Lessons by Age and Level: The Easter Season

During the Easter Season, the days between Easter and Pentecost, we focus on lessons which invite the children to wonder about the mysteries of the “resurrection life” which we all share. These lessons include a Liturgy of the Light, Baptism I, II and III, the Empty Tomb, the Mystery of Life and Death, and various lessons about liturgical gestures.

**Liturgy of the Light:** At the first session after Easter we celebrate a “para-liturgy” to celebrate Jesus as the light of the world. In this liturgy we explain that His light cannot be extinguished; it conquers even death. Through the gift of Baptism, we die and rise with him; we take on his inextinguishable light and life. Through the water, Word, and holy oils of baptism, we come to participate in the abundant light and life of Christ. In this celebration, which is done in all three levels, we celebrate the light of the Risen Christ in our lives.

**IDEAS FOR WHAT YOU CAN DO AT HOME:**

- Talk to your child about their Baptism. They likely don't have a memory unless you "provide" them the memory. Here’s some ideas for how to do that:
  - Show them pictures or a video from their baptism.
  - If you still have their baptism gown and candle, show them those too.
  - Reminisce about your memories of that day. What details do you remember?
  - Talk about their godparents or even invite them over for dinner if they’re local. Use this time to remind your child of that special relationship.
- Read the stories of the resurrection with your child. They can be found in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20-21. Ponder with them about Jesus rising from the dead. What would it be like to meet Jesus? What would you ask him? How would you feel?
- Plant flowers or other plants together. Talk about the new life we experience during spring, how it grows from a “dead” seed into a new plant. Relate this new life to Jesus and our new life in Jesus through baptism. April 22 is Earth Day. This is a great opportunity to connect the environment to our relationship with God.
- Use a Children’s Mass Book to point out parts of the Mass including the Preparation of the Chalice, the Lavabo (washing of the hands), and the sign of peace at Mass.
- Practice the Our Father and Hail Mary with your children at home using a Rosary and the Glorious Mysteries. [How to Pray the Rosary](#)

**Level I Lessons By Age**

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**Baptism I, II, and III:** The gifts and signs of Baptism are introduced to children from the earliest time in Level I, but are done so in stages.

- **Age 3-4:** The youngest children learn that they received the Light of Christ at their baptism. In this presentation we focus on Jesus’s light being given to them.
- **Ages 4-5:** The second time children learn about Baptism we build upon the first lesson by talking about the gifts of water, the Word, and the sacred oil. These symbols reveal something about the mystery of receiving Jesus’s light. We ponder what the water, Word, and oil teaches us.
- **Ages 5-6:** In their last year in the atrium the baptism lesson expands to include the gestures of baptism. These include asking the Spirit to bless the water (called Epiclesis) and the signing of the child’s head with the cross. We ponder what it means to be marked with the cross.

**Liturgical Gestures:** Preparation of the Cruets, Preparation of the Chalice, Lavabo, and the Sign of Peace

- **Preparation of the Cruets:** This is a very simple, quiet presentation. The catechist demonstrates the careful, slow, controlled pouring of wine from a pitcher into a cruet, using a funnel.
- **Preparation of the Chalice:** this presentation progresses from the Preparation of the Cruets. In it, the catechist says the words of the prayer that the priest says when he adds the drop of water to the wine: "By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity." The child then ponders the meaning of this prayer with the assistant or catechist.

**The Empty Tomb:** We present one narrative of the Resurrection of Jesus. At St. Peter we use the Gospel of Matthew (28:1-10) and read of the two women who come to the tomb where Jesus is buried. In the Atrium, we have a three-dimensional model of the tomb. The children are individually able to work with this model and the corresponding figures (women and an angel) after the presentation. We wonder with the children about this amazing story with these questions:

- How do you think the women felt going to the tomb?
- Why do you think the women were afraid?
- How was the stone moved?
- Had this type of event ever happened in history before?
- The light of the Risen Christ has come into the world. What can this event mean for us? For the world? For all peoples?

**The Mystery of Life and Death:** From their earliest time in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, children have listened to the Christian message in which "death and life are tightly bound to the announcement of resurrection: life is stronger than death." In this way the discussion of death/life is presented in a positive context. We address the children's concerns by showing an example of a seed that when planted in the ground is transformed to new life.

The presentation is only given to children who have been in the Level I Atrium for 2-3 years. It begins with Jesus' words found in John 12:24: "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much wheat."

We show the children some materials that help us understand these words. We display a jar of wheat seeds and 3 pots of plants. With the pots, we show the progression of what the seeds looks like after 2 weeks, 8 days and 4 days in each of the pots. We dig up the different pots and see if we can still see the seed at the root of the plant. This is a time where the children are encouraged to feel the dirt and touch the roots and/or the remnants of the seed. The children discover that, when the seed is planted, it is totally transformed from a seed to a growing plant. We wonder together what must be in the seed to make this transformation occur.
### Level II Lessons by Age

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- **Baptism Works**
  - **Synthesis of Baptism**: The gifts and signs of Baptism are introduced to children from the earliest time in Level I, so the presentation in Level II is reinforcement for those children who have been with us for a while. The sacramental signs and gestures are so rich and important that the children don't seem to tire from receiving them again. During this time we try to host a “field trip” to the church to visit the baptismal font, paschal candle, white garments, and holy oils used in our baptisms.
  - **Rite of Baptism**: Children in their second or third year of Level II receive a more complex presentation and work on creating a missal of the Rite of Baptism. In the missal they copy pictures of the rite and include prayers used for each of the blessings.

- **Eucharist Works**
  - **Eucharistic Presence International**: The Level I lesson which connects the Good Shepherd to the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is expanded in Level II to show that Jesus is not just present to us, but to people throughout the world.
  - **Origin of the Eucharist**: From their earliest years in Level I, the children have received presentations about Jesus' Last Supper and Jesus' presence in our celebration of the Eucharist. This lesson explains how it is possible that we still celebrate the “last supper” today. Starting with the apostle’s continuing the supper, we ponder how the celebration could have developed into what we do today.
  - **Synthesis of the Mass**: The “Synthesis of the Mass” is a compilation of the main moments in the celebration of the Eucharist. This presentation is lengthy, and each child is asked to make his or her own Mass Missal (book). We give this lesson to all first communion candidates. Here some of the objects, moments and gestures of the Mass that we will review:
    - Listening to the Word (readings from the Bible)
    - The objects - cruets, that hold the water and the wine
    - The mixing of water and wine
    - The gesture of Epiclesis (when the priest gestures with his hands the “coming down” of the Holy Spirit on the gifts of bread and wine)
    - The moment when we profess our Mystery of Faith ("We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.")
    - The gesture of the Offering (The priest gestures with his hands the people's offering back up to God and says the words "Through Him, with Him, in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, forever and ever.")
    - The Lord’s Prayer
    - The gesture of peace where we shake each other's hands to spread and share Christ's peace
- The moment of Holy Communion where we receive Jesus in a special way. These are not new topics because the children have received presentations on these throughout their years of catechesis; however, this is the moment we bring all the elements together into a synthesized whole. In Level III they will spend even more time with the structure and prayers of the Mass.

- **Resurrection Works**
  - **Empty Tomb**: See notes in Level I lessons.
  - **Post-resurrection Narratives**: In this adaptable lesson we read stories from the gospels about the apostles encountering Jesus after the resurrection. Found in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24 and John 20-21, these stories help us wonder what it would be like to meet the Risen Christ.
  - **Resurrection Bible Studies**: Children in their third year in Atrium II have learned to look up scripture verses. During the Easter season we gather them to read and compare the four resurrection stories. This leads to discussion about how differences exist in the Bible. We ponder why these stories would be different and if they can still be true.
  - **Pentecost Narrative**: Third year students spend the second to last week reading and discussing Acts 2:1-4. We ponder what it means that the Holy Spirit comes down to us. This is to prepare for the Pentecost liturgy we will celebrate the final week.

**Level III Lessons**

- **Liturgy of Light**: In Level III the children prepare their own liturgies. They organize and lead this liturgy for both Level II and Level III.

- **The Cardinal Virtues**: In this presentation the children will be introduced to the names and definitions of the four cardinal virtues and the sister virtues of each cardinal virtue. In the following sessions, the children will receive further presentations that help them distinguish positive examples of a virtue from examples in which the virtue is lacking.

  The four cardinal virtues are:
  - **Prudence**: The virtue that pushes us to act wisely by choosing right paths.
  - **Justice**: The virtue that pushes us to give to everyone that which is rightfully theirs.
  - **Fortitude (courage)**: The virtue that pushes us to face any difficulty for a just cause, to the point of sacrificing one's life.
  - **Temperance (self-control)**: The virtue that keeps us from excessive desires and actions.

- **The Synthesis of the Lord’s Prayer**: In this lesson the students break down the statements of the Lord’s Prayer, learning more about how Jesus taught us to pray.

In Level III we added four new lessons over the past few months and a fifth (Sacraments) will be ready by May. This has been made possible through the generous work of volunteers at our monthly material making days. Much thanks to all of them. Our next material making day is April 20 and coincides with the St. Peter’s Day of Service.