

# THE HANDS-ON GOSPEL

Thought-Provoking  
Demonstrations  
*of the* Sunday Gospels

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*Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them;  
for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.*

—Matthew 19:14

Jesus invites both catechists and parents to find a way to instill in our children the love of God. What better way than to prepare them for the message of the Gospel every Sunday? Mass is about sharing the message of Jesus with the whole community. *Hands-On Gospel* is about getting that message into the hands of our children.

In seeking how best to lead our children to God's kingdom, we consider the environment in which our children develop and learn. What we find is an atmosphere of almost constant stimulation, particularly that provided by the all-pervasive media. As a result, learning tends to be increasingly experiential. Children embrace learning when they are discovering information and trying it out.

*Hands-On Gospel* responds to the need for an experiential approach to religious education. It provides fun and stimulating activities and experiences that are designed to correspond to the Gospel reading for each Sunday.

For the convenience of the catechist or parent, boldface type within the "Demonstration" sections is used to suggest questions or comments that may be paraphrased as desired. The Gospel readings from the *Lectionary for Masses with Children* are referenced at the top of each page. To further reinforce the Gospel message, a graphic symbol accompanies each Gospel passage. Reproducible pages of these symbols are also provided. These may be copied onto labels and given to the children to remind them of what they have learned.

We hope you will enjoy using *Hands-On Gospel*. May its activities bring the children to a greater appreciation of the Gospel message and offer them a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven that Jesus promises to all of us.

Illustrations by Jason O'Malley and Paul Canavese.

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## READING

Matthew 24:37-44

## SYNOPSIS

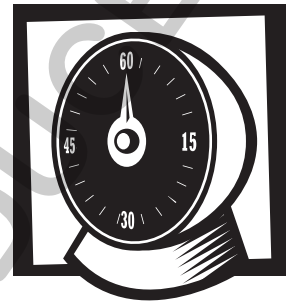
Just as the flood surprised those of Noah's time, Jesus cautioned the people that there will be no warning when he returns. We must take precautions just as we would to prevent a theft.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Kitchen timer
- Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

## DEMONSTRATION

1. Bring a wind-up timer that will ring after a few seconds. Have the children sit in a circle on the floor. Pass the timer around the circle until it rings. Have the child holding the timer when it rings move out of the circle. Do this several times.
2. Then say: ***How did you feel as you were passing the timer?*** (nervous, excited) ***How did you get ready for it to ring?*** (stayed alert)
3. Tell the Gospel story or read it from the Bible. Discuss with the group how we can be ready for the Lord to come again by being loving, following the Commandments, celebrating with Jesus at Mass, studying to get to know Jesus better, and so on. Remind the children that during this season of Advent, we can prepare ourselves for the day of the Lord by showing that we are living as disciples of Jesus. Ask them to think about and then share one thing they will choose to do for this season. Encourage them to be specific, for example, rather than saying "I'll be nicer to my brother" ask them to be more concrete, as in, "I won't hit my brother when he is bothering me." Instead of generally committing to "I'll listen to my parents" they may more concretely try to "Do my chores the first time they ask instead of making them ask several times."
4. Pray together the Lord's Prayer or today's Responsorial Psalm

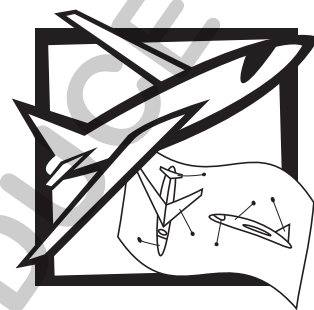


## READING

Matthew 3:1-9, 11

## SYNOPSIS

John the Baptist warned the people to repent and to show that they have really given up their sins. He baptized them with water but predicted that Jesus would baptize them with the Holy Spirit.



## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Diagram and directions for a model car or airplane, plus a sample of the item fully assembled. (Another option - a Lego project)

## DEMONSTRATION

1. Show a diagram and directions for putting together a model car or airplane or a Lego set. Then show the assembled item.
2. Say to the children: ***From the diagram, can you tell what the item will be?*** Discuss the benefits of having the directions when trying to put the model together.
3. Then ask: ***Since the diagram and directions are so helpful, would you rather just have them? Or would you prefer the finished model?***
4. Then tell the children that this is how it was when John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin, came before Jesus. Say: ***John's job was to tell the people that Jesus was coming. He was like the diagram and directions. He was important because he instructed the people how to prepare for Jesus' coming. But he was not as important as Jesus was. Some people were thinking that John was so good that he was God's son. But listen to the Gospel to hear what John told these people.*** Read today's Gospel.
5. After reading the Gospel, ask the children what they think it means to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Then ask: ***What happened when you were baptized?*** Allow for some responses. ***Were you baptized with water or with the Holy Spirit?*** [Explain to them that though the priest uses water to baptize, we also receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism.] Say: ***The Holy Spirit helps us to live as Jesus did while he was on Earth.***
6. Pray together the Glory Be to the Father or sing an Advent song, such as "Prepare the Way of the Lord" by the Taizé Community.





