Jesus teaches that whoever is not against him is for him.

- When the disciples point out someone not of their group healing in the name of Jesus, Jesus affirms that these people, too, are on the side of Jesus.
- In any formation setting, young children challenge us with one crucial question: am I fully welcome here? Our primary task as catechists is to give a resounding yes to that question through our words and actions.
- In today’s core session, we affirm to children that Jesus welcomes them and all people.

Question of the Week
Who has surprised you by unexpectedly bringing grace or good news?

Core Session
- Getting Started
- Gospel Story: Just the Way They Are
- Puppet Games (craft sticks, decorative odds and ends, such as yarn, ribbon, paper scraps)
- Praying Together

Enrichment
- Discover the Good News
- Singing Together
- Games
- Poetry: Padgett’s “Chocolate Milk”
- Info: Responding to Children’s Art
- Info: Young 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: Prophet
✓ Getting Started (5-10 minutes)
Play a getting acquainted game with children.

Sit in a circle with the children. Begin by chanting:

When we’re in the zoo,
Then who are you?

At the end of the chant, ask the children to use sounds and movements to pretend to be their favorite animals. After 1 minute or less of galloping, barking, roaring and slithering, gather children back in the circle.

Comment briefly on the different choices that children made:
◆ What wonderful high horse jumps I saw! Jesus loves horses.
◆ I heard loud, ferocious lion roars. Jesus loves lions.

Encourage children, too, to notice the different choices made. Repeat the game several more times, affirming each time that Jesus loves all the different animals. Children will hear this as a message of affirmation for themselves. Explain that Jesus loves all the animals, and all the different people in the world, too—just as we hear in today’s story.

✓ Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)
Just the Way They Are

“Jesus, look at that man!” said Jesus’ friends.

“I see him,” said Jesus.

“He does everything the wrong way. Make him do things the right way,” said Jesus’ friends.

“No,” said Jesus. “He is just doing things his way. That’s all right. I like people just the way they are.”

“All people?” asked Jesus’ friends.

“Yes,” said Jesus. “I like big people, short people, old people, young people—all kinds of people. I like people just the way they are.”

✓ Puppet Games (5-15 minutes)
Children make simple puppets, then use them in a simple get-acquainted game.

Cut simple abstract shapes, such as the ones shown below, about 4”-6” long, from poster board. You will find the patterns attached to this document.

Make available markers or crayons, glue and popsicle sticks. Explain that Jesus loves all the different people in the world. Invite children to make many different puppets to remind us of all the different people that Jesus loves.

Children can use felt pens or crayons to decorate their puppets, as well as gluing odds and ends onto the puppets. Help children glue a popsicle stick to the back of each puppet.

Sit in a circle with the children. Invite the children to give their puppets names. Ask, “What do your puppets like to do?” Comment on all the different puppets, and all the different things they like to do. Just as with people, Jesus loves them all!

✓ Praying Together (5 minutes)

Stand in a circle with the children. Walk around the circle, gently touching one child at a time on the shoulders as you say, “Jesus loves (child’s name).” Help the children to respond, “Thank you, Jesus, for (child’s name).” Continue for every child in the room. Then pray:
◆ Jesus, thank you for welcoming each one of us. 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)
Page 1 of today’s Discover the Good News offers a brief retelling of today’s gospel story. If you wish, you can use this page as a review activity in the session.

You’ll also find an activity that shows children playing. You could invite children to act out these and other times when they know that Jesus is with them...playing, eating, sleeping, etc.

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)
◆ “The Last Will Be First” (songbook p. 14, also available as an MP3)

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.

Games (5-15 minutes)
Children play get-acquainted games that celebrates their individuality.

Play Pictures
You may like to begin by showing pictures of children engaged in activities, such as the Play Pictures, attached to this document.

As you hold up the pictures ask:
◆ What do these children like to do?
◆ What do you like to do?

Then sit in a circle with the children. Invite the children, one at a time to stand up, say their names and tell what they like. For example one child might say:
◆ I’m Kim and I like running.

Encourage children to respond:
◆ Her name is Kim and she likes running.

Help the children clap and cheer for each child. Continue until all the children who want to stand have had a chance to do so. Some children may choose to stand more than once; others may choose to sit this game out. Try to accommodate both choices.

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

Poetry (10-15 minutes)
Chocolate Milk
Tell children that Jesus taught us, “Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to anyone at all has done it for me.” Then read aloud to children this poem by Ron Padgett:

Oh, God! It’s great!
to have someone fix you
chocolate milk
and to appreciate their doing it!
Even as they stir it
in the kitchen
your mouth is going crazy
for the chocolate milk!
The wonderful chocolate milk!


Ask children, “What do you like to drink? What tastes wonderful to you? Who gives you good things to drink?” Affirm that Jesus loves the children and the people who give them good things to drink.

Note: To learn more about Ron Padgett visit http://www.ronpadgett.com/.
Responding to Children’s Art

One important part of working with the arts in faith formation is finding fresh ways to talk about a work of art. For catechists of young children, this takes on even more urgency as we seek authentic ways to respond to the works of art the children produce.

Begin by acknowledging that many of us feel uncomfortable discussing a work of art, whether we are seeing the work of a professional artist or the latest crayon drawing from our group. For some of us, our education has taught us that artists paint or write or make music as a kind of “secret code”: our job is to figure out what this painting (or poem or sonata) “means.” The implication is that there’s only one right answer!

Others of us have been taught that our task in encountering a work of art is to judge it: Is it good? Do I like it? Should I like it? However, if we can step away from both decoding and judgment, we find a fresh pleasure in our ability to simply experience a work of art.

The skill of simple description can serve us when talking about either professional art or children’s art. What do you actually see? What colors, lines and shapes? Does the art work have texture or movement or rhythm? What intrigues you? What makes you want to look longer?

So often children hear, “What a great picture!” no matter what they produce. You show that you’ve taken time to really look at the picture when you say instead, “I see bright red all over this picture, and a few patches of soft blue. Those colors seem to go so well together.”

Young Children and the Gospel

In today’s gospel, Jesus includes in his ministry those who are not formally members of his band of disciples. Children relate readily to a message of “God welcomes you.” The challenge throughout the faith formation years is gently encouraging children to model to others the welcome God extends to them.

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.
  — Puppet Patterns to use in the Puppet Games activity found on page 2.
  — Kids at Play pictures to use in the first of today’s Games.
  — A noncompetitive Party Game to play with children.
  — A copy of today’s Gospel Story which can be distributed or e-mailed to children and their families.
  — A copy of today’s At Home with the Good News to print or to 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 the Visual Arts.
  — A printable article titled Learning through Poetry.
  — A PowerPoint presentation for catechists titled Why Use the Arts?
  — An article for parents titled Parents as Primary Religious Educators.
  — 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 readings illustrate how God can choose unexpected people to do God’s work. In Numbers, for example, Eldad and Medad, though not participating in Moses’ official “commissioning,” receive the same Spirit of prophecy as the seventy elders. In James, the writer suggests practical guidelines for those who wish to do God’s work. Today’s gospel reading relates how Jesus, like Moses, endorses the work of those who, though not part of his “in-group,” still bring healing in God’s name.

Numbers 11:25-29

This reading helps us to understand role of a prophet of the Lord in Israel. God speaks to Moses, who is the pattern for later Jewish prophets. God shares Moses’ gift of the Spirit with seventy elders. But Eldad and Medad, who were not with these elders, also receive God’s Spirit and prophesy.

When told of this, instead of thinking he is in control of prophetic gifts, Moses recognizes that such a gift from God ought to be bestowed on everyone. Moses sees that prophecy is a gift, given freely to whomever God wants. He refuses to limit God’s Spirit and is willing to acknowledge God’s gifts in people who are not part of the “in” group.

James 5:1-6

The consistent New Testament emphasis on the dangers of riches represents a challenge to the generally accepted view that riches were a sign of God’s favor.

James addresses those who valued wealth as the highest good, to the detriment of justice, compassion and self-restraint. The amassing of wealth is a treacherous end in itself and may lead to social injustice.

James urges an attitude of humility before God and right relationships with one another and with the world. Greed and success in commercial enterprises can blind the merchant to the impermanence of life and possessions (4:13-17). The possession of riches can lead to self-reliance, rather than dependence on God and interdependence with one’s neighbor.

Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

This reading comes from a passage that consists of a series of Jesus’ sayings on a variety of subjects. They do not follow a logical sequence but are grouped by the occurrence of a catchword, thus allowing easier memorization of the material for oral transmission. The first section (9:37-41) is centered around the words “(in) the name (of Christ).”

The incident of the unauthorized exorcist (also in Luke 9:49-50) echoes the story of Eldad and Medad in today’s first reading.

The disciples were jealous of their special relationship with Jesus, but Jesus acknowledges that a relationship with him comes through sharing his work and appealing to his authority.

The next section (9:42-49) is linked to the previous one by the phrase “one of these little ones” (v. 42) and is held together by the word used for sin, literally “stumble or scandalize.” The first verse of this section (9:42) addresses the situation of being an occasion of sin to other believers, especially new or weak disciples. The rest of the section concerns occasions of sin in one’s self.

The word for hell is literally Gehenna, which is the Greek translation for the name of a valley southwest of Jerusalem, where at one time children were sacrificed to Molech, the god of the Ammonites. After this practice was ended by King Josiah (2 Kings 23:10), the place became the trash dump for the city and its burning refuse a symbol of the place of eternal punishment. The point of the passage, and its link to verse 41, is that present actions have eternal consequences.
Reflection

“Unlimited possibilities” is a phrase that might express the theme of today’s readings. Moses has the breadth of vision to say, “Would that all God’s people were prophets!” He cannot bring himself to refuse anyone’s gifts or deride any good that people might do—even if they’re not perfect. His tone echoes the inscription over a welcoming gate at the entrance to a Rumi shrine in Turkey: “Come, come, whoever you are...come even though you have broken your vows a thousand times... Ours is not a caravan of despair.”

Jesus’ vision is even broader, including even a glass of water given in his name. He sees the holiness in all human deeds, whether or not they occur in church, whether or not they are labeled “religious.”

If we returned to our roots and took Moses and Jesus seriously, what a difference it might make. We might end the arbitrary distinctions between “secular” and “sacred,” instead seeing all of life as holy and whole. We might better answer the criticism of young people that the churches are so bent on internal bickering that they have neglected the needs of the larger world. We might forget our silly distinctions between “religious” and “lay” and get on with the important business of bringing water to the thirsty, food to the hungry, attention to the lonely. We might realize with the poet Betsy Sholl that “everything’s sacred.”

The Scriptures and the Catechism

Today we learn that God often works in ways that we might not expect, making us channels of grace and revelation (CCC, #51–53, 62–64, 218), and that God also works mysteriously in other religions (CCC, #27–29, 817–22, 839–56). Today’s readings also remind us of the dangers of wealth (CCC, #2426–42). Our behavior toward the poor draws God’s attention and must be characterized by Christian attitudes and values.

The World of the Bible

Prophet

Biblical prophets (Greek, to speak for or on behalf of someone) speak as God’s intermediaries to the king and the covenant people. Rulers tended to forget that they were to rule according to God’s covenant law and not for their own interests.

The prophets spoke on behalf of God, reminding the rulers and the people of God’s agenda and encouraging trust in God rather than in human power and wisdom. Although their words were often taken as predicting the future, their predictive power was nothing more than a consequence of their belief that God always comes in judgment to punish evil and in mercy to reward good.