

May We Be One

Year 5

Please note: this file is an archived version of what we had posted on the old website (with a few formatting changes).

Theme 10: God Chooses a People (*Guide pages 140 - 147*)

Aims

- To see the Epiphany as celebrating God's initiative in loving us
- To discover how God calls again and again

For the Catechist: One of the themes of the Epiphany is the welcoming of all nations. It is a feast of the manifestation of God in Jesus. The "Wise men" came from the East in search of the child who was to be born. Another theme then is that anyone who searches for wisdom and for God is welcome and will find. Jesus, as God, is also manifested in the other two stories of this season, the Baptism of Jesus and the Wedding feast at Cana. Remember Abraham and Sarah who became parents even in their old age because of the faithfulness and generosity of God. God's love extends to all nations. In spite of human nature's failing and destructiveness, God renews his covenant of love with the human family again and again...with Adam & Eve, Noah, Abraham & Sarah, the prophets, Jesus.

Preparations: To make a bright Epiphany star follow instructions on blackline master #5. You may have a Christmas decoration star to use. Hang one in your gathering centre or have one present to show.

We Gather: Talk about the star. Share some Christmas memories. Discuss ideas about stars bringing out that a star gives off light, the sun lights our planets, is for all people, the heavens are enjoyed by all people on earth.

We Listen: Recall star stories from their Christmas memories. Then read Matthew 2:1-12. Discuss the details of the story. The Church reads this story on the feast of the Epiphany. Other information has been added eg. the names of the 'Three Kings' being Balthasar, Casper and Melchior according to legend, but the meaning of manifesting the light of Jesus was there for all people of the world and all nations. Jesus is manifested to the world in other scripture stories. Look at the drawings on page 85 and identify and describe the stories of Jesus' baptism and of the Cana wedding feast.

We Respond: These Epiphany stories show us how faithful God has always been. We call this kind of faithful relationship a "covenant." Use pages 86 - 91 to bring out an understanding of "covenant" relationships. ..You cannot read all, but try to read story page 86, some quotes from page 87, tell story page 88, and 89 briefly in your own words and finish with the story page 91 to emphasize God's constant and faithful love for us. Point out that scripture uses an image of God as an eagle protecting Israel, God's people: "God found them wandering through the desert, a

desolate wind-swept wilderness. God protected them and cared for them...Like an eagle teaching its young to fly, catching them safely on its spreading wings, the Lord kept Israel from falling."

Have them draw a picture in their treasure books or on a rock outline of an image or words showing God's care for us. Share these as time permits.

We Go Forth: Invite the children to take their books home and ask the family to read some scripture passages suggested on page 90 to learn more about God's people in the time of Moses.

Closing prayer: Ask children to say a Thanksgiving prayer of a way that God cares for us today. Model a prayer yourself first. End with "Thank you God for being our God and we promise we will follow your light and be your people in all that we do this week."

Theme 11: The Lord Welcomes all Nations (*Guide pages 156 - 163*)

Aims:

- To see God's continuing faithfulness in the Church's missionary activity
- To celebrate God's faithfulness to all nations

For the Catechist: This theme stresses God's faithfulness in reaching out to all nations. The Church's missionary activity is seen as a sharing of the Christian message, interwoven and enriched by the cultural setting in which the good news is being proclaimed. We are constantly being exposed to the diversity of other cultures and we are reminded that we must respect other cultures. The Christian message is a message for all nations and all cultures. We must recognize that God is already present to all other cultures. Faith must live in the culture for the gospel to take root in the hearts and minds of people.

We Gather: Use the Epiphany star from last theme and remind the children that the magi were strangers to the Israelites, they came from other parts of the world. This was God, again, reaching out to other nations. God has always been reaching out to gather a people who will relate to God. From Abraham and Sarah, from Moses, and through the ages. Jesus reached out to strangers to hear his message. After his resurrection, the risen Jesus gave a lasting mission to go out to all nations.

We Listen: Gather the children, light the candle and proclaim from the Bible Acts 1:8. Discuss the passage focusing on God's welcoming all nations. Listen to Song # 11 "And the Nations Will Clap."

We Respond: Look at page 98 in the textbooks. Compare the spreading of Christianity to passing the Olympic torch. Where did Christianity begin? Point out Asia minor on the left lower point of the pink area. Use material in blackline masters 6 - 10 to describe (briefly) how the faith spread throughout Asia, then to Europe, to Africa, to Central & South America and finally to North America. If you have a world map you can follow its spreading on it. Refer now to Luke 24: 44 - 48 and confirm that the first ones to hear the Christian message did as Jesus told them to do. You may want to refer to page 99 to indicate that the Christian message spread to large centres and sometimes they responded in diverse ways due to the diversity of cultures. This led to different "Rites" of the faith with different worship, traditions and creeds. We belong to the Roman Rite. Churches of the Eastern Rite are shown in the diagram on this page.

We Go Forth: Page 100 shows the dates for the founding of some Canadian Dioceses. Note that the Diocese of Charlottetown is the third oldest diocese in Canada. Why would that be? Read the information and discuss it. If you check for the book 'A walk of Faith' by Father Art O'Shea you can get some information about your own parish. Spend some time reflecting on the strength of the faith of the very first followers of Jesus and how others since have the same faith and continue to follow Jesus' command to go out and teach the Good News to all nations. Close with the prayer on page 102 with the Remember message because it is by the movement of the Spirit that the faith continues to spread.

Encourage the children to share these stories with family members at home.

Theme 12: Anyone who Welcomes You, Welcomes Me (*Guide pages 166 - 171*)

Aims:

- To deepen our awareness that the Church is called to reach out with the Kindness of God
- To see justice as essential to being Church

For the Catechist: Justice must be a part of a believer's life. This theme is designed to increase the children's awareness of the relation of the gospel message to justice and concrete action.

The Biblical Good News tells of a God who delights to be with little people who traditionally have few rights: the stranger, the widow, the orphan. God adopted Israel when it was no more than a disunited group of slaves in Egypt and God stood by them until they became a free people. Jesus' messages is about the same God, "He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's Year of favour." John Paul II brought a similar message: "And the poor people and poor nations— poor in different ways, not only lacking in food, but also deprived of freedom and other human rights- will judge those people who take these goods away from them..."

We Gather: Read the Play on pages 107 - 108 and discuss the details about the rights of the farmers forced off their lands, the poverty of working for such low wages, the loss of family , the rise of violence, the intrusion on their culture and way of life, etc. Relate this to what happens in many developing countries which have traditionally produced bananas, pineapples, tea, coffee, sugar and cocoa. Ask what would a just person do? Go back and read Nurishan's message on page 106.

We Listen: Assign each student one of the scripture references from page 105 to have them learn a story of Jesus' care for people. Share these. Then reflect on Matthew 10:40 "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me."

We Respond: Read "The United Nations Rights of the Child" Discuss this declaration from the point of view of Canadians. Discuss also that with the rights come responsibilities. Discuss some of these responsibilities.

We Go Forth: Introduce Amos as a prophet who spoke out for justice. Bottom page 108. Concentrate on the message "Let justice flow like water, and integrity like an unfailing stream." Have each design a banner with these words on it. Have them take their banners home and talk with family members about justice issues. And close with a blessing, "Remember: Whoever welcomes you welcomes me and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me!"

Theme 13: I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me

Aims:

- To hear the call to open our doors to others
- To discover how people welcome and reach out to others

For the Catechists: We live in a world where the resources and wealth are unfairly distributed. Divisions keep people from recognizing one another as children of one God. Yet we are responsible for establishing just relations. Pope Paul VI insisted "To reach peace, teach peace." If justice is the way to peace, justice must be taught. We want to help children to enter into issues of justice as deeply as possible for them. Justice calls for a personal conversion in which the work of the Spirit must be respected.

There is a strong tension between capitalism and the basic rights of the poor. Judaeo-Christianity believes that God gave the earth to humans and appointed them stewards. The earth's abundance is a banquet to be shared by all. Pope Pius X states that the right to subsistence precedes all other economic rights. Then Pope Paul VI wrote "No one is justified in keeping for one's exclusive use what one does not need, when others lack necessities."

We Gather: Ask the children if they have ever made a special effort to include someone in an activity or welcomed someone who seemed unsure if they belonged. Talk about some of their situations.

We Listen: Discuss if they know any family who has a mentally or physically challenged member. What are some obstacles or challenges they face? Share the Osborne Story from Guide page 175. Discuss the details of the story in light of the United Nations Rights of the Child.

Then discuss the meaning of "refugee." A refugee is someone who lives outside the country of their birth for fear of being harmed or imprisoned. They are forced to leave because of race, religion, nationality or political opinions. Share the story from page 110 in their textbooks.

Explain that God calls us to care for others by reflecting on Matthew 25:35 "For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Finally introduce the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19 - 31)

Do a contrast between the two men;

Rich man: *has no name, *has rich clothing, *feasts magnificently *has guests * experiences good things

Lazarus: *is named Lazarus meaning "God helps" * is covered with sores * has nothing to eat *has only dogs for company *experiences bad things in life

After they die:

Rich man: *is punished * loses his riches *thirsts *experiences torments in Hades *is alone

Lazarus: *is rewarded *is fulfilled and happy * has water *has comfort in bosom of Abraham his father *is no longer alone

Discuss details of the story in relation to feeding the hungry and welcoming the stranger.

We Respond: Discuss the pictures and questions on page 112. Then make a list of things the children of their age can do to practise justice.

We Go Forth: Gather in your prayer space. Invite the children to make prayers of petition about each of the things on the list of their justice actions. Example: Lord Jesus, give us the strength to play fair, to include others in our games, etc. Encourage the children to share their stories with family members and discuss issues about justice which their families might be involved in. Close with the blessing "Go in peace and Remember, I was hungry...(Matthew 25: 35-36)

Theme 14: Let Justice Flow Like Water

Aims:

- To uncover the place of justice in ecological relationships
- To celebrate our oneness with all creation

For the Catechist: The wonders of God are in full display particularly in the earth, our mother and our home. Our environment is integral to our survival. Ecology is about the relationships of interdependence of earth and air, water, sunlight, soil, and all living forms. All of these are part of one large interdependent, intimate web. So the slogan "Think globally...Act locally" is an important one. We must understand the whole message from Genesis, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it." The cosmos is a manifestation of God. A gift given in stewardship for all generations.

We Gather: Have a rock (Group Rock?), some clay and some water available. Do Option "C"

"Our Relationship with the Earth," from your Guide pages 182 - 183 to develop an understanding of our intimate link to the soil, water and air. Read the poem in text books, page 114 and "An Insight into Ecology" on page 115.

We Listen: Proclaim Genesis 1:28 - 31. Discuss who / what makes up all creation? What is the role of people? How do they share responsibility?

We Respond: Divide the children into four groups and assign each group one of the "Wake-up Calls" from page 117. Have each group decide what they can do to help? What can the community do? Can they affect the community? Share their responses with the large group. Connect these ideas with the Genesis story that tells us we are the stewards of the planet. We are accountable to our creator for its care. All of the gifts of creation continue to give glory to God if they are valued, protected and preserved. Justice demands all aspects need care and protection, because what happens to one part affects other parts. Every aspect of the natural order requires our attention. It is justice that we attend to it. Remind the children of the slogan "Think globally...Act locally." If you have time refer to the news article on page 115 which describes how one group of children acted.

We Go Forth: Use the "Celebration of God's Gift of Creation" in your Guide page 186 - 187. Enjoy listening to "In Beauty We Walk" Song #6. Encourage the children to take their books home and sharing this theme's ideas with family members and discuss further ways they can help protect the planet. Close with a blessing, "Go in peace and remember God says to us 'Be fruitful, fill the earth and subdue it' so we are responsible for its care." Encourage the response, "Thanks be to God."

Theme 15: God Saw That It Was Good (*Guide pages 190 - 195*)

Aims:

- To see creation as God's covenant
- To understand disorder in the world as a breach of God's covenant

For the Catechist: Lent and Easter are approaching and some time will be missed due to March break. Begin looking forward to the season of Lent as a time of preparation for the greatest celebration of our faith. When Jesus was crucified, God raised him from the dead. God is a God of the living. God gives life. The Church surrounds us with symbols of light and life. Our God is a God of the living. We share in that life now and in eternity. Israel's first knowledge of God was a God as founder who had formed a people with whom God made a covenant to protect, lead, be their God. Eventually these "chosen" people came to realize God was a God of all people and the source of all creation. People are created in God's image and likeness. God's trace in them is permanent. God's goodness and faithfulness is the deepest signature grafted in all that is. There is no need of conflict with science and evolution as we understand God as the source of all of creation the land, the sea, the sky, the water, the plants, animals, people, and their relationships.

We Gather: Begin to develop some interest in the upcoming season of Lent which begins on Ash Wednesday (Feb 25, 2009)

Recall from the previous theme some of the areas where imbalances and disharmony exist in our environment. See "Ecology Recommendations" on page 121 of text books. and the passage there from Genesis 1: 28 - 31. Compare the two. Listen to Song # 13, "I Am Your God" What is the message? Do they know other songs about creation with a similar message? We are responsible to preserve the order and harmony of creation. That is part of our covenant with God.

We Listen: Read together the creation myth from the Ojibway Nation, on page 122 in their text books, then share the creation myth from the Northern Plains in your Guide page 193. Then explain that Jews and Christians have a creation story which we will hear at the Easter vigil, the holiest night of the year. We remember that every created thing is a sign of God's covenant with the earth and with people. It is an inspired story of how God views our beginnings. Proclaim Genesis 1 - 2 .4. Ask According to our story where does our earth come from? How does God create? How is our story similar to the creation myths? How is our story a story of trust? Of love? Of covenant? Of freedom?

We respond: Have seven individuals or groups each do a drawing on paper or a rock (see text book page 123) if you should have a supply (or play dough creation) for each day of creation or do a group mural if space allows. Share and review our story of creation according to days.

We Go Forth: Listen to Song # 3 "May We Be One" and close with "Remember In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...and God saw that it was good.."

Theme 16: God's Faithfulness is From Age To Age (*Guide pages 196 - 203*)

Aims:

- To probe the mystery of evil
- To understand that our unfaithfulness cannot undo God's faithfulness

For the Catechist: Even though we understand the goodness of God's creation, we are still faced with much suffering, violence and evil and that is a major block to people's having faith in a loving God and the goodness of life. In the second account of our Judaeo-Christian account of creation, the origin of evil is presented by the story of the fall of Adam and Eve because they sinned through their desire to "be like God." They reached beyond their limits of being human in their desire to decide what was good and what was evil. This is the story of human history. God constantly seeking to be our God while people spurn God's advances in favour of following our own paths. God continues to tell us that the world is good and that good will prevail. God's covenant is always faithful.

We Gather: Recall the last theme and what they had discussed about the goodness of creation.

We Listen: Proclaim the second account of creation in Genesis 2:5 - 25. Ask: What did earth look like before God created humanity? How does God create the man? Note "Adam" means human and is close in meaning to "earth" Eve means "to live". How does God create the earth? Why did God create man and woman? What warning does God give people? Why does God create humanity as man and woman?

Where does evil come from? Share Genesis 3: 1-24 by reading the sample story on page 199 of your guide. Discuss How does the story tell us that evil came into the world? Where do you think evil comes from? (Jesus teaches that evil comes from within.) Why did they eat from the tree? What was the result? What does God do in the face of evil? What happened to the man and woman when they wanted to be like God? What does God do for them before expelling them? What was life like afterwards? Note that even in the midst of evil, there is a promise of new life.

We Respond: We note there is evil in our society. Read Blue section on page 200 of your guide. What do they consider the worst evils in our society? Brainstorm and list examples around the words "sin, evil, temptation". Why do people hurt one another and themselves? Why do people sometimes do things they know in their hearts is wrong? Why do people sometimes try to get others to do what is bad? Sin is to hurt or to break relationship with God, with life and with one another. In the Bible sin is linked to having priorities confused, not taking the straight road set by God, resisting life, being stubborn, refusing to listen, being lost or going astray. Then talk about temptation which is a pull toward something we desire so much we would have to do something wrong to have it. Discuss the situations presented in their text books page 126. Note that temptation is not in itself a sin.

We Go Forth: Read the story "I set my bow in the clouds" in text books page 127. Conclude that we can always trust God will keep his covenant with us and give us all the help we need to

live right. Read some of the Psalms written by children on page 125 of their books. If there is time ask each to write a little psalm of their own about trust in God. Encourage them to take their books home to share the theme with family members and write a psalm at home if time runs out. Close with "Go in peace and remember the rainbow is a sign of the covenant between God and the earth."

Theme 17: The Holy Spirit Reconciles the World (*Guide pages 204 - 211*)

Aims:

- To see that God reconciles the world through Jesus in the Holy Spirit
- To celebrate God's reconciling action through the Holy spirit in the Church

For the Catechist: The Church celebrates Easter with great symbolism. These next themes develop using some of this symbolism. Connect them to the upcoming celebrations about God's reconciling with people and people's reconciling with God through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church celebrates this reconciliation through the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Reconciliation. Cain's remorse after killing his brother was great. It is similar to our anguish when we feel solidarity with people in need, we sense a feeling of responsibility. Christians realize the call to reconciliation for the damage our actions or inactions inflict on others because we are blind to their needs, but we trust in God's generous mercy and patience.

We Gather: Ask if anyone ever had a "close call" in life. Share and discuss the story from their books on pages 128 - 129. Note the change of feelings from anxiety and fear to peace and gratitude.

We Listen: Read "I am the Living water" on page 129 in their books. Then finish the story from the Bible John 4: 16 - 42.. Explain that the Church is preparing to celebrate that Jesus died and rose for us. To help us understand what the story of what Jesus did for us, we use different symbols. One is water because Jesus is called the living water. We are Baptised with water and at Easter we will be reminded again of being baptised in water. This ritual gathers together all people who are God's people because that is what Jesus instructed his disciples: "Go and baptise all nations in the name of this God.." In Baptism we become part of the dream God had to reconcile all people into one people. Then talk also about sharing meals as a way to bring people together. Jesus did this a lot. Read Mark 2: 13 - 22, Luke 7: 36 - 50 and Luke 19: 1-10. Jesus wanted sinners to know that God wanted to celebrate with them, to welcome them, to eat and drink with them. This was another way Jesus reconciled people with God and we continue this reconciliation through the celebration of the Eucharist. Through the activity of the Spirit God reconciles people and heals broken relationships in the Eucharist.

We Respond: As Christians the pull to sin is strong and we often break our bond with God and others through conflict, lies and hurts. God remains loving and merciful to us and still reaches out to us to come back and be reconciled again.. What do Christians do when they have sinned? (They bring their sinfulness to God to be freed from sin. They are sorry they sinned; they do penance to break the power of sin; they ask the Church to pray with them and they try to make amends. Read over information on page 131 in their texts .and discuss the Sacrament of Reconciliation in a positive way as a third means by which the Church celebrates reconciliation between God and people.

We go Forth: Encourage the children to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent. Have information as to date and time available in the form of a note to families. Close with the

"Penitential Service" in your Guide pages 210 - 211. Encourage the children to bring their books home and share this theme with family members at home.

Theme 18: Love As I Have Loved you

Aims:

- To invite wonder at the superabundance of God's love
- To recognize the Holy Spirit acting in and among people

For the Catechist: What is the route to holiness? The proverb says, "Many are the roads to perdition and narrow the path to perfection." (Matthew 7: 13 - 14) Jesus re-defined for us the highest level of human perfection: a whole-hearted acceptance of God's mysterious love and mercy. Jesus reveals through his parables a God who loves extravagantly and loves, in an unusual way, the outcasts, the poor, the sorrowful, the persecuted. The pious people had a hard time accepting in Jesus the will of God. God's gifts are freely given. No one can claim them. The Church honours as saints those who have sought to live with their free gift, accepting it as their treasure, and living a life of praise and thanks.

We Gather: Do a brainstorming of ways to show love for your neighbour. Then assign each of three groups one of the story starters on pages 134 - 135 and have the group compose a conclusion for each story. Share the stories and their endings.

We Listen: Now assign each group a matching parable to read from their Bibles: Group One Luke 10: 25 - 37; Group Two Luke 15: 11 - 32; Group Three Matthew 20: 1 - 16. Compare the stories as to how the characters showed love, concern, caring and fairness. Notice in the parables how God's love is above and beyond human boundaries. God's love is superabundant!

Do the Guided imagery from your Guide Book page 217 and ask "Through this action, what does Jesus tell us about God?" Examine the scenes on pages 136 - 137 to find more examples of God's superabundant love. #1 is the story of the rich man who is told the way to heaven is to sell all he owns and give it to the poor, #2 is the father welcoming the prodigal son back, #3 is the landowner paying the labourers, #4 is the healing of the woman, #5 is feeding the five thousand, and #6 is the healing of the centurion's slave.

We Respond: If you are doing the Easter Basket with the oil and water, today you may add a candle as Jesus is the light we will celebrate at Easter because he lights the way for us to understand the superabundant love and compassion God has for us.

Tell the children that we trust that the Holy Spirit still acts among people today showing the superabundant love and compassion of God. Share "Mae's Miracle" from your Guide pages 219 - 220. Discuss details of the story. What allowed Leslie's brilliance to shine forth? Who reflected God's love? Have the children draw a picture of the story and give it a title. Share these in the group.

We Go Forth: Close with the song #15, "My People Love One Another" and the blessing: "Go in peace and remember God's love for us is superabundant. Through parables Jesus tells us about God's love. Jesus, too, is a parable of God's love." Encourage the response, "Thanks be to God." Encourage them to take books and stories home to share with family members.

Theme 19: I Have Given You An Example (*Guide pages 222 - 227*)

Aims:

- To recall the significance of anointing in our faith tradition
- To understand the Church's ministries as rooted in the anointing with the Spirit

For The Catechist: At the Chrism Mass every year during Holy week, the Diocesan Bishop blesses the three oils, the oil of the catechumens, the chrism oil, and the oil of the sick. Each parish in the diocese then uses these oils for sacramental celebrations during the year. Your parish likely stores the wooden boxes containing these oils in a public place in your church. To be anointed is to be designated for a service. The Christian is anointed at Baptism, at Confirmation, sometimes when sick or dying, and priests and bishops are anointed in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Anointing means God's Spirit is with this person. Just as oil gives life to the olive, the Spirit gives life to the Christian to live as Jesus lives.

We Gather: Have a variety of oils available such as baby oil, cooking oil, motor oil, suntan oil, etc. Discuss where oil comes from and their various uses. Maybe have some seeds to crush to show their oils. Olives and olive oils have been popular for thousands of years. Jesus would have eaten olives and food made tasty by olive oil. Discuss text book page 138 to bring out that oils are used a lot in our Christian tradition in what we call anointing.

We Listen: Discuss some ritual actions the children may know when someone joins a special group or given a special role or position. (Such as swearing- in ceremony) Read from Scriptures 1 Samuel 9:26 -10:1a. In Israel, Kings were anointed with oil. Why? (To signify they received the power of God. They had to do for the people what God would do.) What was the role of the king according to this passage?

Assign each child one of the passages on page 139 to look up in their Bibles and share. What do they have in common? Note especially Acts 10:38 in which Peter proclaims that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is 'the anointed one' Christ is the Greek word meaning 'the anointed one'. Read page 140 in their text books and discuss the questions.

We Respond: What does anointing mean? We are anointed with God's Spirit, who enables us to act in the power of God. Anointing at Baptism and Confirmation gives us the power to live like Jesus in service to others. Bishops and priests are anointed to proclaim the Gospel, to baptize, to forgive sins, to preside at the Mass and other sacraments and to serve as leaders in our Church. Read the letter from Bishop Cooney from page 141 in text books. Listen to Song #4 "In the Spirit we Live."

We Go Forth: Explain about the Chrism Mass which is celebrated in the Diocese of Charlottetown by Bishop Vernon Fougere at St. Dunstan's Basilica on Monday before Easter at 7:00 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend. Encourage the children to suggest to their families that they attend. For an activity in the next theme, ask the children and their families to name one special need. Close with getting the children in pairs to trace a sign of the cross on each other's forehead and say, "Remember, (Name) you are anointed with God's Spirit to follow the way of

Jesus." Model this for them first. Encourage the children to bring home their books and share this theme with family members at home. Also have them write on a piece of paper their family's special need for next theme.

Theme 20: We Ponder the Mystery of God's Love (*Guide pages 228 - 235*)

Aims:

- To understand the Triduum as the celebration of the mystery of God's love
- To prepare for the Easter Vigil as the central celebration of our faith

For the Catechist: The Triduum is one celebration of the three days of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil. The Triduum is to the year what Sunday is to the week.

The cross is the symbol of God's love for human beings. As Christians on Good Friday, we remember before God what happened that day and we approach God in full confidence. We read the whole Passion story and pray a lengthy series of petitions for all the needs of the world.

The Easter Vigil has many images of light out of darkness. We trust that the light of Jesus will forever overcome any darkness the world may present. We hear the whole story of God's love for us from creation, through Abraham, Moses, the prophets, Jesus and the disciples. Then we celebrate the new life through Baptisms and renewal of Baptismal promises, we sing Alleluia again which has been quiet during Lent, and we celebrate in great style the Eucharist with the Church decorated again in great joy. Be sure to participate yourself and encourage the children to join their families.

We Gather: Discuss Holy Week as the special time when we proclaim the Scripture passages about the Last Supper, about the sufferings and trials, the condemning of Jesus, his crucifixion, and death, but also the narratives about Jesus rising from the dead. The Church proclaims that in Baptism we die to sin with Jesus and rise with him to the new life for God. At the Easter Vigil, Baptisms are celebrated and we are all invited to renew our Baptismal vows to make them our own commitment. Tell the children that today they are going to have an opportunity to dramatise the Passion story according to John's Gospel. It is a story of God's "Passion" for all humans.

We Listen: Assign individuals to read and act out certain roles for the Passion story in their text books pages 142 - 145. Perform the three act play with simple actions and props. Children are used to doing this and will easily flow with the narrative and your directions and commentaries.

We Respond: Discuss: Is the crucifixion the end of the story or just the beginning? What is God saying through the passion narrative? Bring out in the discussion that God will go to the point of death, through Jesus, to show love. God is love and the cross is the symbol of love. We can then go to God for anything trusting in God's great love for us. This is what the Church does on Good Friday. After we read and listen to the Passion narrative, the church brings many petitions to God as we pray for the Church, the Pope, the clergy and laity, those preparing for Baptism, the unity of all Christians, the Jewish people, persons of other religious beliefs, those who do not believe in God, all in public life, and for all in special need.. Ask the children to reflect on special needs they may think of in their lives and the lives of their loved ones. Ask them to write on small pieces of paper cut into the shape of a cross one or more special needs they have to bring before the cross.

We Go forth: Have a simple cross (wooden or made of palms) in your prayer centre. Gather around the cross. Proclaim 1 John 4: 9 -10... (text books page 146) Invite each child to approach the cross, touch it reverently and pray silently about their special need and leave it at the foot of the cross. Close with the prayers from page 235 in your Guide.

Encourage the children to share pages 142 - 146 with family members and to attend the Holy Thursday, Food Friday, and Easter services at your parish. When you gather next you will be celebrating all the joy of Easter!

Theme 21: Were Not Our Hearts Burning Within Us?

Aims:

- To celebrate the risen Lord through sign, symbol and story
- To deepen appreciation of the feast of Easter

For the Catechist: For Christians, the Easter story keeps on happening in our lives, supports our faith, until all things are complete. Christians use time for doing, being and living for God. Even death has no power over time in our relationship with God. Prepare your gathering space to reflect Easter joy with a white cloth, candle, etc.

We Gather: Gather and discuss changes to your space. Discuss also the Easter celebrations in your parish. Review the liturgical year reminding the children of the season of Advent when the Church's liturgies were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, then the Christmas season when we celebrate Jesus' birth on earth and the beginnings of people's recognition of Jesus as someone sent from God, some ordinary time when we learned about Jesus' calling his disciples and many followers gathering to hear his teaching and experience his love and healing, then Lent when we prepared ourselves to enter fully into his suffering, death, and resurrection. Now the Church has entered into its Easter season of 50 days when we will be immersed into the time Jesus spent on earth in the glorious state of his resurrection. Look at the pictures of Easter symbols on pages 150 - 151 in their books. Talk about the word, "Alleluia" which is a Hebrew word meaning praise God with great joy.

We listen: Tell the children you are going to read about something that happened soon after Jesus' resurrection. Ask them to listen carefully how things progress from beginning to the end as you will want them to do something special to help remember the story of the Emmaus Travellers. Proclaim Luke 24: 15 - 36.

We Respond: Explain that a triptych is a very old idea which people used to tell a story in art. It is composed of three panels which tell the beginning, the middle, and the end of a story. Use three pages of light-coloured construction paper or manila paper for each group. Divide the children into groups of three. Each group should plan together the three parts of the Emmaus story and each one can make a drawing to depict one of the parts on a panel. Share the completed triptychs. Compare occasionally that we are like the Emmaus travellers because we meet Jesus, we get to know Jesus, and we tell others about Jesus.

We Go Forth: Read the stories on pages 152 - 153. Share some Easter egg treats and share some events their families enjoyed at Easter. Remind them that the Easter season lasts 50 days so they will be hearing more interesting stories about the resurrected Jesus.

Listen to Song #16 "Easter People." Close with the blessing, "Go in peace and remember 'the Lord is risen indeed, alleluia'" Encourage the response "Thanks be to God, Alleluia!"

Encourage the children to take their books home and share some of this theme with family especially the story of the travellers on the road to Emmaus.

Theme 22: Christians are Easter people (*Guide pages 244 - 251*)

Aims:

- To learn how we become Easter people
- To learn how we hold on to the Easter vision in our lives

For the Catechist: The sacraments are the Church's celebration of the Paschal mystery (the life, death, resurrection and coming in glory of the Lord Jesus). The initiation sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, makes the Paschal Mystery present among us by the power of the Holy Spirit. These initiation sacraments lay the foundation for Christian life and all other sacraments flow from them. The pattern of each sacrament is twofold: first is to proclaim the Word of God and secondly to engage in an appropriate ritual action. Like the disciples of the Emmaus event, at the Eucharist, we come together with the Scriptures and the bread and wine to celebrate the presence of the risen Christ among us. The sacraments are moments when we celebrate the activity of God in our midst. Christians become part of the work of Jesus by which God recreates humanity. Through the sacraments in their lives Christians are sustained on the path of Jesus through to our death when we also reach completion as did Jesus. That is why we are called an Easter people.

We Gather: Read the identity stories in their books page 154. Ask each to share what is their identity story. Then ask what it is that identifies Christians. What stories, activities, images, symbols and events describe Christians? Why particularly are we called Easter people? Look at and read page 155 in their books and point out what the Paschal Mystery means and how our identity is all about the Paschal Mystery. Then explain that Christians identify themselves by our celebration of this Paschal Mystery through the Church's sacraments. The sacraments tell how the life, death, resurrection, became part of the story and identity of each of us. We believe that as God gave new life to Jesus in his resurrection, God will do the same for us. That is why our proclamation "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. " is so much a part of our identity.

We Listen: We want to understand how we become who we are....as an Easter people. The Church gradually introduces people to the story of God's activity through the initiation sacraments. Each of the initiation sacraments plays a part in this gradual development into the Christian life. Use the material about each of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist from your Guide pages 248 - 249. Review what are the essential actions of each?

We Respond: Have them draw a picture of a symbol representing the essentials of each of the initiation sacraments. Briefly comment on the other four sacraments Penance, Sacrament of the sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders which are special celebrations at various times and situations in our lives and help us live out our lives in our Christian identity.

We Go Forth: Discuss people whom they know as Christians and how they know they are Christians. You might invite each to bring in a picture of someone who can easily be identified as Christian by what he / she is doing in the picture. These pictures can be used to develop an Easter People mosaic. Close with the blessing, "Go in peace and remember ' In the sacraments,

the paschal mystery is made present in the power of the Holy Spirit." Encourage the response "Thanks be to God." Encourage the children to take their books home to share pages 154 - 157 and this theme with family members.