

Today's Readings

Isaiah 49:3, 5–6
 Psalm 40:1 and 3ab,
 8 and 11
 John 1:29–34

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- a Lectionary
- a battery-operated candle
- a festive houseplant or bouquet of fresh flowers
- a globe or ball to represent the globe (please note how it will be used during the Prayer of the Faithful)

For use during the Homily have ready either chalk and chalkboard or a sketchpad and felt-tip marker.

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

“God’s Family”

(*Seeds* VOL.-2, Track #16) or “**The Baptism of Jesus**” (*Promise & Good News* VOL.-2, Track #16)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

“**Alleluia**” (*Promise & Good News* VOL.-2, Track #24)

Jesus Is the Son of God

PREPARATION

Children’s Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children’s Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

You, LORD God, have done many wonderful things, and you have planned marvelous things for us. No one is like you! I would never be able to tell all you have done. (PSALM 40:5)

Scripture Background

Today’s readings begin with the second of Isaiah’s four “Songs of the Suffering Servant.” In the first one, the Heavenly Father spoke. In this one, the servant speaks.

It seems clear that Jesus identified with these servant songs from the many times in his public life that he referred to himself as a servant. Frequent references to Christ as servant or slave in the letters of Peter and Paul also indicate early Christian attachment to this image for our Lord.

The First Reading offers yet another image to describe the coming Messiah. Verse 6 says he will be “a light for other nations.” Here, light is a symbol of salvation, for in a very literal sense light from the sun saves all the world from the starvation and death that would surely accompany perpetual night.

In today’s Gospel, John the Baptist offers a brief discourse about Christ first by calling him the Lamb of God, then eventually naming him the Son of God. In this way, John speaks in terms that in the future will be agreeable both to Jewish and Gentile Christians.



The title of “servant” or “slave” was popular mainly among Jewish Christians, who recognized its Old Testament roots. Christian converts from the Greco-Roman tradition could better relate to the title “Son of God.”

Biblical scholars agree that his “Lamb of God” designation is meant to suggest both Isaiah’s Suffering Servant, for whom the work of salvation is difficult and costly, and the first paschal lamb that was sacrificed while the Hebrews were still slaves in Egypt.

The blood of that lamb, you will recall, was sprinkled on the Hebrews’ doorposts so that the Angel of Death would bypass them during the night he was slaying the first-born sons of Egypt. So, too, does the blood of Jesus save from death all those who put their trust in his message.

CHILDREN’S CONNECTIONS

Kids Say the Darnedest Things! was the name of a popular book Art Linkletter once wrote after several years of interviewing young children on daytime television. If you were to interview the children of your parish about the religious art in their environment, you might hear them say the darnedest things, too.

One little girl thought that a side altar in her church decorated with a “J” superimposed on an “S” had something to do with money—not Saint Joseph. A boy looking at a symbolic depiction of the Sacrament of Matrimony thought the two interlocking rings were a pair of handcuffs!

It would pay to thoroughly familiarize yourself with the religious imagery that children in your parish see all the time, but perhaps do not understand. If a stained-glass window or a saintly image also puzzles you, a parish priest probably could fill you in.

If your church was built after Vatican II, don’t overlook the more subtle uses of Christian symbolism favored by contemporary church designers. Seven high windows through which only blue skies are visible, for example, suggest the Seven Sacraments and the glimpses into Heaven that they provide.

At appropriate times throughout the year, share with children the meanings of the religious symbols found in their immediate environment. Begin today by pointing out any images inside your church or on its printed materials that portray Jesus as the Lamb of God or the light of the world.

More About ...

Son of God

In his *Dictionary of the Bible*, John L. McKenzie, SJ, writes that when Christians call Jesus the Son of God, they mean that he was sent by the Father, fully possesses the Holy Spirit, and enjoys an intimate and exclusive union with the Father unlike any other human being.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* offers these additional insights:

- When Jesus calls himself the “only Son of God” in John 3:16, he is affirming his existence long before human beings populated the earth (#444).
- When the Old Testament refers to an angel, a human being, the entire Hebrew nation, or a Hebrew king as a son of God, the term implies adoptive sonship (#441).
- In the Gospels, Jesus never uses the phrase “our Father” except when he tells his disciples, “You, then, pray like this: Our Father.” Instead, he always distinguishes his sonship from theirs by saying “my Father and your Father” (#443).

The Children’s Leaflet

The Children’s Leaflet for this week helps the children learn about the Son of God, through a prayer, a summary of the Gospel, and a creative activity.

You may distribute the leaflet now, for use during the session, or before the children return to the assembly. If you distribute the leaflet now and time permits, you may wish to read with the children the summary of the Gospel in “The Word of God This Week” after you have read the Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

Leaflet Activity

This week's leaflet features a creative activity focused on Jesus and John the Baptist. Children are invited to draw or color a scene showing Jesus and John standing at the River Jordan. Encourage them to include a dove in the sky, symbolizing the Holy Spirit. This grace-filled moment helps children reflect on the story of Jesus' baptism and the light of God's presence.



THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Lead the children in singing the African-American folk song "Jesus in the Morning" while accompanying it with gestures. At the beginning of the song, stand up straight with arms at your side, then accompany the sung phrases with the following actions:

Je-sus (*slowly raise left hand, palm up, in front of you*)
Je-sus (*slowly raise right hand, palm up, in front of you*)
Jesus in the morning (*sway to the left*)
Jesus in the noon time
(*sway to the right and gracefully return hands to side*)
Je-sus (*repeat as above*)
Je-sus (*repeat as above*)
Jesus when the sun goes down (*form a circle with arms raised above the head, then bow from the waist down*).

Repeat the same gestures with successive verses.
After finishing the hymn, invite the children to be seated.

Collect

LEADER: Please bow your heads for prayer. At the end of each prayer, repeat, "Lord, have mercy."

Lord Jesus, you are the servant of God, the servant of humanity, and the light of the world. Lord, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: Lord Jesus, you are the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Lord, have mercy.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: Lord Jesus, you are the Son of God filled with the Holy Spirit and sent to us by the Father.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: While listening to today's First Reading, imagine Jesus, the Messiah, saying these words to himself as he begins his public life of teaching and healing.

*Read Isaiah 49:3, 5-6. Then say,
"The word of the Lord."*

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be sung or spoken. Before beginning the psalm, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

CHILDREN: Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

LEADER: Read Psalm 40:1 and 3ab, 8 and 11.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: From the First Reading, we know that Jesus was the servant of God and the light of all nations. In today's Gospel, you will hear two more titles for Jesus, and they come to us from John the Baptist. The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: A reading from the Gospel of John.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read John 1:29-34. Then say,
"The Gospel of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Tell the group that today's readings give us four different names or titles for Jesus, and each one tells us something important about him.

1 On a sketchpad or chalkboard, preferably placed where the children can watch, draw a stick figure of someone kneeling down with head bowed. Ask the group to guess what you have drawn (a servant); then share these thoughts:

- We sometimes call Jesus the Suffering Servant.
- Anyone who freely makes himself a servant accepts the pain and inconvenience that goes along with it. That's why we call Jesus the ultimate servant, "the Suffering Servant."

2 Next, draw a Christmas star with rays shining down on a globe. Ask the group what title for Jesus this represents (light of the world, or light to all nations) then share these thoughts:

- Jesus' salvation is for everyone, just as the Christmas star shone over the whole world.
- That is why we call Jesus "the light to all nations."

3 Draw a woolly lamb. Ask what title for Jesus this represents (Lamb of God) and offer these related thoughts:

- In the time of Moses, the Hebrew slaves were told to sacrifice a lamb and smear their doorways with its blood. The Angel of Death was coming to Egypt that night, and this would be a sign to him to skip that house.
- The blood of Jesus spilled on the cross saves us from everlasting death, and that's why we call him "the Lamb of God."

4 Draw an open hand coming from a cloud over a smiling human face. Ask what title for Jesus this represents (Son of God) and offer these related thoughts:

- In Christian art, a hand coming down from Heaven is always a symbol of God the Father.
- The smiley face in this sketch shows that Jesus was human just like us.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith and respond to each question with, "Yes, I do believe." Do you believe in God, the Father, who sent Christ Jesus to save the world from sin and death?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

LEADER: Do you believe in Christ Jesus, Suffering Servant and light to all nations, Lamb of God, and only Son of the Father?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

LEADER: Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit, who is one with Christ and one with the Father?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Because Christ is the light to all nations, we are going to take the globe from our worship table and pass it around among ourselves. As you receive the globe in your hands, please name a city, state, or country that you would like to pray for today. Our response to each petition will be, "Christ, be their light."

Have the children form a circle. Take the globe into your own hands and name a place. Then pass the globe to the next person.

LEADER: Heavenly Father, truly Jesus, your only Son, lights up the world with your love. May we bring his light to all the places we go this week. This we ask through the same Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.