Scripture

An Invitation to Follow

We follow Jesus, our Teacher.
◆ Three ordinary fishermen leave everything to follow Jesus.
◆ We will present Jesus as a teacher and leader from whom we learn and follow.
◆ In today’s core session, we explore with children the story of the call of Jesus’ disciples.

Question of the Week
What “unlikely heroes” do you know or admire?

Core Session
◆ Getting Started
◆ Gospel Story: Simon and James and John
◆ Creative Drama (blue streamers, cloths or sheets)
◆ Praying Together

Enrichment
◆ Discover the Good News (old magazines)
◆ Singing Together
◆ Fish Cards (poster board, sponge, foil, decorative hole punches, yarn, confetti)
◆ We Will Follow Jesus Now
◆ Info: Young Children and the Gospel
◆ Info: Dyani’s “Sikhulule”
◆ 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: Holy, Holy, Holy
Checking in (5-10 minutes)

Tell children that Jesus asked his friends to walk long and far to be with him. Invite children to play a walking game with you.

Ask a child to walk in place as Jesus. (You can model this movement.) Say, “Jesus is walking. Who will walk with Jesus?” Encourage children to join this child in walking. Repeat with other movements, asking the children to join Jesus in hopping, squatting, stretching and so on. Repeat the game as long as interest holds. Children can lead the movement suggestions, too.

Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)
Simon and James and John
Story Focus: Hold up three fingers. Explain that three men are sitting in a boat: Simon and James and John. Teach the children to chant with you the words Simon and James and John whenever you hold up three fingers. In the story below, we italicize those words.

Jesus climbs into the boat of Simon and James and John. He teaches, they listen, together they float, Simon and James and John.

Jesus says, “My teaching is through, Simon and James and John. so now let’s catch some fish for you, Simon and James and John.”

“But we’ve already tried today,” say Simon and James and John.
“All the fish have gone away,” say Simon and James and John.

Jesus says, “I want you to try, Simon and James and John.”
They throw their fish nets over the side, Simon and James and John.

They catch so much fish, they might even sink! Simon and James and John.
The fishermen don’t know what to think. Simon and James and John.

Jesus says, “Come and catch people, too, Simon and James and John.”
“Yes, Jesus, we will follow you,” Simon and James and John.

Creative Drama (5-15 minutes)

Tape a simple boat shape cut from butcher paper to the floor. (You can just tape down a rectangular length of paper, if you’re unsure of your boat-shaping abilities!) Invite the children to act out today’s story with these parts: Jesus, fishers, water and fish.

Tell children that they need not speak, but can act out their parts in these ways:

* Jesus: Follow story directions.
* water: Wave blue streamers up and down.
* fish: Put hands together in front of bodies and make a swimming motion while opening and closing mouths like fish.
* fishers: When told to fish, throw out cloths or sheets for nets. The fish should hold onto the nets and let themselves be pulled into the boat.

The fishers sit in the boat. The water and fish surround the boat. Narrate this story for children to act out:

* Jesus walks by the water. He sees the fish. He sees a boat. Jesus gets into the boat to teach.
* The water is full of waves. The waves are full of fish. The fishers listen to Jesus. Jesus points to the water and tells the fishers to fish. They put their nets over the sides of the boat. The fishers catch many fish to put in the boat.
* Jesus gets out of the boat. He tells the fishers to follow him. The fishers leave the water. They leave the boat. They leave the fish. They follow Jesus as he walks away.

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.)

Gather children in a circle, perhaps near the Jesus the Teacher poster attached to this document. Stand in a circle with the children. Point to one child and say, ”Jesus calls (child’s name).” Help the children respond, “Jesus loves (child’s name).”

Invite this child to continue the game by pointing to another child. When all children have been named and prayed for, pray: “Jesus, thank you for calling us. Thank you for loving us. Amen.”

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.
Discover the Good News
(5-20 minutes)

On page 1 of today's Discover the Good News you'll find an illustrated version of today's gospel story.

On page 2, you'll find pictures of fish on which children can glue pictures of people that Jesus loves. You can help children find pictures of people in old magazines, especially geographic or children's magazines. You'll also find a To Parents note for families.

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)

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

◆ “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.

Fish Cards (10-15 minutes)

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

Help children make decorated fish cards. Cut 6”-8” fish shapes from poster board. A Fish Patterns template is attached to this document.

Tell children that the fish was an early symbol for Christians. Give a cardboard fish to each child. Children can decorate the fish with markers or confetti. If you use confetti, show children how to use dampened sponges to dab glue onto the fish and how to sprinkle the confetti or tiny shapes punched from foil onto the glue. Children themselves can help punch these shapes from foil.

Children can make hanging cards by punching a hole in the fish and threading a yarn through the hole. Put the finished fish aside to dry until the session is over. Children can hang the finished fish in their rooms or give them to a friend or family member.

We Will Follow Jesus Now
(5-15 minutes)

Tape or pin the Jesus the Teacher poster attached to this document. Several sessions will focus on Jesus, our Teacher.

Explain that we all have many different teachers. One teacher we all have is Jesus. If you have placed the poster in the storytelling area, invite children to examine the poster. What do the children think Jesus is teaching?

Explain that in today’s story, Jesus taught three friends to follow him. Jesus invites us to follow him, too. Teach the children to sing these words to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb”:

We will follow Jesus now, Jesus now, Jesus now.
We will follow Jesus now, wherever Jesus goes.

Seat the children in a circle around the paper boat taped to the floor in today’s Creative Drama. Ask a volunteer to play the part of Jesus. The children sing the game song as Jesus walks around the outside of the circle.

When the song ends, Jesus touches one child who gets up and follows Jesus. Sing the song again as the two children walk around the circle. At the end of this verse, the child following Jesus adds another child to the line.

Continue the singing and choosing until all the children follow Jesus in a circle around the boat.
Young Children and the Gospel

Today’s gospel presents Jesus as a teacher whose call compels three simple fishermen to leave everything and follow him. We present this story to young children as a call to them and to us: follow Jesus.

Can Jesus’ call to follow have any meaning for young children? Some Christian denominations feel so strongly that Jesus’ call is a call to adult discipleship only that they won’t even baptize children until they are older.

In most Christian denominations, we baptize even infants, thereby accepting them as full members of Christ’s Church, with all the privileges, responsibilities and calls to growth that membership implies. There are intriguing hints in the New Testament that such an understanding of discipleship echoes the mind of Christ and his first disciples. The gospels record that Jesus warns his disciples not “to prevent” the children from coming to him.

This same verb (in Greek, koluein) is used in the book of Acts to emphasize the inclusive nature of Baptism. There is “nothing to prevent” the eunuch Ethiopian (Acts 8:36) or the gentile Cornelius (Acts 10:47) from being baptized.

When we see young children as full members of the Church, we see faith formation work in its proper perspective, too. We are coworkers with the children and coworkers with Christ in seeking to come together to Christ’s work in the world.

Dyani’s Sikhulule

“Sikhulule” was written by Thozama Dyani, a South-African woman (from the Xhosa tribe) whose brother was murdered by the police during South Africa’s dark days of apartheid.

“Sikhulule” is part of Dyani’s “Liberation Mass,” written to remember the events of Soweto Day (now called “Youth Day”), a student-led day of protest and violence that set in motion the fight to end apartheid.

Reflect on this song and its writing. What words or music give you strength to seek the full justice and freedom of God’s kingdom for all?

Sikhulule,
Sikhulule,
Ngenceba yakho
Sikhulule.

Liberate us, Lord.
Liberate us, Lord.
In your love and mercy
Set us free.

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.
— Fish Patterns to use in the Fish Cards art project found in today’s session.
— 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 and/or families exploring Jesus’ role as The Messiah.
— An article for catechists and/or families exploring the role of Prophets and Prophecy.
— The Introduction for Preschool/Kindergarten for Living the Good News.
More about Today’s Scriptures

The readings for today explore several persons of faith who have answered God’s call to them. The Old Testament readings from Judges and Isaiah recount the calls of Gideon and Isaiah and their responses. Paul summarizes the gospel and reminds the Corinthians of their calling through the resurrected Christ. In the gospel, we read how Jesus calls Peter, above all, to be his disciple.

Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8

Isaiah experienced his call to be a prophet in the temple at Jerusalem. He saw a vision of the Lord enthroned amidst the divine council.

God’s “throne” is the ark of the covenant. Above the Lord are the seraphim, literally burning ones, who represent the heavenly creatures who worship God.

The triple repetition of holy emphasizes the mysterious, awesome, unapproachable quality of the divine.

Isaiah responds to the experience of God’s holiness with a sense of profound sinfulness, not only his own but that of all the people.

He is granted cleansing and healing grace through the coal from the altar, so that he may proclaim God’s word to the people.

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

In preparation for the next topic of discussion, the resurrection of the dead (15:12), Paul reminds the Corinthians of their common ground of belief. By quoting a traditional formulation of the essential proclamation about Christ (15:3-5), he recalls the basic creedal statements he taught them.

What “scriptures” (that is, of the Old Testament) Paul means in verses 3 and 4 is not explicit. In general, the statement “in accordance with the scriptures” expresses the conviction that these events took place according to God’s purpose. It was, however, the lived experience of the early Christians, not merely the evidence of the Old Testament, that shaped their belief.

Paul’s list of resurrection appearances does not match exactly those in the gospel accounts. Paul includes the Lord’s appearance to him, “as to one untimely born,” perhaps referring to Paul’s belated revelation, or perhaps taking up a term of abuse applied to him by others. But whatever Paul’s defects or his gifts, he preaches the same gospel as the other apostles, the same gospel that the Corinthians accepted.


Today’s story of the wondrous catch of fish is focused on Peter, whose enormous catch prefigures his missionary success. It is also an epiphany of Jesus; Peter’s reaction to the divine manifestation is to realize his own sinfulness. His cry, “O Lord,” has implicit within it his later confession of Jesus as Messiah (9:20).

Peter leaves everything to follow Jesus (5:11). His response to Jesus contains all of the elements that Luke’s community would need as a model for their own acceptance and following of Jesus.
Reflection
The religious authorities of Israel would’ve sniffed something fishy in this scene. If someone wanted to be a spiritual leader, inspiring reform and conversion, wouldn’t he recruit followers from the seminaries, or at least, the synagogues? Instead this Jesus calls fisherfolk.

It shouldn’t seem so odd to viewers of contemporary films, where the greatest victories are achieved by the least likely heroes. In both “Erin Brockovich” and “North Country,” well-dressed, wealthy, educated attorneys meet their come-uppance through uneducated, powerless women popularly considered “floozies.” Unexpectedly, these women inspire others to speak truth to power simply because it’s the right thing to do.

Jesus must’ve relished Peter’s willingness to follow Jesus’ suggestion, and his stupefaction at the huge catch. Peter has the grace to cooperate and be amazed: what more could Jesus want, even if this unlikely leader does open mouth/insert foot and smell fishy?

We too worry about being unfit for ministry, uneducated in theology, or ill equipped for challenge. We might remember the willingness of these models to answer the plaintive call, “Whom shall I send?” We too can respond to Jesus with the words of Isaiah, “Here I am; send me.”

The Scriptures and the Catechism
God’s holiness calls us to holiness as Christians. For the Israelites, holiness was the distinctive characteristic of God (CCC, #2807–15), which made God divine and completely different from us. Holiness was transmitted to our world through contact with God. So whatever God touched became holy. As Christians, our call into relationship with God is also our call to holiness (CCC, #1716–28). God has touched our deepest selves with healing love and we have been transformed.

The World of the Bible

Holy, Holy, Holy
Holy describes the unique quality that makes God to be divine and thus wholly other or separate from all created realities.

Strictly speaking, human persons like priests or the community of Israel and created objects like the Jerusalem Temple or altars or sacrificial offerings only become holy through contact with God. God’s presence transforms the person or place or thing into something sacred.

As Isaiah demonstrates, this quality of holiness demands reverent fear, for to come into contact with God is supremely dangerous because it changes whatever is touched. The triple repetition of holy emphasizes the mysterious, awesome, unapproachable quality of the divine.