

Scriptures

Luke 4:14-21

1 Corinthians
12:12-30

The Body of Christ

**We encounter with Jesus the Spirit of God in scripture and community.**

- ◆ Jesus' inaugural sermon in his hometown synagogue sets forth the whole meaning of Jesus' preaching and life.
- ◆ These first stories after Christmas have been stories in which we encounter, too, the basics of Christian communal life: baptism, Holy Communion and today the Word of God in scripture.
- ◆ In today's core session, we explore with children their heritage of the Bible and celebrate the role of the Bible in the Church.

Question of the Week

How has God's Holy Spirit helped you help others, as Jesus did?

Core Session

- ◆ Getting Started (*Bibles*)
- ◆ Gospel Story: Jesus in the Synagogue
- ◆ Scripture Scrolls (*dowels, thick yarn or cord*)
- ◆ Praying Together

Enrichment

- ◆ Welcome the Good News
- ◆ Singing Together
- ◆ Church Poster (*optional: photo church directory*)
- ◆ Bible Skills for Third Graders (*letter paper, envelopes*)
- ◆ Info: Children and the Gospel
- ◆ Info: King's "Wonder Bread"
- ◆ 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: The Law (Torah)

✓ Getting Started (5-10 minutes)

Activity Soundtrack: Play “Sikhulule.” (Open your Winter-C *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Companion Music* for options on obtaining this music.)

In today’s gospel, Jesus Christ reads prophetic words from the Old Testament to announce his ministry. Several activities today celebrate the Bible, the beloved book of the Church.

Gather children around a selection of Bibles. Include Bibles of different translations, some with pictures and some without; some with hard covers and some in paperback. Invite children to imagine they are book detectives! “What things are alike about all these books? What things are different?” Help children make a list of the things that are alike and the things that are different.

Explain that all Bibles have stories about God and God’s people. Jesus knew many of these stories, but he read them from a book that was different from ours. First of all, it wasn’t a book! It was a collection of scrolls of paper.

The stories that Jesus knew didn’t have any of the stories about him, his disciples or the Church. The stories that he knew came from the part of the Bible we call the Old Testament. In today’s story, Jesus reads one of these stories from a scroll.

✓ Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)

Jesus in the Synagogue

One day, Jesus went to a small building called a synagogue. In the synagogue were other people ready to read and talk about the Bible. They called the Bible the *mikra*: the readings.

The leader of the people there saw Jesus. He said, “Jesus, would you like to read to us from the readings?”

Jesus said, “Yes! I would!”

The leader gave Jesus a scroll of the Bible. It had words that had been written a long time ago by a prophet named Isaiah.

Jesus opened the scroll. Jesus began to read. He read, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. God has sent me to bring good news to the poor. God has sent me to bring freedom to prisoners. God has sent me to tell everyone: Now is the time that God will save the people!”

Jesus rolled up the scroll. He looked at all the people and said, “These words in the reading are about me.

God has sent me with good news to the poor! Now is the time that God will save the people.”

✓ Scripture Scrolls (10-15 minutes)

Invite children to make scripture scrolls to celebrate the word of God given to both Jesus and us.

Provide dowels and strips of paper. Children can first write words from today’s scripture story onto their scrolls. They can use their own words or take words from **Luke 4:14-21**. Children can add any drawings or designs they like to their papers.

Help children glue their papers to two dowels. When the glue is dry, children can roll their papers into scrolls, tying the finished scroll with thick yarn or braided cord.

Encourage children to reenact today’s story, using their own scrolls as props.



✓ Praying Together (5 minutes)

Activity Soundtrack: Play “Sikhulule.” (Open your Winter-C *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Companion Music* for options on obtaining this music.)

Explain:

- ◆ Jesus listened to God in many different ways.
- ◆ Jesus listened to God by reading the Bible.
- ◆ Jesus listened to God in silence.

Invite children to take a moment to listen to God in silence. Keep silence for no more than 1 minute. Then use a verse from today’s gospel reading as a closing prayer:

- ◆ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...the time has come when the Lord will save (the) people.

Note: If you use *At Home with the Good News*, either distribute this week’s papers to the children before they leave or e-mail the papers to their families.

□ Welcome the Good News

(10-15 minutes)

On page 1 of today's *Welcome the Good News* you'll find a reading from today's epistle from 1 Corinthians. Explain to children that this reading comes from a part of the Bible that Jesus never knew. It was written after Jesus had died, risen from the dead and returned to God. Like today's gospel, this part of the Bible tells us good news.

In *Welcome God's Word* on page 2, children look up verses from 1 Corinthians and complete a scripture story activity. Children will also find an activity called *With Your Family* that they can lead at home.

You can also find a playful variation of the Hokey Pokey that builds on Paul's image by inviting children to sing about all the parts of the Church as if they were parts of the body, attached to this document.

□ Singing Together (5-10 minutes)

From *Singing the Good News* you and the children can sing together:

- ◆ "Apples and Oranges" (p. 20 of the songbook)
- ◆ "Give a Little" (p. 36 of the songbook; also available as an MP3)

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

□ Church Poster (10-15 minutes)

Children—and many adults—often think of the Church as a *building* rather than as a body of *people*. In this activity, children make a church-shaped poster that shows the many people who make up the Church.

Ask a volunteer to cut a sheet of poster board into the shape of a church building. As this child cuts, explain that we call our building a church, but the Church is also all the people inside the building who gather in the building—and many other people, too.

Ask children to name people of the Church. Encourage both specific names, such as the name of each child, and names of *roles*, such as catechists, singers, ushers, etc. Invite children to fill the church poster with words and

pictures that show the people who make up the Church. Choose one of the following methods of illustration:

- ◆ *Directory Photos:* If your church has a member directory that includes photos, cut the pages of one directory apart and distribute them to the children. Ask them to cut out pictures and glue them randomly onto the poster board.
- ◆ *Stick Figures:* Children can draw simple stick figures of pastors, catechists, nursery workers, choir members and other parish members directly onto the poster board.
- ◆ *Construction-Paper Cut-Outs:* Children can cut figures from construction paper and use felt pens to decorate the figures. The finished portraits of parish members can be glued onto the poster board.

Note: As a quick Bible Skills activity, third graders might also write words for the poster taken from **1 Corinthians 12:26-27**.

□ Bible Skills for Third Graders

(10-15 minutes)

Help children find the Table of Contents in their Bibles. First help them find the section labeled New Testament. Explain that some of the books in the New Testament are called gospels, such as *Matthew, Mark, Luke* and *John*. Ask children to find the page numbers for each gospel.

Then explain that some of the books in the New Testament are called *epistles*, a word which means "letters"—the kind of letter you might get in the mail from a friend or family member. The story from Paul in today's *Welcome the Good News* is from an epistle called *1 Corinthians*.

Ask the children to find the page number on which it starts. Help the children use page, chapter and verse numbers to find **1 Corinthians 12:26-27**. Ask the children to follow along in their Bibles as you read aloud the verses.

Invite the children to write their own letters that include at least six words from 1 Corinthians 12:26-27. Children can place their finished letters in envelopes to hand-deliver to a family member, neighbor or friend.

INFO Children and the Gospel

Today's gospel tells Luke's story of Jesus beginning his public ministry. His ministry begins where each of our ministries begin: with the Word of God taken deeply to heart.

The Bible is a mysterious book for children. Usually it doesn't even look like other books to them. The words may come printed in columns. The stories they hear are not like other stories: they aren't generally meant to entertain, but to challenge.

This sense of mystery is entirely appropriate not only for children, but for adults, too. Our very familiarity with the Word of God might make us forget that its purpose is to challenge us, to offer us God's perspective on human life. As we present the Bible to children, we should be careful of our own tendency to present it as a book of "answers." Too often, when we do, we offer children *our* answers instead of God's questions.

INFO King's Wonder Bread

Catholic writer Heather King meditates on her experience of community in the broken, flawed humanity gathered in and by Christ. Where do you experience this sense of belonging?

Christ had nowhere to lay his head, and neither—or so it felt that winter—did I... Sometimes at noon I'd walk down Flower to Ninth for mass at Our Lady, a narrow, time-lost chapel sandwiched between the Orchid Hotel and American Computer... Against the back wall rested a wooden crucifix, for those who felt the urge to stroke Jesus' feet or kiss his wounds.

What struck me most about Christ that winter was his smallness, his hiddenness: his unremarkable early life as a carpenter.. Here in this church at least, he remained small and hidden. The little unassuming chapel, with its chintzy tabernacle, was dwarfed by the towering banks and investment firms and lawyers' offices that surrounded it. We fallen, lonely strangers, converging on South Flower, were hardly the kind of people any public-relations-savvy Messiah would have chosen to glorify his cause.

...and yet things happened in that little chapel. People with briefcases and business suits got down on their knees and buried their faces in their hands. The elderly priest talked about his own struggles and failures, which made me feel not quite so bad about my own. At the sign of peace, we shook each other's hands and sometimes even smiled. This is where we found him, among these wax flowers and stifled sighs; this was the church we had built for him. And so we came with our burdens, our fragile flesh, but also with our little spark that the meanness of the world had not quite extinguished, our little flame of obedience, our ridiculous stubborn belief that the body of Christ was not a symbol but food, real food. Each tiny broken piece of bread might enable us broken people to go out—anonymous, small, hidden—and transform the world.

Excerpt from *Wonder Bread* by Heather King.
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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*.
 - A playful *Hokey Pokey Church* activity you can use in today's session to invite children to understand that the Church is a community of people, not just the building where they meet.
 - A copy of today's *Gospel Story* to hand out to children or e-mail to their families.
 - This week's *At Home with the Good News* to hand out to children or e-mail to their families.
- ◆ Open your Winter-C *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Seasonal Articles* to find:
 - Information on Winter-C's *Models of the Faith*.
 - An article for catechists titled *The Many Meanings of Scripture*.
 - An article for catechists and/or families exploring Jesus' role as *The Messiah*.
 - An article for catechists further exploring *Paul's Corinthian Letters*.
 - The *Introduction for Primary* for **Living the Good News**.

More about Today's Scriptures

Today's readings address us as a community, rather than a group of individuals. In Nehemiah, we hear the heartfelt response of God's people as God's word is read aloud to the community restored from exile. Paul compares the community of the Church to a body, each individual member necessary to the body as a whole. Luke shows Jesus as he begins his ministry by proclaiming God's word to his hometown community gathered at a synagogue.

Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10

The books of Ezra, the priest, and Nehemiah, the provincial governor, tell of those who returned from exile after 539 BCE.

In a ceremony of recommitment to God's instructions (the *Torah* or law) for covenant life, Ezra reads aloud and translates the "book of the law of Moses" (8:1), probably an early version of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament.

The *Torah* was not only the story of God's revelation in history but also the source of divine legislation. After the exile, the Jewish community emphasized that only through more careful obedience to every facet of the law would they live sinlessly before God and so prevent another catastrophe like the exile, which they interpreted as God's judgment for their sinful ways.

1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Paul refers to the community as a body in order to make clear his teaching on the use of spiritual gifts. The image of the community as a body was a common one in Paul's day: the Romans used it as a metaphor for the state. Paul uses the image to show that every Christian is necessary to the body and needs the help of others.

Just as people take greater care to cover their "unpresentable parts" (12:23) and treat them with more honor, so Christians are to give particular respect to those they may think are less important members of the community. Paul calls, not for compromise, but for mutual loving concern (12:25) and cooperation for the good of the whole body.

Paul closes by pointing out once again the great variety of ways to serve. His reflection on the different areas of Christian ministry also appears in Romans 12:3-8 and Ephesians 4:7-16. Paul underscores the importance of interdependence within the Christian community and humility from each individual within it.

Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

In Luke, Jesus' ministry begins at the direction of the Spirit (4:14). Jesus' first sermon in his hometown synagogue sets forth the meaning of his preaching and life. The account is set within the typical synagogue service of the time: recitation of the *shema* ("Hear, O Israel..."), prayers, a reading from the *Torah*, a reading from the prophets, a sermon and a blessing.

Jesus announces himself as the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah, as the "anointed" one, that is, the Messiah, the Christ. The liberation he brings is an actual physical liberation as well as one of forgiveness.

He proclaims the "acceptable year of the Lord," the Jubilee year of liberation from debt and slavery and of return to the family. This passage stands as a link between the Old Testament and the work of Christ and the Church.

Reflection

One way of reading scripture is to notice which word or phrase evokes our most vivid, instant response. While each person will answer differently, today's readings brim with inviting surprises.

Surely one is the invitation of Nehemiah to rejoice. After the tragedy of the exile, the people weep. More vindictive prophets might tell them to keep grieving their miserable sins. But these teachers encourage them: "the joy of the Lord is your strength." What a pleasant shift from grim preaching of gloom and doom!

Jesus' inaugural address also contains fascinating nuggets. While he could've announced a mission to the wealthy, highly educated, or successful, his focus is totally different. The whole purpose of his life will be bringing liberty and joy to those who need it most. He offers a year of Jubilee—forgiveness from a tired past, welcome to God's favor.

If we'd been sitting in the synagogue that morning, how would we have reacted? Surely this wasn't the "same old, same old" we'd heard before. Would we sit up and pay attention, sensing some marvelous potential, some ambitious project we'd want to join? Or would we dismiss it as evangelical fervor that would ultimately change little? How do we respond here, now?

The Scriptures and the Catechism

Paul's image of the human body teaches us to understand the intricate connection between our diversity and unity as a community. The Christian community is the Body of Christ (CCC, #779, 787–95, 805). Each of us is a unique part, yet we must work together for the good of the whole. This is only possible if, as the gospel makes clear, we imitate the example of Jesus to work for more just relationships (CCC, #1807, 1886–89, 2401–25).

The World of the Bible

The Law (Torah)

The Law (Hebrew *Torah*, instruction) consisted of the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) that tell of God's search for an appropriate covenant partner.

Jewish scholars combed these books to discover all of the specific commands given by God and found 613. These became the foundation of their life in community.

These Laws, although difficult to keep in their entirety, were not considered a burden (as we so often think), but rather as a precious gift because the people knew what God wanted and no longer had to guess what to do in order to please God.