "Let us begin & the Sign of the Cross" Recall with the children that in Theme 1 they all shared hopes and dreams they had for themselves for this year. Tell them that today they are going to look at hopes and dreams they have for the world. Teach them the words of Song "Hopes that whisper" to the tune of "Oats and beans and barley grow." with these words: "Dreams are private thoughts of mine, Hopes that whisper in my heart,. Daytime, nighttime dreams are fine. Close your eyes and make a start." Then encourage them to go inside themselves and imagine what they think would make our world a better place. Repeat the song again together and add spoken words, "Can you tell me your dream?" and give each child a chance to share their dreams.

(Images of God's Dream) Share with the children that God also has a dream for the world. Sing the "Hopes that Whisper" song. Ask them to close their eyes, and imagine God's dream for the world. Give each a small paper circle and ask them to draw their images of God's dream. Gather them to share their images and paste them on the large circle around the happy face. Sing the song intermittently and ask "Can you tell me God's dream?"

**Listening:** (God's Dream for Us") Practice the refrain from earlier years to prepare to listen with gestures: "With our ears we listen. With our hearts we remember. And with our lips we want to share good news." From the Bible read Isaiah 26:6. Do a ring around the story: Who prepares

this feast? Who is invited? What is shared? How will the people gathered feel? What does this tell us about God's dream for us? Then read Revelation 7:9. Do Ring Around: How many gathered? Where were they from? Who gathered them? Why? How did they feel? How can you tell?

**Doing:** Give each their Individual Gathering Book and explain that they will use these this year to keep special memories and experiences. Invite them to create a "God's Dream" page using the words of Isaiah 26:6 (repeat this for them.)

**Going Forth:** Look at page 12 in the children's books and discuss the idea of a tent being a place where the people meet God. Present your planned tent and connect with it as being the gathering place where your group will gather to meet God and hear God's word throughout this year. Gather around your tent. Tell the children that in God's dream it is the people who gather there that make the tent so special. You will be gathering each time around your tent. Close with the blessing: Remember, 'God's dream is to gather all people. Let us go in peace and the Sign of the Cross. Remind the children to share these pages in the books and the pictures in their Gathering Book with family members

### **Theme 3: Let's Celebrate!** (Guide pages 58 - 64)

#### **Aims:**

- To prepare for a celebration of gathering
- To gather and celebrate God's Dream for us
- To reflect on the celebration

**For the Catechist:** Our ancestors, the Hebrews, used images of feasts and celebrations, to symbolize the joy of God with God's people. Jesus did the same to symbolize the Kingdom of God. We all know the joy of celebrating where we can forget other things and focus on some special reason for celebration in life. St Chrysostom said, "Where charity radiates its own joy, there we have a feast."

**Preparations:** Have ready a Bible, a candle, a cross, your tent, a green cloth and a table if you wish instead of the floor. Decorate a paper plate with the centre cut out large enough for a child's face, This will be called God's Dream Mask for the ritual. Have a treat prepared.

**Gathering:** (Preparing to celebrate) Gather in a circle which is bare. "Let us begin In the Name of..." Recall that in Theme 2 you learned that God had a dream of gathering all people together. Explain that today you are going to have a little celebration because that dream is being fulfilled when your group is gathered here as God's people. For a celebration you have to prepare: talk about the gathering space... How you will decorate it with the green cloth because this is called the Ordinary time in our Church. You will need a Bible because it is the Book from which we read the stories about God and God's people. In the Old Testament we read about before the time of Jesus (eg about Moses) and the New Testament where we read about the life of Jesus. The candles because whenever we listen to the word of God, we light a candle to remind us that God wants to be the light of our lives. The cross because it is the symbol of all Christians since first traced on our foreheads at Baptism. Plan the "Song of Gathering" for the gathering and closing. Plan a reader for first reading, "Isaiah 25:6" Plan a Gospel Acclamation No. 4. Tell them you have a special story about a feast Jesus held from the New Testament. Plan the ritual using the God's Dream Mask. Have one child assigned to begin by taking the Mask and saying, "Lift up your hearts" practice response "We lift them up to the Lord" Let us give thanks to God for \_\_\_\_\_. The mask is passed to others to say "Let us give thanks for \_\_\_\_" Close with the Our Father and one child taking the mask proclaiming, "God invites us all to a great banquet of love."

**Celebrating:** Prepare the space by one child spreading the cloth, another placing the Bible, another the candle, another the cross, another the tent. Everyone gather in a circle. Light the candle. Sing (play) a verse of Song of Gathering. Greeting (Catechist) "The Lord be with you" Response "And also with you" "Today we have come to celebrate God's dream for us" "Let us bow our heads in prayer." (Silence) 'Dear God, your dream for us is that we come together as brothers and sisters to listen to your word. Open our hearts to hear your word." Child Reader proclaims Isaiah 25:6. Stand for Gospel Acclamation. Catechist proclaims Mark 6:30 - 43. A few moments' silence. Child begins ritual action with God's Dream Mask. Join hands and pray the Our Father. Child proclaims closing words. All respond "Amen" Another verse of Song of Gathering. Enjoy some treats.

**Remembering the Celebration:** Invite the children to gather and share what they enjoyed about the celebration. Draw in their Gathering Books if there is time. Look at and discuss pictures in children's books pages 14 - 16. Close with blessing yourselves and the Remember verse "Remember God invites everyone to gather at the great banquet of love." Remind the children to share books, pictures and experiences at home.

## **Theme 13: God Dwells Among Us** (*Guide pages 154 - 161*)

### **Aims:**

- To explore the mystery of Christmas
- To celebrate God's dwelling among us

**For the catechist:** God's dream of gathering a people has moved to fulfillment in the birth of Jesus, God is personally present among people. God's Word is flesh and lives among us. Jesus is the anointed one, the Messiah. Jesus is filled with God's Spirit. The Spirit is among us that we shall become part of God's holy people. God has taken up a dwelling place among us. Jesus is "light" which shows us the way to God.

***Christmas Wonder:*** Have a set of Christmas bulbs wrapped in a box. Let the children guess its contents. Provide some clues. Finally unwrap the box. Have the empty string of lights draped around the creche. Have each child pick a lightbulb and remind them that lights are warm when lighted and these are to remind them of warm memories of their Christmas celebrations. As they share their memories, have them screw the light bulbs into the string. Plug in the string and remind them that their memories are lit up. Connect with the creche and the Christ child who comes again at Christmas to light up our lives and help us come close to God. Talk again about all the lights and activities of Christmas eventually and frequently focussing on the gift of Jesus being at the heart of Christmas. Play, listen to, sing verse 4 of "Gentle Spirit, Gentle Dove" #14.

***Christmas Light:*** Gather around the Christmas lights and creche. Listen to the Christmas story from Luke 2:3-20. Have a discussion about the story. Then suggest another story about someone coming to find out about the birth of Jesus. Read the Magi story from Matthew 2:1-13.

Discuss the good news this was to these visitors. They were the first to hear the good news of the birth of Jesus. We continue to hear and celebrate this good news.

***Gathered in Love:*** Listen to verse 5 of song #14. As in Advent you made figures of Isaiah, Mary, and Joseph, now it is time to make new figures. If possible, make enough clay dough for each child to make a clay figure of themselves. Otherwise have each make a figure on paper about 10 cm square and fold it and tape it to stand. As they are doing this ask them to think of one activity they can do to show love for someone. This is something between them and God. As God shows love for us and dwells among us, we share that same love with others.

***Celebrating God's Spirit of Epiphany:*** Have a small procession with each child carrying their figure around and to the Prayer Center. Have the large Christ candle lighted. Song of Gathering #1. Proclaim Matthew 2:1-13. Remove the Advent wreath from around the Christ candle.

Model placing your own figure beside the Christ candle with words like, "We remember that God has pitched a tent and dwells among us. We give thanks for God's Spirit." All respond, "Thanks be to God." Have all children place their figures in a circle around the candle. Closing ritual prayer: Invite the children to bow their heads in prayer, praying, "Dear God, during this

time of Epiphany, help us to celebrate the coming of Jesus, your Word in our lives today." Conclude with "Tell the World" #9 or a verse of "Go Tell it on the Mountain."

**Home connection:** Share pictures of pages 56-57 at home with parents and share what you did together today. Make a copy of Blackline Master #13 for each to take home and colour and make stand up models of the Three Kings.

## **Theme 14: The Holy Spirit Fills Jesus with God's Power** (*Guide pages 162 - 169*)

### **Aims:**

- To recognize how the Holy Spirit fills Jesus with the power of God
- To learn about God's dream in the words and actions of Jesus

**For the Catechist:** Many scripture passages tell us that the Spirit is with Jesus...at his Baptism, into the desert, in the temple in Nazareth. The Spirit helps Jesus accomplish the work of God. In the Nicene Creed we profess the Holy Spirit is "the Lord and giver of life." It was the Spirit that hovered at creation and brought order to the chaos, with which prophets and kings were anointed to lead the people, who overshadowed Mary. The Spirit dominates and enriches all of life.

The Spirit is the force and power hidden in all things. "Send forth your Spirit and they are created; and you shall renew the face of the earth." All things are possible through the power of the Spirit.

**Gathering:** The Holy Spirit fills Jesus with God's power. Be prepared to share the ideas about Jesus before and during his Baptism (Guide page 164). Discuss the details. Look at the pictures on page 58 and discuss Jesus' baptism and reread Mark 1:9 - 11. Imagine what Jesus was thinking. Close your eyes and imagine the scene. Share some images.

**Listening:** What does God ask of us? Now you want to share a story of what happened to Jesus after he was baptized. Read Matthew 4: 1 - 11. Discuss the details of Jesus' temptations and how Jesus responded to each. Emphasize that the Spirit helped Jesus overcome these temptations in very human ways. This shows us that God's dream is that all people will choose to trust in the Spirit and will always be able to do God's will even in difficult times and situations. What are some ways they or their family or friends acted courageously to do what is right in ordinary or difficult situations?

**Doing:** Jesus reveals God's dream. After Jesus came out of the wilderness, he was filled with the Spirit. Then he returned to his hometown of Nazareth. This is how Luke describes what happened. Read Luke 4: 16 - 21. Discuss details of the story: whose story? what was Isaiah's vision? What did the Spirit anoint the prophet to do? What did Jesus say after he read from Isaiah? Discuss God's dream of a people who care and share and live peacefully. How did Jesus

make God's dream come true? Jesus called God's dream the Kingdom of God."Look at pictures page 59. What is the "Kingdom of God" like? Look at pictures pages 60 - 61.

**Going Forth:** The Spirit is upon us Review the progress of the Spirit moving Jesus from Baptism, out of the desert, to the temple and into his public life. Listen to and learn some of the song #15, "The Spirit is upon me." Close with the blessing, "Go in peace and remember the Holy Spirit descended like a dove upon Jesus. May the Spirit help us all to live good lives in the Kingdom of God."

## **Theme 15: The Holy Spirit Works in Jesus**

### **Aims:**

- To explore the dream of God
- To see the Holy Spirit at work in Jesus

**For the Catechist:** John the Baptist had a most interesting role: he knew he was to announce the coming of the messiah, but he did not know for sure if Jesus was the Messiah. He sent his disciples to ask Jesus outright if he was the Messiah. Jesus directs the disciples to tell John the Baptist the things they have seen and heard. Obviously the things that are happening announce the presence of the Messiah. John's baptism with water was an urgent appeal for the people to repent and turn to God, but John knew someone with a more powerful message would baptize with the Spirit. However this Spirit was not full of wrath as John had expected but was making peace, healing, inviting, loving...a new Spirit was at work.

**Gathering:** Surprise! Talk about surprises. Tell about a time you were surprised and have the children share a surprise they have experienced. Explain that in today's story John the Baptist would be surprised. Read the introduction from your Guide page 173 and then from the Bible Matthew 11: 2 - 5. Discuss details of the story and the children's thoughts and feelings. How was John surprised? How did his idea of God differ from the God of Jesus? What did the God of Jesus do? How is the Spirit at work in Jesus?

**Listening:** Talk about the pain of sickness and injuries. Then read the story about Jesus curing a sick boy, from John 4: 46b - 53. Discuss the story details. Ask the children to remember some other stories about Jesus healing people. Suggestions are from Mark 8: 22-26 (blind man at Bethsaida), Luke 5: 17 - 19, 24 - 25 (Jesus heals the paralytic), Luke 13: 10 - 13 (Jesus heals the crippled woman), John 9:1, 4 - 12 (man born blind). Discuss the different stories the children can remember. Name as many as possible.

**Doing:** Prepare ideas on slips of paper, one for each child in your group on how one would feel and act if they had lost a special gift they had but were given it back. Examples: Someone was paralysed but could now move about. Someone who was blind could now see. Someone who was deaf could now hear. Someone who was lost now found his / her parent. Someone found a lost toy. Someone who was very sick gets better. Someone who was hungry now had food. Someone who was cold now has a warm coat. Have each child prepare to pantomime the situation and have the others decide what gift was lost and restored. Look at books pages 62 & 63 and discuss how other children showed their joy at being filled with the Spirit of healing. Encourage the children to share these ideas with family members at home.

**Going Forth:** You might prepare a basket of 'gifts' such as shoes for the gift of walking, earphones for gift of hearing, glasses for gift of seeing, gloves, mitts, water, food, etc Gather for a prayer of Thanksgiving of all our gifts. Each participant should name the gift they most appreciate. After each all respond 'Holy is God, Holy and strong, Holy and living forever!'

Close with a blessing, "Go in peace and remember Jesus said 'Go and tell what you have seen and heard.'" Encourage the response "Thanks be to God!"

## **Theme 16: Jesus Shares His Mission with the Disciples**

### **Aims:**

- To discover the different ways Jesus called his disciples
- To recognize that Jesus shared his mission with his disciples

**For the Catechist:** Following Christmas and his Baptism, we hear the stories of Jesus calling different disciples to "Come follow me" or "Come and see". Then Jesus begins to send them out to bring the message to others. We understand Jesus is filled with the Spirit to gather a people and shares the Spirit to send them forth. These disciples were to trust in a fair exchange for their bringing the good news of God's kingdom, healing, the promise of peace, they would receive hospitality from those who accepted the good news. Thus began the gathering together of a people, the People of God.

**Gathering & Listening:** Explain to the children that all the stories about Jesus that you have been discussing over these years in catechism are written in one large book we call the Bible. The Bible is really one big book containing many small books. The bible is divided into two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament tells about God's love before the time of Jesus and the New Testament continues the story of God's love through the life of Jesus and the early Christians. Name some people they have heard about from Bible stories and group these names into people in the Old Testament and people in the New Testament. Most of the stories about Jesus are told in the four Gospels which means "Good News" because we know that Jesus shares the good news about God with us. In fact Jesus is the Good News.

**Listening:** Spend some time helping the children understand how to look up a Bible passage. Write out Mark 10:14 on paper. Then explain that Mark is the name of the Book. Have them look up the page where Mark's gospel begins. Then explain the first number is the Chapter which is in dark print. Look up Chapter 10. Then explain that the 14 is the verse number which is in lighter print. Follow the verse numbers down to 14 and read the verse.

Practice with Matthew 4:18 - 22, Luke 5: 1 - 11, John 1: 35 - 51. In each case discuss "How did Jesus call the disciples? Why did they follow Jesus? What did Jesus want them to do?"

Then read Luke 9: 3 - 4. Discuss What did Jesus ask the disciples to do? Why 'two by two'? What could the disciples take with them? How were they to live?(on people's hospitality) What could they give the people where they stayed?(peace, healing, good news)" The Holy Spirit was acting in Jesus and in the disciples beginning to gather a people who understood about God's love and their call to follow Jesus. You might like to listen to the Song # 17 "Two by Two".

**Doing:** Have each child draw a picture in their individual books about their favourite story of how Jesus called some of his disciples. Share these. Say a little closing prayer to thank God that we know Jesus, that the disciples continued to tell the good news they had heard and that we are called to tell others about Jesus especially in things we say and do. Close with the blessing, "Go

in peace and remember Jesus said 'Come follow me.'" Encourage the children's response "Thanks be to God."

Encourage the children to take their books home to share pictures on pages 66 & 67 and their pictures and journals with family members.

## **Theme 17: The Spirit is Upon Us**

### **Aims:**

- To celebrate the coming of God's Spirit upon the disciples
- To see how the Holy Spirit strengthens the disciples to continue Jesus' work

**For the Catechist:** This theme continues to explore the actions of the Spirit upon the disciples of Jesus, but this time after the death of Jesus. You can well imagine that following Jesus has not been easy for them. They suffered through Jesus' crucifixion and death, but they have also experienced Easter. Next will come the beginning of the Spirit-filled community called Church. It is only with the power of the Spirit that the diversity of so many can be respected yet brought together in unity and called Church. It involves tension, but trust in the Spirit. Through it all, the Spirit of God delicately brings men and women around the world to communion in order that, in the end, God will be 'all in all.' (1Cor.15,28)

**Gathering:** Bring some wind chimes. Listen to them noting the different sounds. Present the word "Ruah" which is an Old Testament word for Spirit and means breath or wind. Recall the action of the wind on kites. Explain that, just as wind surrounds the chimes and kites, we are surrounded by the 'breath of God'; we are filled with the Holy Spirit who gives us life. Do a quiet exercise of asking the children to relax, close their eyes and 'take a few deep breaths. As you breathe in think about how wonderful it is to be alive. As you breathe out, give God thanks for the Holy Spirit who fills us with life."

Tell the children that you will share a story about Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that after he died he would ask God to send the disciples the Holy Spirit who would always be with them to help them continue his work even when he was not with them. Read John 20: 19 - 22c. Discuss details of the passage.

**Listening:** Now tell the children that you want to share a very special story that took place on the feast of Pentecost (50 days after Easter which was a harvest festival for the Jewish people). The disciples and Mary were gathered in a room which they had often done since they felt so alone and afraid because Jesus had died. Listen to "With our Ears" Song #3 and read Acts 2:1 - 4. Discuss details of the story and the children's reactions.

**Doing:** Look at the pictures and discuss the information in their textbooks pages 70 - 72 about the birth of the Church and parish communities. Concentrate as much as possible on page 72 on the five actions of the first Christians.

Make a group list of all the ways your Christian community remains faithful to Jesus today.

**Going Forth:** Pray together the Come, Holy Spirit Prayer on Page 68 and also use as a prayer the top of page 70 by you leading with the first sentence in each group and the children praying the rest. Close with inviting the children each to offer the one on their right a sign of peace with the words, "Jesus said 'Receive the Holy Spirit' Go in the peace of God's Spirit." Give time for each to do so maybe with assistance. Encourage them to take their books home to share ideas

from the theme with family members and to remember that the Spirit is present just as the air around them filling them with life.

## Theme 18: We Meet People of the Spirit

### Aims:

- To see how the Holy Spirit strengthens people
- To discover the call of the Holy Spirit in our own time

**For the Catechist:** Through stories of the disciples on the day of Pentecost; St. Stephen, one of the first to be martyred for his faith in Jesus; Archbishop Oscar Romero, who fought for justice in El Salvador; and Pope John XXIII who wanted the Spirit to liven our time, we come to see the different ways the Spirit has changed people. They / we become witnesses to the activity of the Spirit within.

The evangelist Luke wrote both the gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Luke deliberately created a parallel between the activity of God's Spirit on Jesus at the time of his Baptism by John and the activity of God's Spirit on the early Church through their Baptism by the Spirit on Pentecost. We understand that all of Jesus' actions were empowered by the Spirit. So also, all the actions of the Church are empowered by that same Spirit. God's works continue to be done in the Spirit through the actions of people. Your work as a catechist is being done by the power of the Spirit.

**Gathering:** Recall the last theme was about what happened to the disciples at Pentecost. To review read from Acts 2: 5 - 8 and 12 - 17 and then from your guide on pp 194-195 (in shaded box). Discuss details and recall how 3000 were added that day and how they devoted themselves to teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers. Explain that you want to create a list of "People of the Spirit.", begin with all those whom they can name from the Pentecost story.

**Listening:** Explain that you are going to learn about some other "People of the Spirit" Read about St. Stephen, guide page 196, Oscar Romero guide page 197 - 198, and Pope John Paul XXIII on guide page 198 - 199. Discuss these stories as to how each acted out of love for Jesus and in the power of the Spirit.

**Doing:** Add these three names to your list of "People of the Spirit." Discuss others who are 'people of the Spirit' and add their names to your list. Add people in their own lives who act in Spirit - filled ways in generosity and goodness. Add the children's own names and identify actions that are related to the working of the Spirit in their lives and yours too!

**Going Forth:** Gather in a circle for prayer. Listen to Song # 17, "Two by Two" and practice a response of "God is holy. Holy and strong. Holy and living forever." Then lead a litany such as

"For St. Stephen, Oscar Romero, Pope John XXIII. We give thanks for people of the Spirit...(R)

For \_\_\_\_\_ (others on your list) We give thanks for people of the Spirit, (R)

For families, moms and dads, etc. etc. (R)

Close with 'Come Holy Spirit, fill our hearts with your Spirit, and kindle in them the fire of your love.'

Encourage the children to take their books home and share these stories of People of the Spirit with family members. Pages 74 - 78.

## **Theme 21: The Earth Shall Yield its Fruits**

### **Aims:**

- To identify areas where we can make a difference
- To celebrate the Earth

**For the Catechist:** God is not a king who is lofty and distant or to be feared. God's kingship takes place in the midst of his people where God lives and creates. How do we recognize our king, God? We do so through our celebrations as we celebrate all of creation. God lives in the liturgies, the prayer, the celebrations of God's people. God cannot celebrate alone. God celebrates with us in our handclapping, shouting and rejoicing.

**We Gather:** Recall your last theme about creation and how God gave us dominion over creation.

**We Listen:** Have these verses from Psalm 104 written on chart paper for the children to read with you.

"By the streams, the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches."

"The earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work!"

"You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth fruit from the earth."

Discuss each one. Mention birdhouses, gardens, pets, shelters, uses of plants, etc. What would the world be like with no flowers? No fruit? No Plants? No animals? Lead into a discussion that there are people who have no homes or not enough for their families because they do not have enough money. Tell them about the group called "Habitat for Humanity" in which people volunteer their time and skills to provide homes for people who find it too difficult. They try to make the world a better place for others. Ask the children, If you could do anything to make this world a better place, what would you do? Remind them that God trusted the care of the earth to them. What can they do this week to be more responsible for the earth? Remind them especially of the value of water and how we treasure water through its many uses and in our rituals especially Baptism which we will be reminded of again at our Easter celebration.

**We Respond:** Create a fan. You will need two popsicle sticks per child and one piece of white cardboard about half or smaller of an 8 ½ X 11 cut rounded on top and bottom. Have them decorate the cardboard with pictures of nature and one of the quotes from Psalm 104 above. Have them glue the sticks one on each side of the cardboard to make a fan. Tell them that their love for the earth, the creatures and the plants is like a fan. The wind it creates is like the wind of the Spirit who carries love to all the ends of the earth.

**We Go forth:** Have a little procession to your prayer centre waving their fans. Use the celebration on pages 223 - 224 in your Guide as a celebration of creation. Encourage the children to share some of this theme ideas with family members at home.



## **Theme 22: Jesus Brings the Spirit of Forgiveness** (*Guide pages 226 - 233*)

### **Aims:**

- To experience Jesus as one who forgives
- To explore our lives in the light of God's dream

**For the Catechist:** The Holy Spirit is the power that makes possible reconciliation and forgiveness in the world. Jesus provided examples of reconciliation. Jesus showed us how God seeks healing in broken relationships, people returning to community who had been alienated. We need to explore the reality of sin in our lives. In fact it is often said that people have lost the sense of sin. The word "sin" has a deeply religious meaning which we inherited from our Hebrew background. Sin touches humans at the core of their identity where they are most authentically themselves. Sin is the break or distortion of our bond with God. It is the desire to replace God or to "be like God." Just as love and tenderness exist in the heart, then sin exists in the heart. Sin affects the capacity for a full, authentic life, contaminates relationships and the order of creation.. Jesus is the one "who takes away the sins of the world" means it is through Jesus that healing of broken and distorted relationships can happen and all creation can be restored to its original brilliance.

**We Gather:** Talk about what it must feel like to be left out or rejected because of something you did or didn't do or because someone sees you in a certain way. Then imagine what it feels like to have someone reach out to you and accept you fully again. Ask the children to share an experience when they may have felt lost, left out or alone. How did it feel? What did you do? What did people do?

**We Listen:** Lent is a good time to share stories about how Jesus accepted people and forgave them even if they had done some pretty awful things. We call people who do awful things "sinners". Jesus often had meals with sinners and always reached out to people who were lost or alone. First proclaim Matthew 9: 9 - 13 (call of Matthew, a sinner). Discuss Where was Jesus? What was he doing? Why were people surprised or upset? What was Jesus' response to them?

Next proclaim Luke 19: 1-10 (story of Zacchaeus) Discuss What did Zacchaeus do before? What did he do when he heard Jesus was coming? How did he react to Jesus' invitation? How was his life changed?

Introduce this parable by saying "Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming to Jesus, and the Pharisees and scribes thought it was not right for Jesus to welcome and be eating with sinners. Then Jesus told them this parable: Proclaim Luke 15: 1 - 7 (Parable of the Lost Sheep) Explain that God and Jesus are the Good Shepherds and we are the sheep. A sinner is like a sheep that does not want to follow the shepherd but wants to go his / her own way. A sinner wants to do things his / her own way, and hurts others . This sin then cuts them off from a good relationship with God and with other people. What needs to happen then? What did Jesus do in the stories shared?

**We Respond:** Read the following with great expression: "Quit butting in all the time!" "You can't play with us today!" "They're talking about me!" "I'll never speak to me again!" "Stop messing around with my things" How do these make people feel? How would Jesus respond? Look at and discuss the pictures in their books on pages 92 - 93. Divide the children into groups to act out situations of hurt, expressing sorrow, forgiveness and making up.

**We Go Forth:** Listen to Song #20 "Jesus is Our Peace" Close with this prayer asking the children to "echo" each line after you: O God, Rich in mercy, Help me to walk in your light." And then give the blessing, "Go in peace and remember Jesus is our peace." Encourage the children to share the stories and picture from their books at home with family members.

## **Theme 23: In the Power of the Spirit We Forgive** (*Guide pages 234 - 245*)

### **Aims:**

- To explore the need to be forgiven
- To celebrate the power of the Holy Spirit to forgive

**For the Catechist:** Stories of the lost sheep, of Zacchaeus, and of the Prodigal Son tell us of the powerful love of God. They do not stress the fault or the guilt or the sinfulness of the one who strayed. We must take responsibility for what we do or fail to do, but we are always welcome to return to the care of a loving God where we live with the promise of new life. God is always there to bring us back to the fold in the loving care of the shepherd. Pardon from God and from other people helps us to avoid being caught up in fear which prevents us from living the fullness of life which we know is ours as the beloved ones. Think about your own feelings about the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These young people will not have serious "sin" but it is important they learn to appreciate the Sacrament of Reconciliation as an opportunity to see, hear, and feel, God's love in this special celebration.

**Gathering:** Read "Margot's Choice" from your Guide page 236. Discuss the details of the story from the wrongdoing through the feelings of guilt and to ideas on how she can make things right and how her family will likely act towards her. Note the feelings of being forgiven and of the forgiving. Ask and discuss, Have you ever done anything that you wished you hadn't done and that you felt bad about afterwards? Remember times when you did not love others or when you were mean on purpose to people. Invite them to say a quiet prayer telling God they are sorry and asking the Spirit to help them change their hearts.

**Listening:** Tell the children you are going to share a story Jesus told about a forgiving Father which tells us how much God loves us and is always ready to forgive us. Proclaim Luke 15: 11-24 (or read adapted version from textbooks page 94.)

Discuss details of the story from the wrongdoing to the feelings of guilt. How is God like the father? Discuss the elder son and how he would feel if he joins the celebration? How will it make the others feel?

**Doing:** Introduce the word "reconciliation" and how it means "coming together again" Identify and list the steps in the process of reconciliation from the scripture story: #1 The son remembers his father's love and recognizes his own sin. #2 The son decides to return and make up. #3 The father welcomes the son with open arms and forgives him. #4 The son is overwhelmed by the father's generosity and celebrates. #5 The son likely changes his life. Then do a comparison with ourselves when we do something on purpose which hurts others which is what we call "sin". #1 we know in our hearts or remember that we have done wrong and were unloving. #2 We decide to say we are sorry, admit what we have done and want to make up. #3 We are forgiven maybe with words and gestures. #4 We celebrate and experience the joy of being forgiven. #5 We try to live more lovingly.

**Going Forth:** Introduce the Sacrament of Reconciliation as the special way we celebrate God's forgiveness. Explain that even though we know God loves us always and is always ready to forgive us, the Sacrament of Reconciliation gives us the chance to see, hear, and feel God's forgiveness. On the first Easter Sunday, Jesus gave the gift of the Spirit and the power to forgive sins to his disciples. Jesus wanted everyone to feel the peace and joy just like the prodigal son did. The sign that we are forgiven in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is the words of the Church spoken by the priest to a person. Use the information on pages 98 & 99 in their texts for sacramental preparation. Make sure you discuss previously with the priest who will celebrate with them just what procedure he expects so the children can be comfortable. Remind them that Jesus is much more concerned about them coming back in love and forgiveness than about the sin. Encourage them to share pages 94 - 99 with family members at home.

## **Theme 24: In the Death of Jesus We are Reconciled** (*guide pages 246 - 251*)

### **Aims:**

- To celebrate the story of the Passion
- To remember how we are reconciled in the suffering and death of Jesus

**For The Catechist:** The Passion of Jesus is really about the passionate love God has for us. The story of the crucifixion involves the very nature of a God who is present in the sufferings of all people and promises new life; a God who through Jesus offers forgiveness and the promise of eternal life; a God who offers the gift of the Spirit who makes possible for all time the reconciliation between God and God's people and among all people.

**Gathering:** Have a piece of palm available and remember how Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem by people's waving the palms and shouting "Hosanna!" "Praise God!" Discuss the word "Passion" Today's story tells us what happens to Jesus in the next few days in Jerusalem. The story is called the Passion of Jesus. This story is the reason Christians gather and remember every Sunday when we gather for the Eucharist. We listen to the whole Passion story on one Sunday of the year which we call Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday.) Tell them that you are going to read a simple version of the Passion story in parts and you will stop between the parts for discussion.

**Listening:** Use the adapted version with the questions on pages 248 - 250 in your Guide. Pause for brief discussion after each part. After the "Death of Jesus" part, kneel and pray silently then sing (or say) "Jesus has given his life for us", and invite their echoing the proclamation a few times. At the end explain that every Sunday we remember this story of how Jesus suffered and died and rose again. We sing "Jesus has given his life for us." The priest breaks the bread as a memory that Jesus' body was broken for us. Jesus gave his whole life as a gift to show God's love for us. Jesus was offered like a lamb as a sacrifice to God but also like a lamb used as food at the Passover meal. Remember the "Lamb of God" prayer from Mass. Pray it together three times.

**Doing:** Divide the children into 8 groups or individuals. Assign each one of the six parts of the Passion story or the part of the Mass where the bread is broken or the communion rite where the people are sharing the Body of Jesus in communion. Assign each to illustrate their part in a drawing. Share these as a means of reviewing the story of the Passion of Jesus.

OR Use the Mime It! suggestion on page 252. This is fairly easy to do as you speak the introductory words and groups act out the parts.

**Sending Forth:** Look at the pictures on pages 100 - 102 and read the Remember, "Lord, by your cross and resurrection you have set us free; you are the saviour of the world." Encourage the children to share pictures and ideas from this theme with family members at home. Remind them of the Holy Week celebrations this week especially Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and of course Easter, the greatest Christian celebrations of the year.

## **Theme 25: Alleluia! He is Risen!** (*Guide pages 254 - 261*)

### **Aims:**

- To celebrate the Easter gift of reconciliation
- To enter into the mystery of new life in the Spirit

**For the Catechist:** The many narratives of the Easter story which we will hear during the fifty days of the Easter season, help us to know how Jesus' disciples and friends had experiences with the resurrected Jesus. They knew it was the same Jesus they had known before who had died and yet they knew Jesus was alive and transformed. They came to a new understanding of the love and grace and power of God.

**Gathering:** Have your gathering place decorated with a white cloth a candle, cross, and bright symbols of Easter. Talk about the Easter and what they recall about Good Friday, the Easter vigil or Easter morning. What did we do to celebrate the Passion of Jesus? (Read the story and revered the cross) How did we celebrate Easter? Do they remember stories about the creation? Abraham? Moses? Isaiah? The empty tomb? What happened with water? With light / fire? Discuss the word, "Alleluia!" It is a happy word we use to praise God as the one who gives new life. Read the Easter story from page 106 in their books and do a sharing of details and feelings about the story

**Listening:** Listen to the song #22 "We have Alleluia!". Then explain that you are going to read another Easter story. Read John 20: 19 - 23 from your Bible. Discuss Why were the disciples locked away? What did they fear? What did Jesus say to them? What gift did he give them first? What did they feel? Why did Jesus breathe on them? What gifts was he giving them? (The Holy Spirit and forgiveness) What would they be able to do with the gift of the Holy Spirit? (To forgive) How do we experience the gift of God's forgiveness today? (Baptism, Eucharist, the Our Father, penitential services, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, day-to-day forgiveness from others)

Pray together the Holy Spirit prayer on page 68 in their books.

**Doing:** If possible, go for a nature walk to look for signs of new life and new growth. Or just do some brainstorming about signs of spring and some of the symbols used at Easter. Discuss these in connection with the story of Jesus' resurrection. Imagine the disciples' surprise when they saw and heard Jesus, who they knew had died, speaking and standing in the room with them. Imagine them coming to understand that Jesus is now living in a new way. Imagine their beginning to understand that God gave this new life to Jesus and this fulfills all that Jesus has been teaching them. They have a share in this newness of life. All life is a gift from God. When we accept life as God's gift to us and the gift of forgiveness it changes how we live and how we relate to others. When we experience forgiveness and love more we are living a new life.

**Going Forth:** Invite each to draw a picture showing Jesus with his new life and add at least four other signs of new life in their pictures. Expand on the idea of new life to reflect forgiveness. Add a title "New Life is a gift from God! Alleluia" Close with a prayer of thanksgiving for some

of the new life portrayed in their pictures. Model the prayer such as "God has given us new life in Jesus." Encourage response "Thanks be to God, Alleluia!" God has given new life in lambs, ...grass...tulips...new babies, ...friends who are reconciled, ...families re-united, ...people experiencing healing etc.

Encourage the children to take their books and pictures home to share with family members.

## **Theme 26: The Holy Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth** (*Guide pages 262 - 269*)

### **Aims:**

- To experience changes
- To see the Spirit alive in the changes of life

**For the Catechist:** Spring is the season when the earth is renewed with all kinds of new life springing forth. For Christians Easter is a time of celebrating new life through the power of God's Spirit. Even the dead are brought to new life. God has such a love of life and is the source of all life. We have trust and hope because of our relationship with God through Jesus. With Jesus the blind see, the deaf hear and the dead are raised. The Spirit who rests on Jesus is a life-giving Spirit. The Kingdom of God is a reign of life and victory over sickness and death. God raised Jesus to new life; God has power over death. This is the source of our Christian hope

**Gathering:** Read the story "The Teapot" from your guide page 264 and discuss the questions that follow. Connect the story with the disciples and how they felt when Jesus had died and his body was missing from the tomb.

**Listening:** Mention some objects from nature which are just showing up now in springtime, eg. A bud on a branch, a blade of grass, a crocus, a robin, a baby chick etc. Ask the children to choose one and think of what was happening with it six weeks ago. Discuss their ideas bringing out the concept of change. Then ask them what event has made a big change in their lives. Ask How did they feel when they knew the big change was coming? Were they happy or sad? Why? Did they eventually grow used to the change? What new experiences happened? How did your feelings change or grow? Discuss some of these ideas.

**Doing:** Have a big piece of paper. Ask each child to decide on a colour (red, orange, yellow, green blue, indigo and violet) to represent their story of change and be ready to give a reason if they can. Then let them take turns drawing a large curved arc of their colour across the paper. Each will add an arc with their own colour. Eventually there will be a rainbow. Ask what they know about rainbows. Tell them there is a story in God's word about rainbows. Read Genesis 9:13. "I have set my bow in the clouds and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." Explain the word 'covenant' means a promise God made with people showing God's love and friendship. "I am yours and you are mine. I will be with you always." Conclude this with an explanation that there are many changes in our lives as we grow, but God's Spirit is with us always just as God promised in the promise of the rainbow. Just as the earth changes with the seasons, people change and grow with God's new life in them. That is why we pray "Come, Holy Spirit, and renew the face of the earth."

**Sending Forth:** Invite the children to offer a prayer by repeating the "Come Holy Spirit and renew the face of the earth..." but add something such as 'in all the trees' in the fields, on the farms, in the rivers, in our parents, in all of us, in our neighbours who are poor. Etc. Look at pictures in books pages 110 - 111. Encourage them to take their books home and share the theme with family members.