

Scripture

Mark 8:27-30

Faith in Action**Our beliefs are shown by the way we live.**

- ◆ Jesus asks his disciples to affirm their understanding of who Jesus is.
- ◆ Naming ourselves and others is one way we affirm people. Children take special pleasure in hearing their name used with kindness and respect.
- ◆ In today's core session, we continue to build a supportive formation group as we develop our understanding of who Jesus is *and* who we are.

Question of the Week

When have you had a moment of insight, a sudden seeing like Peter had?

Core Session

- ◆ Getting Started
- ◆ Gospel Story: Who Do You Say I Am?
- ◆ Clay Review (*play dough or modeling clay*)
- ◆ Praying Together

Enrichment

- ◆ Welcome the Good News
- ◆ Singing Together
- ◆ Bible Skills for Third Graders
- ◆ Charades
- ◆ Poetry: Schwartz's "I Am Cherry Alive,' the Little Girl Sang"
- ◆ Get-Acquainted Tree
- ◆ Info: Children and the Gospel
- ◆ Info: Where You'll Find Everything Else

Helps for Catechists

- ◆ More about Today's Scriptures
- ◆ Reflection
- ◆ The Scriptures and the Catechism
- ◆ The World of the Bible: Satan

✓ Getting Started (5-10 minutes)

Sit in a circle with the children. Ask for a volunteer who would like to hear his or her name sung first. (You can also offer to go first yourself.)

With the children, sing together the chosen name over and over to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

Vary the game by:

- ◆ using the names of other volunteers
- ◆ using other tunes, such as “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”
- ◆ using the name of Jesus

✓ Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)

Who Do You Say I Am?

Jesus and his friends walked long and far together. Wherever they went, people would run to meet them.

“Teach us, Jesus,” the people called. And Jesus did. The people brought sick friends and family members to Jesus. “Heal us, Jesus,” the people asked. And Jesus did.

One day Jesus and his friends were alone. Jesus asked his friends, “Who do people say that I am?”

“Some people say that you are a teacher,” one friend said.

“Some people say that you are a preacher or a prophet,” another friend said.

“Some people say that you are John the Baptist,” another friend said. A cruel king had killed John the Baptist. Now some people hoped that Jesus was John, come back to life.

“What about you?” asked Jesus. “Who do you say that I am?”

Peter spoke up right away. “You are the Messiah, the one who will save all people” he said. “God has sent you to us.”

All the friends of Jesus looked at him. The Messiah! For hundreds of years God’s people had waited for God to send the Messiah! Now Peter had said what they all hoped: that Jesus was God’s Messiah. Could it be true?

“Teach us, Jesus,” one friend said, suddenly. “Help us understand.” And Jesus did.

✓ Clay Review (5-15 minutes)

Children use modeled figures to review today’s story. You can make your own play dough by mixing together 1½ cups flour, ½ cup salt, ½ cup water and ¼ cup oil. Knead well. Use food coloring to tint the play dough. Store in plastic containers.

Distribute lumps of play dough or modeling clay. Invite each child to make a figure from today’s story, such as Jesus, a friend of Jesus or one of the people who came to Jesus. First graders move the figures as you retell the story.

Invite older children to work in pairs and make figures for their own retelling of the story. After the story retelling, discuss:

- ◆ When do people make you feel good by using your name?
- ◆ How does the name *Jesus* make you feel?
- ◆ Make a figure of yourself to add to today’s story. Tell us what you would say to Jesus in today’s story.

✓ Praying Together (5 minutes)

Sit with the children in a circle. Ask each child to name the child next to him or her. Then pray:

- ◆ Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to us. Thank you for giving us one another, too. *Amen.*



Note: Distribute this week’s *At Home with the Good News* to children before they leave, or e-mail it to their parents after the session.

□ Welcome the Good News

(5-10 minutes)

From today's *Welcome the Good News* you can lead a discussion based on today's story with the activity called Who Is Jesus? You can also invite children to follow the directions under "Name, Please!" to make autograph books. Encourage children to collect in their books the names of all the other children in the group.

Children will also find an activity called With Your Family that they can lead at home.

(**Note:** You have the option of e-mailing *Welcome the Good News* directly to children's homes instead of printing it.)

□ Singing Together (5-10 minutes)

From *Singing the Good News*, sing together:

- ◆ "Season of Harvest" (songbook p. 4, also available as an MP3)
- ◆ "Wonderful Sounds" (songbook p. 12)

Note: To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Fall-B *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Singing the Good News*.

□ Bible Skills for Third Graders

(5-15 minutes)

Help children use the table of contents to find the four gospels in their Bibles. Ask four volunteers to make four signs, each with the name of one gospel.

Then ask them to stand with their signs in the same order that the gospels are found in their Bibles. Mix up the signs and ask another four volunteers to stand with the signs in the right order.

Finally, help children use page, chapter and verse numbers to find today's story in **Mark 8:27-30**. Invite volunteers to read a sentence or two from the story.

□ Charades (10-15 minutes)

Sit in a circle with the children. Invite children to learn more about each other with this variation of Charades. Directions to the children:

- ◆ Think of something you like to do, such as a game you like to play or work you like to do.
- ◆ When it's your turn, say, "My name is (*name*) and one thing I like to do is..."
- ◆ Don't tell us what you want to do—just act it out!

Invite the other children to guess what each child acts out. Let the children make several guesses, but set a time limit for each child's turn.

□ Poetry (10-15 minutes)

Schwartz's "I Am Cherry Alive' the Little Girl Sang"

Read aloud to children this poem by Delmore Schwartz:

"I am cherry alive," the little girl sang,
 "Each morning I am something new:
 I am apple, I am plum, I am just as excited
 As the boys who made the Hallowe'en bang:
 I am tree, I am cat, I am blossom too:
 When I like, if I like, I can be someone new,
 Someone very old, a witch in a zoo:
 I can be someone else whenever I think who,
 And I want to be everything sometimes too:
 And the peach has a pit and I know that too,
 And I put it in along with everything
 To make the grown-ups laugh whenever I sing:
 And I sing: It is true; It is untrue;
 I know, I know, the true is untrue,
 The peach has a pit, the pit has a peach:
 And both may be wrong when I sing my song,
 But I don't tell the grown-ups: because it is sad,
 And I want them to laugh just like I do
 Because they grew up and forgot what they knew
 And they are sure I will forget it some day too.
 They are wrong. They are wrong. When I sang my
 song, I knew, I knew!
 I am red, I am gold, I am green, I am blue,
 I will always be me. I will always be new!"

"I Am Cherry Alive,' the Little Girl Sang" by Delmore Schwartz; © 1979 New York: Harper & Row.

Ask the children to find the different ways that the girl in the poem finishes the words, "I am..." Ask children how Jesus could finish the words, "I am."

Then ask each child to finish the words, "I am..." in his or her own way. Help children write their new "I am" lines on a sheet of poster board, using a different colored marker for each line.

Help children read together the finished new poem.

Note: To learn more about Delmore Schwartz and read more of his poems, visit <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/delmore-schwartz>.

INFO Get-Acquainted Tree

You can invite children to make a Get-Acquainted Tree that takes the place of a conventional attendance chart. Like an attendance chart, it serves to recognize and celebrate the presence of each child in the group. Unlike an attendance chart, it does not penalize those children whose parents' attendance is sporadic.

Ask children to paint or draw a large "tree" on brown paper. Each child can paint or draw one branch on the trunk.

Next ask the children to cut autumn leaves from construction paper. You can also invite children to dip thumbs and fingers in brown paint and make prints on the leaves to give the effect of mottled fall foliage. Help children glue the leaves along the branches.

Children can also cut and decorate individual name tags. Ask the children to fasten their name tags to the appropriate branches.

Invite children to find their own names and those of their friends on the Get-Acquainted Tree. As new children join the group throughout the year, they can make name tags to add to the tree.

INFO Children and the Gospel

In today's gospel, Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" and "Who do *you* say that I am?" Faith asks this question of each of us, throughout our whole lives. For children, we communicate this story with activities that name Jesus and begin to explain who he is and what he does.

Throughout today's session, we recognize the importance of names in the process of Christian community building. Sometimes, without meaning to, adults can fall into the habit of using names chiefly to emphasize reprimands.

- ◆ Peter, stop that.
- ◆ Susan, sit down.

We can decide instead to use children's names in ways that affirm them, praise them and make them feel welcome:

- ◆ Peter, I'm so glad you're here today.
- ◆ Susan, your question really makes me think.



INFO Where You'll Find Everything Else

- ◆ Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
 - Backgrounds and reflections for today's readings, titled *More about Today's Scriptures*.
 - Directions for making *Name Bags*, decorated storage bags the children can use for this year's art projects.
 - A copy of today's *Gospel Story* to print or e-mail.
 - A copy of today's *At Home with the Good News* to print or e-mail to children and their families.
- ◆ Open your Fall-B *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Seasonal Articles* to find:
 - Information on Fall-B's *Models of the Faith*.
 - A printable article titled *Learning through Music*.
 - A printable article titled *Learning through Poetry*.
 - An article for catechists and/or parents exploring *Lectionary-Based Faith Formation*.
 - An article for catechists exploring Isaiah's references to *God's Suffering Servant*.
 - An article for catechists titled *Preparing a Living the Good News Session*.
 - An article for catechists exploring the seasons of *The Church Year*.
 - The *Introduction for Primary* for **Living the Good News**.

More about Today's Scriptures

Today's scriptures ask us to demonstrate our Christian beliefs through appropriate actions. In Isaiah, God's servant remains obedient in the face of suffering and remains confident of God's guidance and support. James asserts the importance of right speech, because of the destructive power of even a few evil words (James 3:1-12). Jesus, after allowing himself to be identified as the Messiah, points out that sharing in his mission means embracing a life of sacrifice.

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Today's passage is the third of Isaiah's four servant songs (the others are found in 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 52:13-53:12). The servant probably represents Israel in its ideal form, fulfilled only in the unique person of the Messiah (49:3).

This song describes the servant as a disciple of the Lord, a misunderstood, ill-treated prophet to a weary people. Using the image of a law court, the servant expresses confidence that God will vindicate him. These servant songs provided a way for Israel to understand the significance of the suffering and humiliation of the exile, and they later helped the Church understand and proclaim Jesus' suffering and resurrection.

James 2:14-18

James focuses on the relationship of faith and works. Keep in mind that James and Paul use the word *faith* in different ways: James means intellectual assent to theological statements; Paul means a total loving relationship with God. Thus, James's "works" are the practical counterpart of Paul's "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23), the result of "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). James's concern is not to make one superior to the other but to claim that they are inseparable; living faith is demonstrated by works.

Mark 8:27-38

Today's gospel contains three significant elements: first, the confession of Peter; second, the first prediction of Jesus' approaching suffering and death; and third, Jesus' sayings on discipleship.

Jesus went to the predominately pagan region of Caesarea Philippi to question and deepen his disciples' understanding of his role and theirs. The popular evaluations of Jesus' identity—John the Baptist, Elijah, a prophet—do not include that of Messiah, which Peter proclaims.

In Mark, the general expectation of the Messiah seems to be that of a royal deliverer. Jesus rejected this approach by sternly ordering (literally, rebuking) the disciples not to speak of him in those terms. Instead he used his favorite name for himself, "Son of Man," combining it with the figure of the suffering servant drawn from Isaiah.

The word used for "must" in "the Son of Man must undergo great suffering" shows that it is part of God's purpose in fulfillment of the Old Testament (Isaiah 53:10). Mark, however, reiterates throughout his gospel that the disciples (and the Church) cannot truly understand the meaning of Jesus as Messiah before, or apart from, the crucifixion.

Peter rejects the thought of a suffering Messiah. But Jesus also said that suffering will be the cost of discipleship. The disciples are called to total surrender of self-centered desire.

Reflection

It's tempting to imagine what Peter's diary might record—if Peter were reflective enough to keep a diary. “Today I tried to pin a title on Jesus,” he might record. “Failed miserably.” All Peter does is convey the prevailing folk wisdom, which many of us believe: when you see suffering coming, run the opposite way.

“Not so easy,” Jesus might say. He and many of his followers know that suffering can be deceptive. Beneath its ugly exterior, it may contain the treasure. He alludes to a truth Franciscan Father Richard Rohr has explored in his work on the two halves of life.

In the first half, we establish identity and boundaries. This concern for the self is necessary, and may answer the question, “Who am I?” In the second half, our own failures or situations beyond our control lead us to rely on God.

Rohr believes that “some form of suffering is the only thing strong enough to destabilize the ego.” People who are learning from this phase become less reliant on proving themselves, and fall instead into the divine mercy. The path of taking up the cross, which Jesus recommends to a shocked Peter, thus can lead to transformation.

The Scriptures and the Catechism

The reading from the letter of James helps us to make the connection between our faith and our everyday behavior. What we believe is worthless unless we practice it. As Vatican II noted, “this split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age” (*Pastoral Constitution on The Church in the Modern World*, #43). For more on how our faith is shown in the work of justice see *CCC*, #162, 1807, 1886–89, 2401–25.

The World of the Bible

Satan

In the earlier books of the Bible (especially Job), “the satan” or accuser is a kind of legal prosecutor in the divine assembly who questions the sincerity of human faith. After the exile, as the Jews began to stress God as transcendent and supremely good, they found it difficult to account for evil in the world. Gradually they developed the figure of Satan as an evil spirit who is subordinate but hostile to God, struggling with God for domination of the earth, and tempting humans from following God's ways. In today's gospel, Jesus calls Peter a *satan* because he is rejecting God's plan for salvation through Jesus' death.