

Chapter 8

Featured Story

Jesus Sends the Holy Spirit to Help Us (John 14:15–31)

Lesson Goals

- to recognize that the Holy Spirit is our helper and guide
- to identify that the Holy Spirit helps us in an examination of conscience as we prepare to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- to review the key words and important concepts of these chapters in preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Lesson at a Glance

- 🏠 Go** (10 minutes)
 - Opening Prayer
 - Engage Activity
- ✚ Seek** (30 minutes)
 - Featured Story
 - Core Learning Activity
- ✂ Find** (20 minutes)
 - God's Treasure of Forgiveness
 - Lesson Wrap-Up
 - Closing Prayer

Materials Needed

- *The Catholic Children's Bible* and chapter 8 activity booklet
- index cards, one for each child
- materials for any of the optional activities you choose

Music Suggestions

- "Holy Spirit Come," by Spring Harvest (Elevation Kids)
- "Nigeria: Come, O Holy Spirit / Wa wa wa Emimimo," by John Bell and Alison Adam (GIA Publications, Inc.)

The Holy Spirit Teaches Us



Background Focus

You may have seen the cartoon featuring Lassie, the dog who so often comes to the aid of her human family members. In one frame, a man is pictured in the midst of high waves, clearly about to drown and calling, "Lassie, get help!" In the next frame, Lassie is seen stretched out on her back on a psychiatrist's couch, recounting her thoughts and feelings, while the psychiatrist diligently takes notes.

We all need help. Jesus knew this, and promised to send the Holy Spirit as our Advocate, our Helper. The Holy Spirit is especially important—and helpful—while preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Holy Spirit helps us to discern our sin, ask forgiveness, and move forward with confidence in the love of God in order to share that love with others. This is the whole purpose of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

In this chapter, the children are introduced to the examination of conscience to help them call on the Holy Spirit for guidance as they prepare to receive this sacrament for the first time.

🏠 Go (10 minutes)

Opening Prayer

- Invite the children to turn to page 1 in their chapter 8 activity booklets and locate the prayer on the page.
- Begin prayer by leading the group in the Sign of the Cross, then saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God." Allow about 10 seconds of silence.
- Read the prayer in the activity booklet to the group. Invite all of the children to say "Amen," and then close with another Sign of the Cross. Have the children put their activity booklets away for now.

Engage Activity

- Ask the children to name some of the helpers in their lives (*community helpers like police officers and firefighters, helpers at school, helpers at home*). Write these on the board.
- Consider aloud some of these helpers. Choose some in turn and ask:
 - How does this helper help you?
 - How does this helper make your life safer or better?
- Tell the children that today we will learn about another helper that Jesus sent to us, the Holy Spirit. We will learn more about all the ways the Holy Spirit helps us in our lives, and how the Holy Spirit helps us prepare to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Seek (30 minutes)

Featured Story

- Invite the children to find John 14:15–31 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* (pages 1689 and 1692).
- Direct them to turn to the Featured Story on page 1690 and place an “I found it!” sticker on the page. Tell them that the words between the leaves on the page are a shortened version of the Scripture verses on pages 1689 and 1692.
- Ask the children to look at the artwork on pages 1690–1691, and invite them to describe what they see in the artwork.
- Introduce the Bible story to the children by explaining that after Jesus died and rose from the dead, he went back to Heaven to be with his Father. Tell them that before he left, Jesus promised to send a helper for us, the Holy Spirit.
- Read the Bible story to the children. Then ask the children several questions to check for comprehension, such as these:
 - Who is the Helper that Jesus promised? (*the Holy Spirit*)
 - How will the Holy Spirit help you? (*The Holy Spirit will teach us and help us remember all that Jesus said.*)
 - What does the Holy Spirit bring us as a gift from Jesus? (*peace*)

- Conclude by reminding the children that because the Holy Spirit brings us peace, we can share that peace with others. Ask the children: How can we share peace? (*by being kind, by forgiving others, by helping others*)
- Invite the children to turn to page 2 in the activity booklet and complete the activity. *Answers: Helper, forever, Spirit, truth, remains, in, Holy Spirit, teach, remember, told, peace, worried, afraid*

Understand It!

- Read Understand It! on page 1691 to the children, or invite a volunteer or volunteers to read.
- Invite the children to summarize what they just heard, asking them key questions about the reading to check for comprehension.
- Review these key points with them:
 - The great gift of Jesus to us is the Holy Spirit.
 - The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all one God. They are the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.
 - We receive the Holy Spirit's power at Baptism.
 - The Holy Spirit is our Helper. We cannot see him, but he works within us.
 - The Holy Spirit helps us to understand what Jesus taught and to act on it through the good ideas we have.
 - The Holy Spirit is at work in us each day. We can ask him for help and guidance.

Live It!

- Invite a volunteer to read Live It! on page 1691 or read it aloud to the group.
- Distribute an index card to each child if time permits. Instruct the children to copy the Holy Spirit prayer onto the index card and place it in their Bibles as a bookmark.

Tell It!

- Ask the children to look at the images in Tell It! on page 1691.
- Direct their attention to the second frame. Explain that the Holy Spirit is often shown as a dove, because a dove is a sign of peace.
- Encourage several volunteers to stand and summarize the Bible reading for the group, using the images in Tell It!

- Have the children use some of the smaller stickers to mark parts of the Featured Story pages that capture their interest. Tell them that they can keep any remaining stickers to be used at a later time as they explore the Bible by themselves.

Core Learning Activity

An Examination of Conscience

- Explain that one of the special things the Holy Spirit helps us with is our preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
 - The Holy Spirit helps us remember things we have done for which we are sorry and want to ask forgiveness. The Holy Spirit helps us to be honest and truthful with ourselves.
 - Today, we will ask the Holy Spirit for help to think of sins we want to confess in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This thinking-over of what we have done and any sins we have committed, how we could have better kept the Ten Commandments and been better followers of Jesus, is called an **examination of conscience**.
- Remind the children that each of us has a conscience, that is, an inner knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. Tell them that when we examine our conscience, we look at things we have done and remember things we have done that were right and good. Explain that we also remember things we have done that were not right, that caused a problem for ourselves or for someone else.
- Explain that we will now examine our consciences together. Begin in these or similar words:
 - Let us quiet ourselves. Hands, be still. Feet, be still. Fold your arms or hands on top of the desk. You may put your head down if it helps you to listen. I will ask a question for you to think about. Answer it in your heart, just for yourself. When it is time for you to prepare for your confession, ask the Holy Spirit to help you remember this examination of conscience.
- Continue with the following questions. Pause between each one.
 - Have I used God's name and the name of Jesus with respect? *(pause)*
 - Have I honored God by saying my prayers? *(pause)*
 - Have I done my best to pay attention at Mass and to pray and sing with my parish? *(pause)*
 - Have I shown love to my parents and others who care for me by listening to them and always doing as they ask? *(pause)*
 - Have I lied to my parents or my teachers? *(pause)*
 - Have I been helpful to my brothers and sisters? Have I been mean to them? *(pause)*
 - Have I treated others in a kind and friendly way? Or have I been mean to others? *(pause)*
 - Have I played fairly? *(pause)*
 - Did I call names or tell lies about someone? *(pause)*
 - Did I share my things with others? *(pause)*
 - Have I treated the belongings of others carefully? Have I taken what does not belong to me? *(pause)*
- End by praying: "Jesus said, 'Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid.' (John 14:27) Thank you, Holy Spirit! Be with us always. Amen."

Process the Activity

- Invite the children to share what they felt during this activity. Explain that sometimes we can feel sad when we remember some things we have done wrong, but this sadness is true sorrow, and it will turn to joy after we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Explain that the Holy Spirit is our Helper and will help us to live the way Jesus taught. Tell the children that the Holy Spirit will remind us of all the things we have done and will help us to prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation with honesty and courage.

- Explain that as followers of Jesus, we try to live by the Golden Rule that Jesus taught us:

“Do for others what you want them to do for you” (Matthew 7:12).

Ask the children to turn to page 1990 in *The Catholic Children’s Bible* to find this Golden Rule printed above the Ten Commandments.

- Remind the children that the examination of conscience is printed on page 3 in *The Rite of Reconciliation and Key Words* booklet. Suggest that they bring this examination of conscience to church and review it before receiving the sacrament.

Additional Activity Options

If the core activity would not work for your group for any reason, you may choose to use any of the Additional Activities on pages 65–66 in its place.

✕ Find (20 minutes)

God’s Treasure of Forgiveness

- Recall the previous lessons with the children by arranging the children in two lines. These will be the two teams.
- Ask the first question (using the questions below). Only the two children at the front of the line may answer, but if any other team member knows the answer, it can be whispered to the child at the front of the line. The first correct answer gets one point. After answering the first question, the first two children sit down and the next two are “up” for the next question.

Review Questions for This Activity

1. What do we call God’s life in us? (*grace*)
2. When we disobey God’s Law, we call it what? (*sin*)
3. What is the Great Commandment that Jesus taught us? (*to love God and to love others as ourselves*)

4. When we fail to love fully, where can we ask for forgiveness? (*in the Sacrament of Reconciliation*)
 5. Why did God give us rules? (*to keep us safe and happy*)
 6. How is an accident different from a sin? (*An accident is something unexpected that you did not choose to happen; a sin is a deliberate choice.*)
 7. What is the difference between a mortal sin and a venial sin? (*A mortal sin separates us from God; a venial sin harms our relationship with God and others. We must confess a mortal sin and ask forgiveness as soon as possible.*)
 8. What prayer do we say in the Sacrament of Reconciliation to express our sorrow for our sins? (*an Act of Contrition*)
 9. When can we call on Jesus for help? (*anytime, but especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation*)
 10. What happens when we receive absolution in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? (*Our sins are forgiven and we are given the gift of peace.*)
- Expand the questions, if necessary, by formulating extra questions based on the activity worksheets.
 - End the game by assuring the children that they are ready to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation!
 - Invite the children to turn to page 3 in the activity booklet and complete the activity. *Answers:*
1. *sin*, 2. *contrition*, 3. *venial sin*, 4. *mercy*, 5. *absolution*

Teacher Note: This content is presented in a child-friendly way in the *God’s Treasure of Forgiveness Student Booklet*. You may wish to have the children read all or parts of chapter 8 to supplement your presentation. Or use the concluding points under “Things to Remember” to wrap up the lesson before prayer.

Lesson Wrap-Up

- Invite the children to think back over all of the different things they did in this lesson, and invite volunteers to share some of the key things they learned.
- Take some time to get input from the group, and write their answers on the board.
- Ensure that the following points are made, write them on the board, and circle them:
 - The Holy Spirit is our helper and guide.
 - The Holy Spirit helps us examine our conscience.
 - The Holy Spirit helps us remember important facts about the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Ask the children to place the chapter 8 sticker in the correct circle on their treasure maps.



Closing Prayer

- Begin prayer by leading the group in the Sign of the Cross, then saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God," followed by a few seconds of silence.
- Play a song from the list of "Music Suggestions" at the beginning of this lesson, if there is time.
- End by praying the "Come, Holy Spirit" prayer (found in Live It! on page 1691 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*). Then close with a final Sign of the Cross.