

Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Acts 10:44-48

Background

Alleluia, Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Easter is nearing a close but we continue to celebrate with the same enthusiasm because Jesus was raised! We've walked with Jesus through the wilderness into Jerusalem and to the grave. Easter is a season of 50 days in which we name and claim our identity in Christ as an Easter People. Easter is a season of baptism and rebirth. Many of the Scripture passages we will hear are about baptism or about Jesus' sacrifice for us. Many churches use this as a season for baptisms and receptions into the church. It is the season when we re-explore our identity as Christians as it is the key to our faith tradition: that Jesus, the Son of God, died for our sins and rose to new life again from the grave. In doing so, Jesus has opened the pathway to everlasting life for all of us. Thanks be to God!

A Notation for This Week's Scripture

Today our Scripture passage is a continuation of the preaching we heard from Peter in the lesson from Acts on Easter Day. You'll remember that on Easter we heard the story of Peter preaching the Good News to the Gentiles at Cornelius' home. (For more detailed background read Acts 10:34-43 and/or the "Notation for This Week's Scripture from the Easter Day Acts lesson on LPTW.) Today's passage picks up from where we left off. Peter has preached the birth, baptism, teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection of our Lord when, suddenly, the Holy Spirit interrupts him by giving the gift of belief to all who were hearing the Word. As Peter and his followers who accompanied him witness this beautiful exchange of the Spirit they are taken aback, because they have witnessed the Spirit giving of itself freely to Gentiles, just as with the Jews. At this realization, Peter asks the key

question: “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” Thus, the people at Cornelius’ home are baptized on the spot.

Theme: Baptism is for All

Before Class:

- Set up the room to look like a sacred space. You will be enacting the Liturgy of Baptism for the activity today so all of the materials listed below are for the classroom to “become” a church hosting a baptism. Remember, not all baptisms happen in churches! Make your space feel special and holy – that is what matters.
- Read through the liturgy on your own to make sure you can find all of the pieces. Use the attached liturgy “cheat sheet” to line it up with your prayer book so you can help the children find the right pages.
- As you will be acting out the baptism liturgy there will be two choices for who will be “baptized:” a member of the class could volunteer to play the roll or you could use a baby doll. Consider before class if you have a preference in this. Play-acting the roll of the person being baptized could be a powerful learning tool as children learn so much by doing. Many of your class members will not remember their own baptism, having been baptized as a baby. However, if you have a member/members of your class who have not been baptized this could be a challenging place to negotiate and you may need to talk with parents about the structure of the lesson. It will be important, in any case, to stress to the children (if a classmate serves in this roll) that this is a dramatization of a baptism, not a “real” or second baptism.

Supplies needed:

- Bibles
- Books of Common Prayer, one for each child

- Pitcher of warm water
- Large mixing bowl (to be used as the baptismal font)
- White Sheet (to use as an altar cloth)
- Small Towel (to wipe the water off the forehead)
- Chrism (the oil used to anoint the newly Baptized)
- Candles
- Matches/Lighter
- 1-2 “stoles” (stoles could easily be made from long thin strips of white fabric or ribbon)
- Baby doll (optional)

Beginning: Start by telling the children that today you are going to act out the baptism liturgy from our prayer book. Next, tell them a short story about a baptism that was important to you as a means of introducing the personal nature of this activity. Ask if any of them have a memory of baptism that was special or important to them. When all who have a desire to share have had a chance, open the lesson with the Easter Acclamation.

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

People/Children: The Lord is Risen indeed, Alleluia!

Opening Prayer: *Wonderful God, Thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit and for the baptism you invite us all into. Amen.*

The Story: Acts 10:44-48

Today’s story is a continuation of the story we did on Easter Sunday. If your church did not hold formation classes on Easter Sunday, the children still would have heard the lesson in church that morning. However, it was several weeks ago so it would be good to start by reviewing what happened in that story.

Briefly, in Acts 10:1-33, Peter is invited to go to the home of a Roman Centurion, named Cornelius. Centurions were Roman military leaders – he was a Gentile (meaning he was not Jewish.) Peter was confused as to why Cornelius invited him there, but he learned that Cornelius saw in a dream to invite Peter to preach the Gospel. So, in the passage we heard on Easter (Acts 10:34-43) Peter tells Cornelius and his friends the story of Jesus from Jesus’ baptism all the way to Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Today, our story picks up where Peter left off. He has just finished telling the Gentiles all about Jesus and is continuing his preaching.

Read the Story: Acts 10:44-48

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder how Peter knew the Holy Spirit was falling upon the people.
- I wonder what it would feel like for the Holy Spirit to fall upon you.
- I wonder what the people thought when Peter suggested they all be baptized.
- I wonder what you thought the most important part of this story was.

Activity: Today we are going to act out the baptism liturgy from our prayer book. We talked about some of the special baptism memories we have at the beginning of class today. Do any of you have a favorite part of the baptism service? (Some churches have their own special traditions that are part of the baptism service – the children might ring bells, the priest may invite a child to pour the water, etc. While these traditions are not in the prayer book, they are part of our local experience. This could be a good opportunity for your children to learn which things about the baptisms they witness at church are from the Episcopal tradition and which are from your local tradition.)

In order to act out the liturgy today we are each going to need to play a roll. The “parts” we have to play are:

- Acolyte

- Priest
- Person being baptized (Or you could use a baby doll)
- Family of the person being baptized
- Godparents
- Reader

After each child has a roll, invite them to open their prayer books to page 301. Before starting the liturgy invite your acolyte to light the candles. Remind the class that they are in sacred space and that your classroom has been transformed into a space of worship.

Now it is time to begin the “service” using the liturgy on page 301 and referring to your “Liturgy Cheat Sheet” provided.

Getting Closure: After the liturgy has been completed, ask the children how they felt in each of the roles. How did it feel to get the water on their head? Invite the children to smell the holy oil... what does it smell like? Did anything surprise them about the experience? Are there any final thoughts they would like to share about the experience?

Closing Prayer: *Thank you, God, for meeting us in the waters of baptism. Amen.*

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

People/Children: The Lord is Risen indeed, Alleluia!

Liturgy Cheat Sheet

*The following pages are taken directly from the Book of Common Prayer.
Additional instructions and helps are added in red.*

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Presentation and Examination of the Candidates

The Celebrant says (The child/ren acting as the priest will say)

The Candidate(s) for Holy Baptism will now be presented.

Adults and Older Children (During the baptism of the class member this is used – if using a doll skip ahead to the next section)

The candidates who are able to answer for themselves are presented individually by their Sponsors, as follows:

Sponsor: I present N. (insert name of person being baptized) to receive the Sacrament of Baptism.

The Celebrant asks each candidate when presented

Do you desire to be baptized?

Candidate I do.

Infants and Younger Children (During the baptism of the doll this is used)

Then the candidates who are unable to answer for themselves are presented individually by their Parents and Godparents, as follows

Parents and Godparents

I present N. (insert name of person being baptized) to receive the Sacrament of Baptism.

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When all have been presented the Celebrant asks the parents and godparents

Will you be responsible for seeing that the child you present is brought up in the Christian faith and life?

Parents and Godparents

I will, with God's help.

Celebrant

Will you by your prayers and witness help this child to grow into the full stature of Christ?

Parents and Godparents

I will, with God's help.

These next questions are important because they ask the people being baptized, (or if it is a baby being baptized they ask the parents and godparents,) to confirm their faith in God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. In our story today, these are the things Peter has just finished teaching to the Gentiles who have now received the Holy Spirit. Baptism is an important entry into the life of the church so it is important that the people experiencing baptism understand all about God and Jesus.

Then the Celebrant asks the following questions of the candidates who can speak for themselves, and of the parents and godparents who speak on behalf of the infants and younger children.

Question Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?

Answer I renounce them.

Question Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?

Answer I renounce them.

Question Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?

Answer I renounce them.

Question Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior?

Answer I do.

Question Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?

Answer I do.

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Question Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord?

Answer I do.

The next few lines will be skipped because there isn't anyone else to present and no one is being confirmed. If there is time you could talk a little about confirmation and reception and why they would be happening at this point in the service.

~~*When there are others to be presented, the Bishop says—The other Candidate(s) will now be presented.—*~~

~~*Presenters—I present these persons for Confirmation—or I present these persons to be received into this—Communion.—or I present these persons who desire to reaffirm their baptismal vows.—*~~

~~*The Bishop asks the candidates—Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil?—*~~

~~*Candidate—I do.—*~~

~~*Bishop—Do you renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?—*~~

~~*Candidate—I do, and with God's grace I will follow him as my Savior—and Lord.—*~~

→ *After all have been presented, the Celebrant addresses the congregation, saying*

Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support *these persons* in *their* life in Christ?

People We will.

The Celebrant then says these or similar words

Let us join with *those* who are committing *themselves* to Christ and renew our own baptismal covenant.

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The Baptismal Covenant

(In the Baptismal Covenant we say the creed in a question/answer format rather than a statement like we do other weeks at church. This is one way that we see the unity between members of the church.)

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Father?

People I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Celebrant Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

People I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

People I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

People I will, with God's help.

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Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People I will, with God's help.

Prayers for the Candidates

The Celebrant then says to the congregation

Let us now pray for *these persons* who *are* to receive the Sacrament of new birth [and for those (this person) who *have* renewed *their* commitment to Christ.]

A Person appointed (The reader assigned for class) leads the following petitions

Leader Deliver *them*, O Lord, from the way of sin and death.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Open *their hearts* to your grace and truth.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Fill *them* with your holy and life-giving Spirit.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Keep *them* in the faith and communion of your holy Church.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Teach *them* to love others in the power of the Spirit.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

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Leader Send *them* into the world in witness to your love.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Bring *them* to the fullness of your peace and glory.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

The Celebrant says

Grant, O Lord, that all who are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ your Son may live in the power of his resurrection and look for him to come again in glory; who lives and reigns now and forever. *Amen.*

Thanksgiving over the Water

The Celebrant blesses the water, first saying

The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Celebrant

We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. (The “priest” pours the water into the “font” here. You may need to help. Try to have the “priest” pour it from up high so it will splash around. This is a celebration!) Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.

We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in joyful obedience to your Son, we bring into his

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fellowship those who come to him in faith, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

At the following words, the Celebrant touches the water.

Now sanctify (*this means make holy*) this water, we pray you, by the power of your Holy Spirit, that those who here are cleansed from sin and born again may continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Savior.

To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Skip ahead

~~**Consecration of the Chrism**—The Bishop may then consecrate oil of Chrism, placing a hand on the vessel of oil, and saying—Eternal Father, whose blessed Son was anointed by the Holy Spirit to be the Savior and servant of all, we pray you to consecrate this oil, that those who are sealed with it may share in the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. *Amen.*~~

The Baptism

Each candidate is presented by name to the Celebrant, or to an assisting priest or deacon, who then immerses, or pours water upon, the candidate, saying

N. (Name), I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

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When this action has been completed for all candidates, the Bishop or Priest, at a place in full sight of the congregation, prays over them, saying

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon these

your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised *them* to the new life of grace. Sustain *them*, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give *them* an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. *Amen.*

Then the Bishop or Priest places a hand on the person's head, marking on the forehead the sign of the cross [using Chrism (Holy Oil) if desired] and saying to each one
N., you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. Amen.

Or this action may be done immediately after the administration of the water and before the preceding prayer.

When all have been baptized, the Celebrant says
Let us welcome the newly baptized.

Celebrant and People

We receive you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood.