Our beliefs are shown in 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?
Getting Started (5-10 minutes)
Knowing names is the first step of building community in your group. Sit in a circle with the children. Show the children how to clap to accompany your name. Give one clap for each syllable. Examples:
◆ Mr. Sharp (Three claps.)
◆ David (Two claps.)

Repeat the clapping game for each child’s name. Finally invite the children to clap to Jesus’ name.

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.”

“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.

Movement Response (5-15 minutes)
Children play cooperative games that name themselves, their friends and Jesus.

Popcorn
Children sit in a circle. Name a child who “pops” by jumping up. The child can keep jumping while naming another child. This child “pops” up and names a third child. Play continues until all the children are standing and “popping.” Invite all the children to keep jumping as they name one more friend: Jesus. The children clap and cheer, then sit down for another round of popping!

All Aboard!
In this game, children gradually form a long choo-choo train. Children scatter around the room and sit. Ask a volunteer to start the first train.

This child travels around the room, making train noises, until he or she stops in front of a child. The child chosen stands up and calls out his or her name. The first child answers, “All Aboard!” as the child joins the train by holding onto the first child’s waist.

Play continues until all the children are traveling around the room in a giant train. Then ask children to shout together to Jesus: “All Aboard, Jesus!”

Praying Together (5 minutes)
Sit with the children in a circle. Thank God for each child in the group. Ask each child to name the child next to him or her. Close by praying:
◆ Thank you, God, for giving us friends. 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.
Discover the Good News
(5-10 minutes)
From today’s Discover the Good News you can lead an interactive version of today’s story called Who Is Jesus?, attached to this document. After the story, invite children to draw pictures of Jesus, of themselves or of themselves with Jesus.

You’ll also find a version of “The More We Get Together” that you can sing with the children.

Page 2 also includes a To Parents note for families to use at home.

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.

Get-Acquainted Games (5-15 minutes)
In these first sessions of Fall, make plenty of time for Get-Acquainted games. You can repeat the games in today’s Core Session or use these games, too.

Handkerchief Hellos
Ask the children to stand in a circle, with their hands behind them. Choose one of the children to be It. It takes the handkerchief and walks, skips or hops around the outside of the circle, stopping behind one child.

It puts the handkerchief in the hand of that child and says, “Hi! I’m Jeri!” The other child turns around and says, “Hi! I’m Juan!” The two children shake hands or hug.

It takes the place of the child who receives the handkerchief. The child who receives the handkerchief becomes the new It, traveling around the circle to choose another child.

Party Game
In this noncompetitive game (attached to this document), children gather their friends to travel to a special party.

Poetry (10-15 minutes)
“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!”


Reread to children the words, “I am tree, I am cat, I am blossom, too.” Ask children to finish the words “I am...” with different words. What animals could they use? What plants could they use? What colors could they use?

Write the children’s words on the board or newsprint to create a new poem in which each line begins with the words, “I am.” Read the finished new poem to the children.

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

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, I see so many bright colors in your picture.

Session Pacing

In these first sessions of Fall, set a leisurely pace you will maintain throughout the year. For preschool and kindergarten children, be sure to allow generous time for free play during the session. Expect the children to sit quietly for a story no longer than 5-10 minutes.

When you have a craft activity to share, you can call two or three children at a time to make the craft with you or a helper while the other children play. For storytelling, games and other group activities, encourage each child to join in, but allow reserved children to choose their own level of involvement. If some children choose not to join the group even for story and prayer time, allow them to continue playing quietly on their own.

Young 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 preschoolers and kindergartners, we communicate this story with activities that name Jesus and begin to explain who he is and what he does.

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 fingerplay for young children called Who Is Jesus? You can use this for today's story and throughout the season to reinforce the children's understanding of Jesus.
  — A noncompetitive Party Game to play with children.
  — A copy of today’s At Home with the Good News to print or to e-mail to children and their families.
  — A copy of today's Gospel Story 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.
  — An article introducing parents to the curriculum titled Living the Good News Overview for Parents.
  — An article for catechists and/or parents exploring Lectionary-Based Faith Formation.
  — A printable article titled Learning through Music.
  — A printable article titled Learning through Poetry.
  — 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 Preschool/Kindergarten 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.
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.

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 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.