

Sunday Gospel Background

In Sunday's Gospel, Jesus teaches his friends to trust in God when they have fears and worries. Mark wrote his Gospel shortly after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The early Christians thought they must be living in the last days. We too, can trust in the Father's love and care, no matter what is happening around us.

Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- Pray together** "Jesus, you know when we're happy, sad, angry, or afraid. Help us remember that you are always with us. Amen."
- Story • The Storm** Share this story about a scary day that turned into a very good day.

Laney jumped up on Mom's bed and said: "It's Saturday. Can we do something special?" Mom said: "Dad and I have a fun day planned. We're going to the country to buy pumpkins to make pumpkin pies." Laney ran to tell her brother, Logan. When breakfast was over, they got in the car.

Dad watched the sky as he drove. Large clouds grew bigger and darker. A loud clap of thunder made Laney and Logan jump! It started raining very hard. The trees bent over in the wind. The rain came so fast, the windshield wipers couldn't clear it all. Dad slowed down, turned onto a little road, and shut off the car. "We'll wait here until the rain quits," Dad said. They all prayed the Our Father together.

Finally, the rain stopped, and the sun peeked out. Dad opened the windows. Everything smelled wonderful! Laney heard something in the ditch. She leaned out and saw a little wet puppy. She got out of the car and picked up the puppy. It started licking Laney's face. "I want to hold him," Logan said, and Laney let him. Dad pointed to a house down the road. "I bet the puppy lives there," he said. "Let's go see."

Dad drove to the house, and Laney got out with the puppy in her arms. A little boy came running from the house. "You found Sammy!" he yelled. Laney gave him the puppy. The boy's parents came out of the house too. "Thank you for bringing our puppy home," they said. "Would you like to see his brothers and sisters?" In a big cardboard box in a shed were four more puppies and a mother dog. Logan and Laney rushed to the box to pet the puppies. "Please, Mom, can we take a puppy home?" asked Logan.

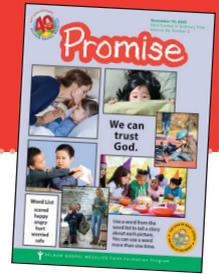
"Please, Dad?" asked Laney

"Well . . ." said Mom. Just then, a puppy crawled over the side of the box into Laney's lap. "This puppy wants to come with us. We can call her Sunny," Laney said, "because we came here when the sun came out."

Soon, Mom, Dad, Laney, Logan, and Sunny were all in the car going home. "This was a fun Saturday," Logan said. "We didn't get our pumpkins, but we got a puppy," said Laney. "Thanks, Mom and Dad," both children said.

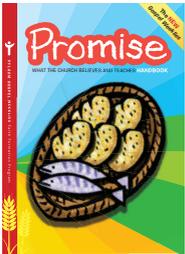
Ask: What did the family plan to do together? What happened to change their plans? What helped them to not be scared? What good things happened?

- Cover Activity • We can trust God. (page 1)** For each photo on the cover of *Promise*, ask your child what is happening and how the child feels. Point out the word list and show how to choose a word and tell a story. For example: *Safe*. The boy feels *safe* when his mom kisses him goodnight. Invite your child to choose a photo and word to tell a story.



Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- Sunday Gospel • God Is with Us** Sunday's Gospel is about the natural disasters that will precede the end of the world and our need to be ready when Jesus returns. These themes are incomprehensible to young children, so *Promise* teaches that everything about them is good and put there by God. Explain that your child can help with the Gospel by saying Jesus' part as follows: When I am sad, Jesus says: **God is with you.** When I am happy, Jesus says: **God is with you.** When I get mad, Jesus says: **God is with you.** When I feel proud, Jesus says: **God is with you.** When I feel lonely, Jesus says: **God is with you.** When I am scared, Jesus says: **God is with you.** All the time, every day and night, Jesus says: **God is with you.** Thank you, Jesus, for telling us that God loves us. **Amen.**



- Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 28. Have your child find the heart near the bottom of the page and read the line next to it. **Ask:** What place Jesus is preparing for us? *Heaven.* Continue reading about Heaven. Then print this sentence: *Heaven is my home.* Have your child copy the sentence on a sheet of paper and draw a picture imagining what Heaven will be like.

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, page 4.

- Word of the Week • Heaven (page 4)** Help your child locate the Word of the Week in the red circle on page 4. Share this definition: *Heaven is living in happiness with God forever.*

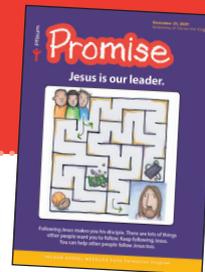
Live the Gospel

- Activity • Who made the world? (pages 2–3)** Open *Promise* to pages 2–3. Read the title aloud. **Ask:** Do you know the answer? *God, our loving Father, is the Creator of the world and everything in it.* As you read each stanza, invite your child to answer the questions. Then have your child use a crayon to follow the dots for each picture. Invite your child to tell of other things God has made. Explain that we can trust God to keep plants and animals growing and healthy and we can help God care for Creation. Give your child time to color both pages.
- Activity • I can always talk to God. (page 4)** Have your child to turn to page 4 and read aloud the title. Read the words in each picture and **ask:** What else might that child say to God? Invite your child to imagine they are that child to complete each prayer.
- Closing Prayer** "Loving God, we can pray to you anytime and anywhere, and you will hear us. Please hear our prayers today." (*Invite your child to share the prayers from page 4.*) "Help us to always trust you. Amen."



Parent Resources

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Sunday Gospel Background

The Solemnity of Christ the King is the final Sunday of the Church Year. This feast helps us remember that love, peace, forgiveness, and truth rule in Jesus' kingdom. Jesus tells Pilate that his kingdom is not like that of the Romans whom Pilate represents. You might ask your child to name the leaders in your family, community, parish, and school. Explain that Jesus wants to be the king of our hearts and discuss what that means.

Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- Pray together** "Thank you, God, for loving us and giving us everything we need. Help us make you the king of our hearts. Amen."
- Story • Who Is a Leader in Cozy Town?** Invite your child to listen to the story.

Mr. Redden was the best gardener in Cozy Town. He grew the most beautiful roses in the whole town, maybe in the whole world. Mr. Redden used a cane to help him walk up the steps into his home.

One day when Mr. Redden was watering his roses, the wind blew his cane down. It landed on the sidewalk in front of the gate.

Two boys came skateboarding down the sidewalk. "Look!" said Wyatt, "Mr. Redden's cane is on the sidewalk. Let's skate tricks over it." The other boy, Reggie, said, "You know that's Mr. Redden's cane. He can't walk very far without it. Let's prop it back up on the fence so he will be sure to find it."

A dog came running down the sidewalk, dragging its leash. The dog picked up the cane in its teeth and ran to a neighbor's

yard. Just then, Mr. Redden finished watering the roses and looked around for his cane. He couldn't see it anywhere. "Oh, my," Mr. Redden said, "If I don't have my cane, I may fall when I walk back up the steps." Mr. Redden looked around the gate and under the hedge but couldn't see his cane. Then he heard a voice.

"Rusty! Put it down!" Sofia was running toward the dog. She took the cane from its mouth and grabbed the leash. "Mr. Redden, my dog took your cane." Mr. Redden smiled. "Thank you," he said, "I really need my cane." He walked over to his prettiest roses and cut two of the biggest ones. "Please take these to your mother. Thank her and your dad for teaching you to be kind and honest," he said.

Ask: Who acted like a leader? Explain that people who do the right thing and are helpful, kind, and honest act like leaders. They show others how God wants us to behave. **Ask:** Who was thankful? How are thankful people leaders? Would you like to be a leader? What kind of leader will you be?

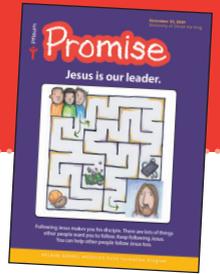
Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- Sunday Gospel • Jesus Is Our Leader** **Ask:** What is a king like? Explain that one day, someone asked Jesus if he was a king.

One day, Jesus was taken to the Roman governor's office. The governor was named Pontius Pilate. Pilate had heard a lot about Jesus and wanted to meet him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked Jesus. Jesus said: "I am not the kind of king you are thinking about. My kingdom is not in this world."

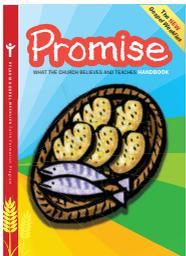
Pilate asked, "So you are a king?"

"You say that I am a king," Jesus told him. "I was born into this world to tell about the truth. And everyone who belongs to the truth knows my voice."



Ask: What did Jesus mean in his answer to Pilate? *Jesus' kingdom doesn't rely on power, is based on loving actions; people in Jesus' kingdom know God loves them and takes care of them.* **Ask:** What are some examples from Jesus' life that show what kind of king he is? What does he want the people in his kingdom to be like? *Jesus' followers must trust in God and share with and care for one another.*

- Activity • God takes care of everyone. (page 2)** Turn to page 2 of *Promise* and read the title together. You might want to give examples of opposites: hot/cold and awake/asleep. Have your child choose the best word in the word bank for each of the pictures, print the words next to the pictures, and draw a line between each pair of opposites. Share about a time you were sick or worried and knew that God was near and taking care of you.



- Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 27. Read the promises together. Remind your child that sometimes we don't get an answer to our prayers right away or the answer we want, but Jesus always hears our prayers and responds with love. Give your child time to complete the prayer starters.

Read the promise at the top of page 28, followed by the next four lines. Then invite your child to draw a picture of a favorite place to pray. Encourage your child to make a promise to pray to Jesus every day. **Ask:** What are some times when you can pray to Jesus? What are some things you can say?

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, page 2.

- Word of the Week • prayer (page 2)** Help your child locate the Word of the Week on page 2. Share this definition: *Prayer is a heart-to-heart talk with God.*

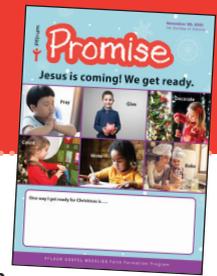
Live the Gospel

- Cover Activity • Jesus is our leader. (page 1)** Give your child time to solve the maze on page 1. **Ask:** Why weren't the money, music player, and balls on the path to Jesus? Read and discuss the lines at the bottom of the page.
- Activity • Jesus Is Our King Table Prayer (pages 3-4)** Read and explain the words at the top. Point out the Alpha and Omega and explain that they are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet. It's like saying "from A to Z" and means that Jesus is the beginning and the end. Have your child trace the hearts on page 3 and color page 4. Then have your child cut on the solid cutting lines, and fold on the folding lines. Use tape to secure the bottom of the stained-glass window panels to the bottom panel. Invite your child to place the display on your family table and pray the prayer together at mealtime this week. Encourage your child to memorize the prayer.
- Closing Prayer** Pray the Table Prayer together.



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Sunday Gospel Background

Sunday's Gospel tells us about Jesus' Second Coming, when he will come in glory to establish God's kingdom on earth. The Church begins its new Church Year by envisioning the ultimate fulfillment of the human race in the coming of Jesus at the end of time.

Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- Pray together** If you have an Advent wreath, light the first violet candle. Otherwise, any candle will do. After you say each sentence of the prayer, your child can respond: "Come, Lord Jesus!" **Pray:** "Jesus, we will celebrate your birthday in four weeks. We light one candle today as we begin the waiting time of Advent. We want to be ready for you. Amen."
- Cover Activity • Jesus is coming! We get ready. (page 1)** Read aloud the action word in each photo. **Ask:** What is the boy with the piggy bank giving? Who do you think he is giving money to? Why do you think he is smiling? For Write, **ask:** What is she writing? *Wish list, Santa letter, thank you, invitation.* For Count, **ask:** What is she counting? *Days until Christmas.* Invite your child to write or draw one way your family gets ready for Christmas in the space.

Explain that during Advent, we get ready to celebrate Jesus' birthday. Advent is also a time to think about getting ready for Jesus to come at the end of time. We might hear about bad and scary things that may happen, but we can be ready by making loving choices and living as Jesus teaches.

- Story • Liza Feels Scared** Share the following story:

Liza loved school. She loved riding the bus. She always brought things to share on show-and-tell Fridays. Liza's Grandpa was visiting. He let Liza bring some of his things to share—shells, baseball cards, and a sailboat model they had built together.

One day, Liza asked her class to pray for Grandpa. He was sick and had to go to the hospital. Liza didn't want to ride the bus anymore. Friday came, but she didn't bring anything for show-and-tell. Liza was worried about Grandpa. She was sad

and lonely without him.

Miss Katie noticed how unhappy Liza was. She called Liza's mother. Do you know what Liza's mom did when she found out how Liza felt? The next day, Liza found a note from her mom in her lunchbox. "Have a good day, Honey," it said. "Love, Mom." That night, Liza and her mom read a bedtime story together. The next night, Liza got to visit Grandpa in the hospital. When Friday came, Liza brought her favorite book to show-and-tell.

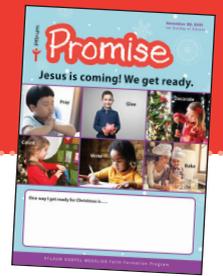
Discuss the story. **Ask:** When have you felt scared, worried, or lonely? Who or what helped you?

Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- Sunday Gospel • Jesus Will Come Again** Sunday's Gospel tells about Jesus' Second Coming. *Promise* focuses on being ready.

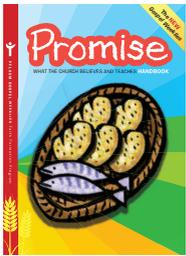
Jesus told his friends that some scary things may happen before he comes again. He said: "I will come on a cloud with power and great glory. When this happens, stand tall

and raise your head because I have come to save you. Pay attention and pray so that you will be ready when I come again."



- **Activity • Stand Up Tall** For this game, invite your child to stand up tall when you name an action that helps us be ready for Jesus. Tell your child to keep sitting if the action won't help us be ready for Jesus.

Stand up or sit down if you...tell the truth / hit your brother / don't do your homework / do your chores / recycle / don't let the new kid play / say "good morning" to someone / pick up litter / read Bible stories / behave at Mass / kick a dog . . . (Add more actions if you wish.)



- **Open the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 18.** Take turns reading the entries about Advent and Christmas. Have your child draw a line from each word at the bottom to its picture.

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, page 4.

- **Word of the Week • Church Year (page 4)** Write out the words *Church Year*. Share this definition: *The Church Year helps us to remember and celebrate Jesus' life.*

Live the Gospel

- **Activity • My Advent Calendar (pages 2-3)** Invite your child to turn to page 2 of *Promise*. These weeks before Christmas are waiting days. The calendar helps us wait and get ready for Jesus' birthday. Point out the candles on the Sundays. Invite your child to color one candle for the First Sunday of Advent.

Point out the saint whose feast day is celebrated in the first week of Advent. Saint Francis Xavier brought the Good News of Jesus to India and Japan. The other squares suggest loving and prayerful activities your child can do to get ready for Christmas.

Have your child cut off the strip at the top of page 3 and place it across the top row of the calendar. Tape the strip only at the top so your child can lift it to look at the saints and activities underneath. There will be a picture strip in every Advent lesson.

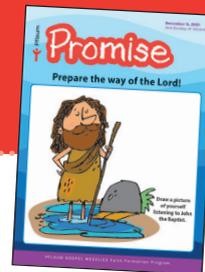
- **Activity • Advent Table Prayer (pages 3-4)** Direct your child's attention to page 3 (bottom). Find the single candle and explain that it represents the First Sunday of Advent. Have your child (1) cut around the outside of the big curved shape, (2) cut the black line that goes all the way across, (3) hold the half with one candle and cut on the dark line by the holly, (4) take the half with the two candles and cut from the bottom to the middle, (5) hold the two pieces so one candle shows on one piece and four candles on the other piece, (6) slide the cut part of the four-candle piece into the cut part of the one-candle piece, (7) stand up the Table Prayer. Help your child check that the page numbers are in order. Place the Table Prayer on your family table. Encourage your child to look at the activity each day of Advent. When a saint is pictured, help your child learn more. Pray each week's prayer together.

- **Closing Prayer** Pray the Family Prayer on the top of page 4 together.



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Sunday Gospel Background

In Sunday's Gospel, John echoes the words of Isaiah, the prophet who had been exiled to Babylon. Isaiah told the other Jewish captives that they would soon see Jerusalem again, because God was preparing a road. They needed to prepare their hearts by being faithful to God.

Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- Pray together** If you have an Advent wreath, light two violet candles. Otherwise, light two candles of any kind. **Pray:** "Jesus, we will celebrate your birth in just three weeks. We light two candles today as we continue the waiting time of Advent. We are trying hard to be ready for you. Amen."
- Story • Never-Ready Sam** Share the story with your child:

Every morning when it's time to get up, Sam wants to stay in bed. His mom says, "It's time to get ready for school." Sam grumbles and says, "I don't want to get up." His mom tells him again and again, "It's time to get ready for school." Finally, Sam gets up and gets dressed. Sometimes, he takes so long getting ready that he eats breakfast in the car so he isn't late for school.

After school, when his dad says, "Sam, it's time to put your game away and get ready for supper," Sam grumbles and says, "I don't want to stop playing." Sometimes, he takes so long

getting ready for supper that he doesn't get dessert.

At bedtime, when his mom says, "Sam, it's time to get ready for bed. Turn off the TV," Sam grumbles and says, "I don't want to stop my show." Sometimes, he takes so long getting ready that he isn't allowed to watch his shows the next day.

On Saturday, when his dad says, "Sam, it's time to get ready to go to the park," Sam zooms up the stairs to get dressed. He zooms to the garage to get his baseball and glove. He stands at the door and says: "Dad, hurry up! I'm ready!"

Ask: Is Sam like anyone you know? What are things you get ready for? Which ones do you do without grumbling?

Discover Gospel and Doctrine

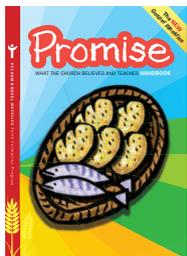
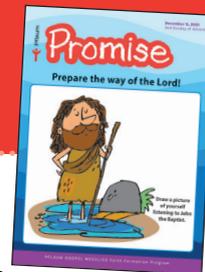
- Sunday Gospel • John Gets Us Ready for Jesus** Explain that John the Baptist helped people get ready for Jesus.

God spoke to John the Baptist in the desert. John traveled all over the area, telling the people to be baptized and to ask God to forgive their sins. The prophet Isaiah had written about John many years before. Isaiah wrote: "Someone is shouting

in the desert, 'Get the road ready for the Lord! Make a straight path for him. Fill up every valley and level every mountain and hill. Straighten the crooked paths and smooth out the rough roads. Then everyone will see the saving power of God.'"

Ask: Why does John talk about making a road for God? *John was telling how people got ready for kings to come to their town. They fixed the roads.* **Ask:** How are we getting ready to celebrate Jesus' birthday?

- Cover Activity • Prepare the way of the Lord! (page 1)** Read aloud the title on page 1. **Ask:** Who is the man? What did John tell the people? Invite your child to finish the picture.



- Open the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 9. Read the text with your child. Stress that God wanted Adam and Eve to be happy forever. Have your child complete the coloring activity. **Answer: Jesus.**

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, page 2.

- **Word of the Week • Old Testament (page 2)** Help your child locate the Word of the Week on page 2. Share this definition: *The Old Testament is the first part of the Bible. It tells the story of God's love for his people.*

Live the Gospel

- **Activity • Mary and Joseph prepare for Jesus. (page 2)** Read aloud the title. Explain that *prepare* is another way of saying *get ready*. **Ask:** How do parents get ready for a new baby? What did Mary and Joseph do to get ready for Jesus?
- **Activity • We prepare our hearts. (page 3)** Read aloud the title on page 3. **Ask:** What does it mean to "prepare our hearts"? *Do kind actions, make loving choices, not be selfish or mean, pray, be kind and friendly.* Read the instructions together and have your child complete the activity.
- **Saint Story • Juan Diego meets the Mother of God. (page 4)** Have your child look at the pictures on page 4 as you tell the story.

Juan Diego lived many years ago in Mexico. Juan worked hard to raise food for his family. One winter day as he was walking to Mass, he heard birds singing.

"Juan," a woman's voice said. Juan saw a beautiful woman with a cloak full of stars. She had dark hair and skin like Juan's. She said: "Don't be afraid. I am Mary, the Mother of God. I want you to ask the bishop to build a church here." Then she disappeared.

Juan hurried to the bishop and told him what Mary wanted, but the bishop wouldn't listen. Juan went back to Mary and told her he had failed. "Try again, Juanito," she said. This time, the bishop said: "I don't believe you. Bring me proof." Juan told Mary that he had failed again. "Don't worry," she said. "Take

some roses to the bishop. Then he will believe you."

"Roses don't bloom in December," Juan said. But when he looked around, he saw many roses. He used his cloak to carry them to the bishop's house. The bishop asked, "What do you have in your cloak?"

"It is the sign from the Mother of God," Juan said. He opened his cloak and let the roses fall onto the floor. The bishop got down on his knees. Juan wondered why. Then he looked at his cloak and saw a picture of the beautiful woman. "I will build a church where the Mother of God has asked," the bishop said. The church is there today, and Juan Diego's cloak is there too.

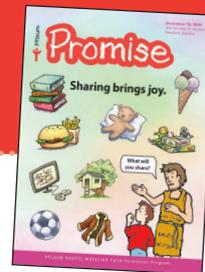
Ask: What is another name for Our Lady of Guadalupe? *Mary.*

- **Activity • My Advent Calendar (page 4)** Have your child cut off the calendar strip on page 4 and tape it to the Advent calendar you worked on last week. Encourage your child to do the activity for each day.
- **Closing Prayer** "Jesus, we want to be ready for you. We are preparing our hearts. Come, Lord Jesus! Amen."



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Sunday Gospel Background

In Sunday's Gospel, rich people, tax collectors, and soldiers come to John the Baptist and ask him how to get ready for God's coming. He tells them to be good to other people by being kind, generous, and fair.

Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- Pray together** If you have an Advent wreath, light two violet candles and the rose candle. Or, light three candles of any kind. **Pray:** "Jesus, thank you for coming to be with us. Help us to find joy in following you. Amen."
- Story • Mia's Birthday Party (page 2)** Tell the following story:

Mia was excited. Saturday was her sixth birthday, and her grandparents were coming to her party. Mia had made an invitation and sent it in the mail. Friday night, she listened to the weather forecast on the news. "There will be a big snowstorm," the weather lady said.

Before going to sleep, Mia looked out her bedroom window. Big snowflakes were beginning to fall. When her mom tucked her in, Mia asked, "What if Grandma and Grandpa can't come to my party because of the snow?" "Don't worry," her mom said and kissed her. "No matter how much it snows, we will still celebrate your birthday."

When Mia woke up the next morning, snow covered everything! Mia couldn't see the sidewalk. She put on her jacket, snow pants, and boots and went outside to help her

dad shovel a path through the snow. But the snow was deep and heavy. Snow covered the streets and cars. No one could drive. Mia began to cry.

Her dad heard Mia and put down his shovel to pick her up. "Birthday girls shouldn't have tears, Mia," he said. "Just watch your dad take care of this snow." He picked up his shovel and made the snow fly.

Mia helped her mom make her birthday cake. She kept looking out the window for cars to come down the snowy street. Then she heard the doorbell. When Mia opened the door, there were Grandma and Grandpa! They had skied to Mia's house. "We wouldn't miss your birthday party," Grandpa said. It was Mia's best birthday ever!

Ask: How did Mia get ready for her party? What almost spoiled it? Who helped make the party happen? Why was it the best birthday ever? Have your child open *Promise* to pages 1-2 and read the rebus story aloud together.

Discover Gospel and Doctrine

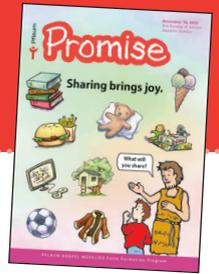
- Sunday Gospel • John Tells Us to Share and Be Fair** Tell your child this Gospel:

The people asked John, "What should we do to get ready for the Lord?" John said: "If you have two coats, give one to someone who needs it. If you have food, share it with someone who is hungry."

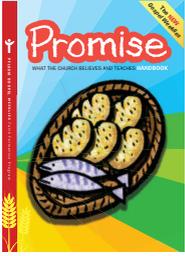
Tax collectors asked John, "Teacher, what should we do?" John said, "Don't make people pay more than they owe." Some

soldiers asked, "What about us? What should we do?" John said, "Be fair, don't lie, and be satisfied with your pay." The people wondered if John was the Messiah.

John said: "I am just baptizing with water. But someone more powerful is going to come, and I am not good enough to undo his sandal straps."



- Cover Activity • Sharing brings joy. (page 1)** Read aloud the words of John the Baptist on the cover. **Ask:** What can the boy share? Which of your things can you share? How do you feel when you give or share something that makes someone else happy? Explain that it's natural to be excited about getting gifts at birthdays and Christmas. Talk about the gifts your child is giving others this Christmas. **Ask:** How do you feel when you give a birthday or Christmas gift? Which do you like better: making or buying gifts for others?



- Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 11. Review the story of Noah and the Ark if necessary. **Ask:** After the flood, what did God ask Noah and his family to do? *Take care of the earth and one another.* Help your child understand that God calls all of us to take care of his Creation even today. Share ways your family takes care of all that God has created. Invite your child to choose a way he or she takes care of the earth and others in the frames. If your child struggles with this, suggest your child draw some ways he or she *would like to* care for others. Encourage your child to take this caring action.

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, page 2.

- Word of the Week • neighbor (page 2)** Write out the word *neighbor*. Share this definition: *A neighbor is a person who lives near someone. Jesus said we should love our neighbor like we love ourselves.*

Live the Gospel

- Activity • Happy Birthday Booklet (pages 3-4)** Have your child cut out the Advent Calendar strip and set it aside. If needed, help cut the remaining part of pages 3-4 on the heavy cutting line, making two long rectangles that will become the birthday booklet. Fold each rectangle on the dotted line and nest them together so the birthday cake page becomes the cover and the picture of the angels speaking to the shepherds becomes page 3.

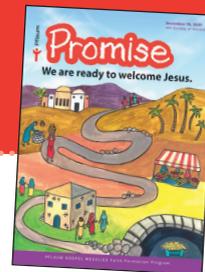
Go through the booklet with your child and show how the elements of birthday celebrations— invitations, people at parties, presents, a special date—are parts of the story of Jesus' birthday too. Then direct your child to complete the booklet by adding the information and drawings.

- Activity • My Advent Calendar (page 3)** Have your child add the calendar strip to the Advent calendar you've been working on. Remind your child to do each day's activity.
- Closing Prayer** **Pray:** "Jesus, we want to share the joy of your coming. Help us to find joy in sharing and giving to others. Help us to be kind and fair. We want to be ready for your coming." Your child can respond, "Come, Lord Jesus! Amen."



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Sunday Gospel Background

In Sunday's Gospel, Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth. Both women are surprised at the Holy Spirit's new life within them. "Most blessed are you among women," Elizabeth says to Mary, giving us words we pray in the Hail Mary.

Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- Pray together** Light all four candles of your Advent wreath, or four candles of any kind. After each sentence of the prayer, have your child respond: "Come, Lord Jesus." **Pray:** "Jesus, soon it will be your birthday. Our hearts are ready. We are filled with happiness."
- Cover Activity • We are ready to welcome Jesus. (page 1)** Look at the cover picture together. Your child will recognize the world of Jesus' time. Have your child look for the empty stable (cave) and manger, and Mary and Joseph coming down the road. Invite your child to use a finger to trace along the road. **Ask:** What will Mary and Joseph think and talk about as they pass through the village on their way to the inn? What happens when they reach the inn? Next week's *Promise* has the Christmas story, so you can stop today with their arrival at the stable.
- Story • Welcome Home, Donnie! (page 2)** Invite your child to look at the pictures on page 2 as you tell this story:

Jamaal had a problem. His big brother Donnie was coming home from college for Christmas. Jamaal was going to have to clean his room and let Donnie use it for two weeks.

Jamaal's room had always belonged to Donnie until four months ago when Donnie went to college. Jamaal loved putting his toys on the shelves. He loved having Spike sleep on the rug by his bed. Jamaal grumbled as he picked up his room and packed up his toys.

Then Jamaal remembered that Donnie had taught him to catch and throw his football. He remembered times when Donnie had taken him for hamburgers and even let him bring a friend along. The more Jamaal thought about Donnie, the

cleaner the room became.

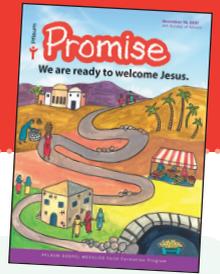
Jamaal was so happy that he could hardly wait for Donnie to get home. Saturday morning, he watched the sidewalk, hoping to see Donnie before anyone else. Jamaal noticed Donnie's red and black scarf before he could see Donnie's face.

Jamaal took Donnie to his old room. The toys were put away in the toy box. The room was clean. And over the bed hung a big sign Jamaal had made—Welcome Home Donnie. Donnie said, "You sure know how to make me feel welcome! You know what? Why don't you sleep right next to the bed on the floor? You can use my sleeping bag. The room can belong to both of us."

Ask: Why did Jamaal grumble? What memories stopped his grumbling? How did Jamaal feel about Donnie coming home then? How do you feel when someone special comes for a visit?

Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- Sunday Gospel • Mary Visits Elizabeth** Note: We include the Annunciation story (Luke 1:26–38) to give context for the Visitation.



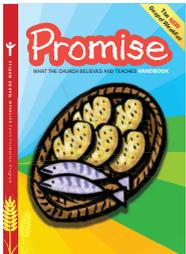
One day, an angel named Gabriel came to Mary. The angel said: "Hello, Mary. You are full of grace. God is with you." Mary was surprised. The angel said: "Don't be afraid, Mary. God wants you to be the mother of his Son, Jesus." Mary said, "I will do what God wants." Then the angel told Mary that her older cousin Elizabeth was going to have a baby too.

Mary left to go visit Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary arrive, the baby leaped inside of her. Elizabeth said: "Blessed

are you among women, Mary, and blessed is your baby too. I feel so special that the mother of our Lord has come to visit. When I heard your greeting, my baby leaped for joy. You are blessed, Mary, because you believe what God has promised." Mary stayed a while at Elizabeth's home before going back to Nazareth to wait for Jesus to be born.

Ask: Why were Mary and Elizabeth happy to see each other? What special news did they have to share? What was special about their babies? *Elizabeth was old and thought she would never have a baby. Her baby became John the Baptist. Mary's baby is Jesus, the Son of God. Elizabeth's baby leaped for joy when Mary (and Jesus) arrived.*

- Activity • Mary visits Elizabeth (page 3)** Help your child identify Mary and Elizabeth. Note that they are happy to see each other. Invite your child to color the picture.



- Open** the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 29. Help your child find the Hail Mary. Read the first two lines. **Ask:** Who said those words to Mary? *The angel Gabriel.* Read the next two lines of the prayer. **Ask:** Who said those words to Mary? *Her cousin Elizabeth.* Read the remainder of the prayer. Help your child learn (or review) this prayer by saying a line and inviting your child to repeat it. The Hail Mary also appears on page 4 of this week's *Promise* lesson.

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, page 2.

- Word of the Week • Mary (page 2)** Print or write the name Mary. Share this definition: *Mary is Jesus' mother. Mary is our mother, too. She hears us when we talk to her in prayer.*

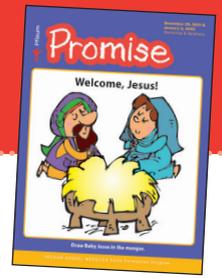
Live the Gospel

- Activity • Elizabeth welcomes Mary. (page 4)** Have your child complete the activity. Answer: *Blessed are you among women.* Invite your child to find similar words in the Hail Mary prayer below the activity. You may need to explain words and phrases such as *art thou* (are you), *thee* (you), *fruit of thy womb* (the baby you will have).
- Activity • My Advent Calendar (page 4)** Have your child cut off the strip and tape to the Advent calendar you have been working on. Encourage your child to do the activities on the remaining days of Advent.
- Closing Prayer** Lead your child in praying the Sign of the Cross, the Hail Mary, and the Sign of the Cross again.



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Sunday Gospel Background

This issue of Promise covers two Sundays. Christmas and Epiphany celebrate that God is one of us, a human being with a human family. The visit of the Magi tells us that Jesus came for all nations.

Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- Pray together** “Dear Jesus, thank you for being the best Christmas gift ever! Help us to share your love with others. Amen.”
- Cover Activity • Welcome, Jesus! (page 1)** Look at the cover picture together. **Ask:** What’s missing? *Baby Jesus.* Have your child draw Baby Jesus into the picture.
- Story • Lucy’s Christmas** Invite your child to listen for how changes to Christmas make Lucy feel.

Just before Christmas, Lucy’s mom told her: “We are going to Grandma’s for Christmas. She isn’t feeling well.” Lucy didn’t say anything. She liked being in her own home on Christmas Day. Mom gave Lucy a hug. “I know you feel bad,” Mom said, “but Grandma will be very happy to see you. We’ll take food and presents and have our party in Grandma’s apartment.”

Lucy and her mom and dad got things ready. Dad and Lucy baked and decorated cookies. Mom made red bows for a small Christmas tree. Lucy helped tie them on the branches. They wrapped presents for Grandma: gloves, a blouse, a box of her favorite candy, and a picture of the Holy Family that Lucy drew.

On Christmas Eve, Mom put the ham in the oven. Then they went to Mass. When they got home, the house smelled like ham. “Let’s have sandwiches,” Dad said, “then it’s off to bed.

We will leave early.”

On Christmas morning, Dad, Mom, and Lucy loaded the car and left for Grandma’s. They sang Christmas carols. Soon, they were at Grandma’s apartment. Grandma was waving from her balcony. “Merry Christmas!” Lucy yelled. “Merry Christmas!” Grandma yelled back.

Lucy carried the bag of presents. Mom carried the Christmas tree, and Dad brought in the roaster with the ham in it. Soon, Grandma’s apartment looked and smelled like Christmas. They opened their presents before dinner because Lucy couldn’t wait. Grandma loved the picture of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph that Lucy had made. She put it on the table by the little Christmas tree. Grandma said: “Lucy, thank you for the present and for coming to be with me. This is the best Christmas ever.” Grandma gave Lucy a big hug, and Lucy hugged her back.

Ask: What was different about Lucy’s Christmas? What did Lucy do to make Christmas happy for Grandma? How did Lucy feel when Grandma liked her present and gave her a hug? *Christmas is about showing love to others. Lucy gave a gift of herself by making Grandma’s Christmas special. That made Lucy’s Christmas special.*

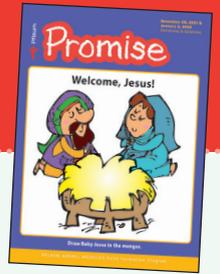
Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- Christmas Gospel • Jesus Is Born** Tell the Gospel:

When it was close to the time for Mary to give birth to Jesus, the emperor said that everyone had to be registered. Joseph had to go to Bethlehem, a city almost 100 miles away from his home with Mary in Nazareth. He and Mary traveled to the town of Bethlehem.

When Joseph tried to find a place to stay in Bethlehem, all the inns were full. Mary gave birth to Jesus in a stable where animals lived. Mary wrapped Jesus in long pieces of soft cloth and laid him in the manger.

Shepherds were taking care of their sheep in the fields



nearby. An angel appeared to them, and the dark night sky became bright. The shepherds were afraid. The angels said: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy. Today in Bethlehem, a savior has been born. Go look for him. He is a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." Suddenly,

other angels appeared and started singing: "Glory to God in the highest! Peace to people on earth."

The shepherds went to the stable and told Mary and Joseph everything the angel had said. Then they went off to Bethlehem to share the Good News that the Savior has been born.

- Activity • Shepherds learn that Jesus is born. (page 2)** Search together for the four things wrong with the picture at the top of page 2: *cowboy boots, roller skates, oar, baseball cap*. Have your child color the picture. Then invite your child to circle the two sheep that are the same: *top row #1 and bottom row #3*. Invite your child to color this picture.
- Epiphany Gospel • Magi Visit Jesus** Invite your child to listen to find out what helped these visitors find Jesus.

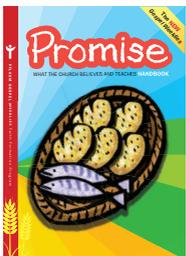
While Mary and Joseph were still in Bethlehem after Jesus was born, special visitors came to see Jesus. These visitors were called Magi. They had seen a big star in the sky and knew the star was a sign that a special person had been born. They traveled a long way to find him.

country lived, they asked: "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We have come from far away to honor him."

The star led them to the Bethlehem, to the house where Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were staying. They honored Jesus and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

When they got to Jerusalem where the king of Jesus'

- Activity • Magi bring gifts to Jesus. (page 3)** Invite your child to solve the maze.



- Open the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 20.** Take turns reading the text one line at a time. Have your child complete the maze and puzzle. **Answer:** *The Holy Family*.

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, page 4.

- Word of the Week • Jesus (page 4)** Help your child locate the Word of the Week. Share this definition: *Jesus is God's Son. He is true God. He is also human like us. Jesus' Father is God in Heaven.*

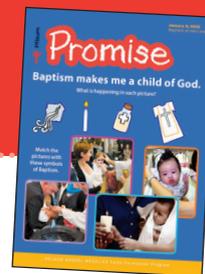
Live the Gospel

- Activity • I can share the Good News! (page 4)** Review the Christmas and Epiphany stories with your child. **Ask:** What message did God share by sending Jesus? *God loves us!* That is the Good News—God loves us! **Ask:** How can you share the Good News of God's love? Give your child time to trace the letters on page 4.
- Closing Prayer** "Loving God, thank you for the gift of Jesus. Thank you for your love for us. Help us share the Good News of your love with everyone. Amen."



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Sunday Gospel Background

In Sunday's Gospel, John the Baptist tells people that someone greater than he is coming. Jesus comes to John for baptism. When Jesus is baptized, the heavens open, the Holy Spirit descends upon him as a dove, and a voice proclaims, "You are my beloved Son." God is revealed to us as Trinity, Three Persons in One God.

Share Experiences

Check off the boxes as you complete each part of the lesson.

- Pray together** "Loving God, you welcomed us into your family at our baptisms. Thank you for calling us your children. We promise to love one another. Amen."
- Story • Vincent's New Brother** Share this story:

Vincent's dad called him at his grandma's house. "You have a new baby brother," Dad said. "His name is David. I will come get you tomorrow so our whole family can be together." Grandma gave Vincent a big hug. "It will be fun to be a big brother," Grandma said. "Let's get ready to welcome David."

Grandma took out a sheet of white paper. She folded it in half to make a booklet. She took one of Vincent's school pictures and put glue on the back. "Put it right in the middle," Grandma told Vincent. He put the picture on the paper and pressed so it would stick. "What should we write by your picture?" Grandma asked. "I will print my name," Vincent said, and he printed VINCENT above his picture. Underneath,

Grandma printed, "I am your big brother."

Grandma opened the booklet. "What else should we tell your little brother?" she asked. Vincent said, "I will draw a picture of a book, and you can write that I will read to him." Vincent drew, and Grandma wrote. "Now," Vincent said, "I will draw a picture of a baby bottle." Vincent drew, and Grandma wrote, "I will help feed you."

Grandma turned the booklet over. There was one more space to fill. Vincent grabbed the red crayon and drew a big heart. Inside the heart, he wrote, "I love you." Grandma and Vincent read the booklet together. "Now we are ready to welcome your baby brother," Grandma said.

Talk about what it is like to be welcomed. Perhaps your child has welcomed a new brother or sister, or a new student at school. **Ask:** How did you help with welcoming? Explain that Baptism is how we are welcomed into God's family.

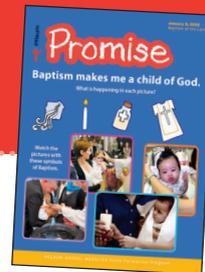
Discover Gospel and Doctrine

- Sunday Gospel • John the Baptist baptizes Jesus. (page 2)** Invite your child to look at the pictures on page 2 as you share the Gospel:

When Jesus' cousin John grew up, people came to listen to him and be baptized by him. John told the people that God had promised to send the Messiah, the One who would save God's people.

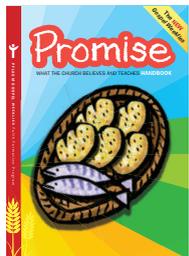
Some people thought John might be the Messiah. But John told them: "The one who is coming will be so powerful that I am not good enough to untie his sandal straps. I am baptizing with water. When he comes, he will baptize with the Holy Spirit."

John baptized people in the Jordan River. People who were sorry for their sins stepped into the water, and John baptized them. One day, Jesus came to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. When Jesus came out of the water, the skies opened and the Holy Spirit came over Jesus in the shape of a dove. A voice from Heaven said: "You are my own dear Son. I am very pleased with you." John knew then that Jesus was the special person God had promised to send.



Explain that the Persons of the Blessed Trinity—God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit—were all at Jesus’ baptism. Help your child identify the Trinity in the Gospel.

- **Cover Activity • Baptism makes me a child of God. (page 1)** Invite your child to describe the cover photos and match the symbols with the photos. Explain that these symbols are ways to show on the outside what is happening on the inside of the person who is baptized.



- **Open the *What the Church Believes and Teaches* handbook to page 13.** Take turns reading each line. As you read, invite your child to underline the following words: *love, holy, God, family*. Explain that Baptism is the first sacrament we receive. To be holy is to be like Jesus.

Ask: Do you know what the priest or deacon says at a Baptism? What prayer do you know that uses those words? *The Sign of the Cross*. Explain that making a Sign of the Cross with holy water as we enter and leave church is a reminder of our Baptism.

Talk about the promises of Baptism. God says, “You are my child.” The person who is baptized promises to live as a child of God. **Ask:** How can babies make this promise? Explain that parents and godparents make the promise for the baby or child. They also promise to teach the child about God so that someday the child can make the promises on his or her own. Invite your child to solve the puzzle. **Answers:** 1-holy, 2-God, 3-family, 4-love. Then turn to page 14 and help your child complete each sentence to tell the story of your child’s Baptism.

Once you have completed this section of the lesson, close the handbook and return to Promise, page 4.

- **Word of the Week • Baptism (page 4)** After your child finds the Word of the Week, share this definition: *Baptism makes us children of God and members of God’s family, the Church.*

Live the Gospel

- **Activity • My Baptism (pages 3-4)** Have your child use the Baptism information from the handbook to fill in the blanks on page 4. Have your child first cut off the strip and then the blue and yellow rectangle on page 3. Fold the blue rectangle in half, cut on the cutting lines, and assemble the slider. Your child can pull the words of Baptism through the window. Mime the motions of scooping up water with your hand and pouring it as your child reads the words of Baptism.
- **Activity • ‘Receive the light of Christ’ (page 4)** Invite your child to turn over what remains of page 4. Read aloud the heading and directions. Give your child time to complete the sentence. **Answer:** *I will walk as a child of the light.*
- **Closing Prayer** “Jesus, thank you for making us your brothers and sisters through Baptism. We will try to follow your way of loving one another. Please help us. Amen.”



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