

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Third Sunday in Easter
Lesson Plans for Younger Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Acts 2:14a, 36-41

In the early church Easter was the day for Baptisms. The festival season of Easter marks the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost. It is a time for reflecting on the meaning of our Baptism and the other sacraments. The church calls this process of studying the mysteries of the church mystagogia. We explore what it means to be the Body of Christ and members of His church and how we are to live this out in the world today. During the Easter season the Old Testament readings are replaced with selections from the *Book of Acts*. We hear about the sacrifice and resurrection of our Lord so that we too may know how to proclaim the good news of Jesus with similar joy and conviction.

A Notation about this week's Scripture

Today's reading concludes Peter's Pentecost speech to the crowds in Jerusalem. Peter and the other apostles had been waiting in fear and anticipation in the upper room. They were afraid of being arrested for being followers of Jesus. On the day of Pentecost, Jesus' promise to them was fulfilled. The Holy Spirit imbued each of them with power, conviction and grace for their mission of spreading the Word. When the crowd finally understood that they had helped to crucify their Lord and Messiah, their hearts were filled with remorse. In repentance, they allowed Peter to baptize them. Pentecost is considered the birthday of the church since three thousand people became believers that day.

Theme: Promise of Baptism

Through the sacraments the Church offers us the means of becoming part of the Body of Christ. Baptism is not only for membership. Baptism gives us a way to repent our sins and amend or change our way of living.

Before Class

If you are doing the music activity, you will need instruments.

Beginning

Review the Easter greeting.

Teacher: *Alleluia! The Lord is risen.*

Children: *The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

Opening Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to respect your name and teachings. When we do wrong, help us to feel sorry and change our ways. Amen

The Story

Before He died, Jesus gave Peter a very important job to do. He told Peter to build his church. Jesus didn't want Peter to get bricks and build a building. Jesus wanted Peter to open people's

minds and hearts to follow Jesus, so that His messages of goodness and kindness would grow in the world.

On this day Peter was feeling very brave and strong in his faith. God's Holy Spirit had filled Peter and the other apostles with courage and the ability to speak just the right words. Peter went outside and made a speech about Jesus to a very large crowd of people in the streets of Jerusalem. When Peter helped the people to understand that they had crucified God's son, who was a part of God, they were very sad and their hearts were broken. The people cried out to Peter, "We are so sorry. What can we do now?" Peter answered, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

On that special day three thousand people decided to change the direction of their lives. They decided to follow Jesus. Peter and the other apostles baptized them in the name of Jesus Christ. Some people say that was the day the church was born, because on that day it grew from a small group of believers to over three thousand members. To this day we celebrate the day of Pentecost as the birthday of the church.

Reflection

- I wonder if Jesus was proud of Peter that day?
- Does anyone remember what the word repent means?
- Have you ever done something that was wrong?
- Did you feel bad afterwards?
- Did you try to do things differently?
- Were you forgiven if you hurt someone?
- I wonder what it feels like when we are forgiven?

Game: Repent and Change Direction

This is a variation on the old children's game "Mother, May I?" Select a child to be Peter (instead of Mother) or you could be Peter first to show the children how the game works. The other children line up at the starting line. In turn each child tells Peter a short situation or action, either good or bad. For example, "I hit my little brother", or "I shared my lunch at school". Then the child says to Peter, "Brother what should I do?" Depending on what has been said Peter will either tell the child to move up a few steps or say, "Repent and change your direction." The child would have to turn around and move back to the starting line. The first child to reach Peter becomes the next Peter.

Music Activity

Ask the children what they think it means to be a follower of Jesus. Teach the song "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus". If you have instruments available hand them out. When the children are familiar with the song you can make a procession [a holy parade] and march around the classroom or church grounds as appropriate. Instruct the children to invite people along the way to join them.

1. I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;

- I have decided to follow Jesus;
No turning back, no turning back.
2. Though I may wonder, I still will follow;
Though I may wonder, I still will follow;
Though I may wonder, I still will follow;
No turning back, no turning back.
 3. The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
No turning back, no turning back.
 4. Though none go with me, still I will follow;
Though none go with me, still I will follow;
Though none go with me, still I will follow;
No turning back, no turning back.
 5. Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
No turning back, no turning back.

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Closing: Have the children return the room to its regular setup and clean up their work space. Return to the story circle. Say this closing poem:

Our time together is almost done
I hope you had a bit of fun.
May God's blessings go with you.
Show His love in all you do.
So now on this special day
Let us bow our heads and pray.

Closing Prayer

Dear Risen Lord, thank you for always forgiving us. Teach us to repent and change our ways.
Amen.

Easter Lesson Plans for Young Children written by Trudy Ardizzone, 2011

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