

LESSON 6

HOLY BAPTISM

LESSON NOTES

FOCUS: INITIATION BY WATER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

- **LITURGICAL ACTION**
- **CORE PRESENTATION**

THE MATERIAL

- **LOCATION: FOCAL SHELVES**
- **PIECES: LARGE TRAY HOLDING A BOWL (FOR THE BAPTISMAL FONT), PITCHER OF WATER, DOVE, CONTAINER OF FRAGRANT OIL, METAL BOX OF MATCHES, CANDLE SNUFFER AND WHITE UNDERLAYS; BASKET HOLDING A BABY DOLL, WRAPPED IN WHITE BLANKET OR GOWN; BRASS BOWL OF SAND; BASKET OF CANDLES, WITH DRIP GUARDS (OR CANDLES WITH HOLDERS); CHRIST CANDLE**
- **UNDERLAY: 3 WHITE FELT CIRCLES**

BACKGROUND

You can present this lesson at any time during the Church year, but it is especially appropriate on the First Sunday after Epiphany (January 6), a Sunday known as the Baptism of Our Lord, or on any Sunday when a baptism is celebrated.

Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into the Church. The rite draws both the past and future into the present, so there is no need to be baptized more than once. For Christians, this rite is the gateway into the family of families we call the Church. It remains the primary moment in the life of a Christian person to be remembered and looked forward to.

We baptize people in the traditional name of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—so the primary material used in this lesson is three overlapping white circles, a well-known symbol of the Trinity. The names of Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer are juxtaposed to the classical language to show that the Trinity is about much more than gender.

We place images of action on each of the white circles: the pouring of water for the Creator, the lighting of the Christ Candle for the Redeemer, and the images of dove

and the invisible scent of oil for the Sustainer. We ask children to remember or look forward to the day of their baptism by lighting candles from the light of the Christ Candle, since this is also the day they receive their "light."

NOTES ON THE MATERIAL

On a large tray place three rolled-up, white felt circles (each about 18" in diameter), a glass bowl (for the font, about 8" in diameter), a pitcher of water, a three-dimensional figure of a dove (about 5" in length), a small bottle or vial of fragrant oil, a metal box of matches and a candle snuffer. In a basket you need to have a baby doll, wrapped in a white blanket or dressed in a white gown. You also need a brass bowl (about 8" in diameter) half filled with sand and a second basket holding small candles (about ½" in diameter and 4" tall) fitted with drip guards, to protect the children's hands from hot wax. For children too small to handle candles, provide candles (tapers or votives) in holders, one to place in front of each child. You will also need the Christ Candle.

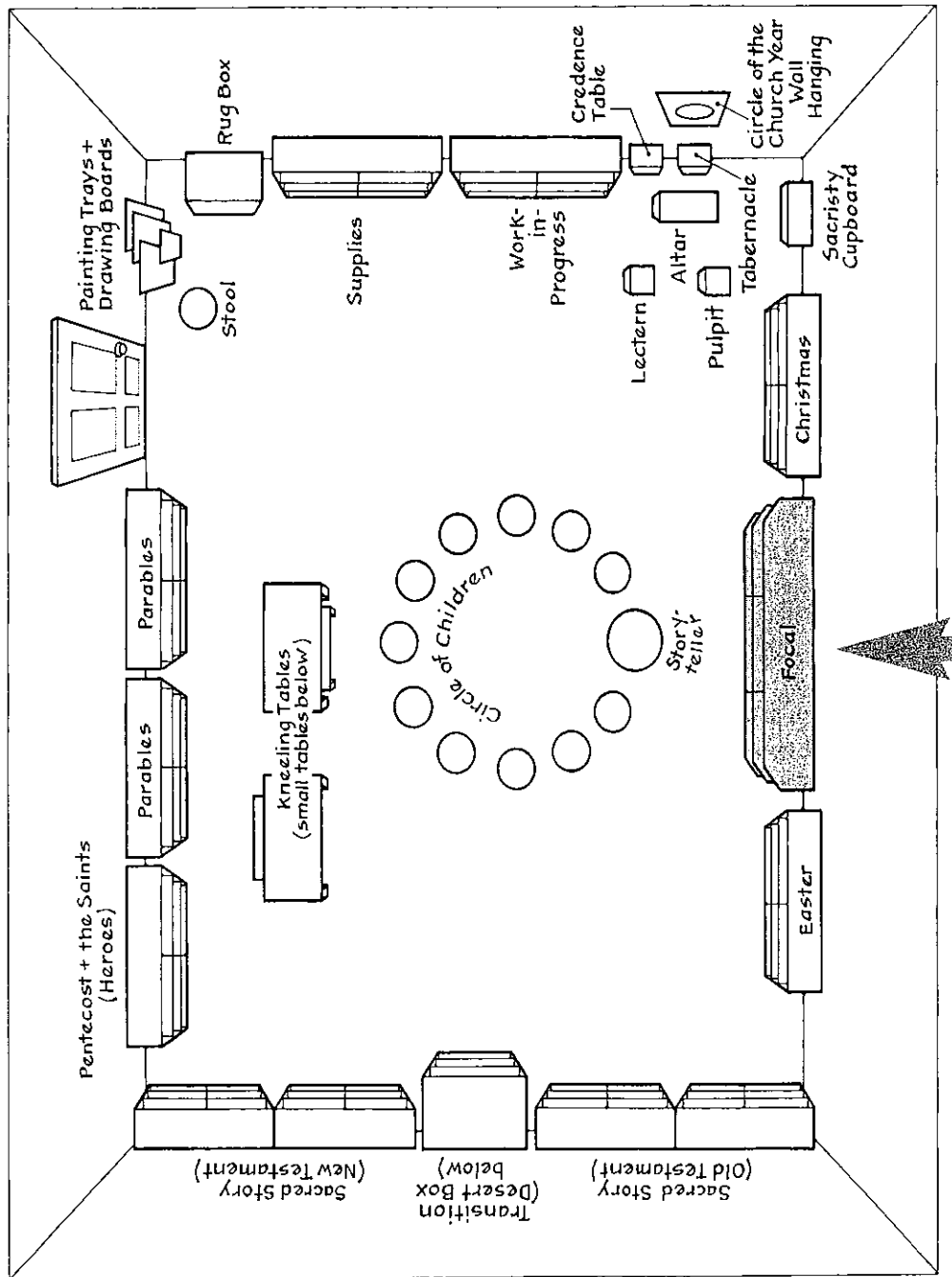
Find the materials for this presentation on the focal shelves. The Christ Candle sits on the top focal shelf, to the left. The tray of materials and basket with the doll are on the middle focal shelf, directly underneath the Christ Candle (to the left). The basket of small candles and bowl of sand are on the bottom focal shelf, underneath the other baptism materials (to the left).

Adapt the materials according to the usage of your church. For example, if your church uses a shell for baptism, you can place one on the tray with the other materials. If your tradition baptizes by total immersion, you will need to work out a way to show that, perhaps using a larger bowl or basin as the font instead of the bowl described above.

SPECIAL NOTES

Classroom Management: When the lesson about Holy Baptism is presented to the children, it is not a baptism, nor is it playing at baptism. Instead, the lesson invites children to "remember the day of their baptism or look forward to the day of their baptism." Thus we use a doll rather than a real person.

Cleaning supplies for the children to use should include polishing materials. Children will enjoy polishing the metal parts of the materials used in today's presentation. Some children will want to choose polishing for their individual work.



WHERE TO FIND MATERIALS

MOVEMENTS

Before the lesson, fill the pitcher with water and check the matches. Will they strike?

When the children are settled, get up and walk around the room. Then come back to where you were seated, in front of the focal shelves.

The Baptism materials are on the lower focal shelves, beneath the Christ Candle, which is on the left of the top focal shelf.

Bring to the circle the large tray, the two baskets and the bowl with sand in it. Place these on either side of where you will be sitting.

Get the Christ Candle. When you are settled and when the children are ready, begin.

Unroll the first white circle. Smooth it out. Unroll the second circle and place it so that it smoothly overlaps the first. Unroll the third one and place it so that it smoothly overlaps the first two circles.

Sit back and appreciate this symbol of the Trinity. Then point to each circle and name them again.

Place the pitcher and the glass bowl on the Father circle, the Christ Candle on the Son circle, and the dove and oil on the Holy Spirit circle. Do this slowly and with deliberation.

WORDS

Watch. Watch where I go to get this lesson. Here are the Sacred Stories. Here are the parables. Here are liturgical action lessons.

Oh. This is the lesson about Baptism.

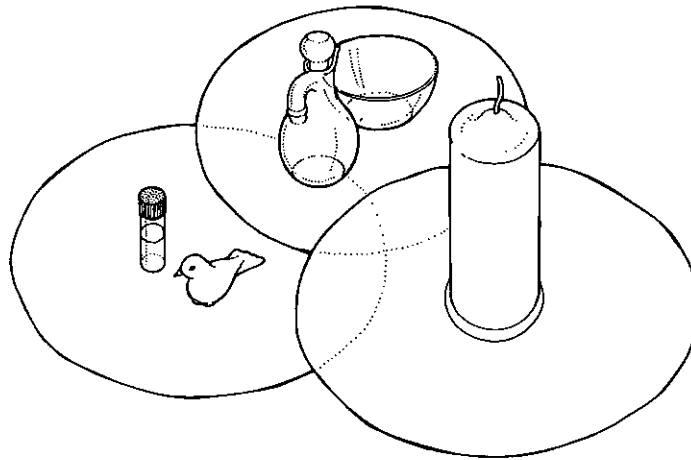
We need something else.

We baptize people in the name of the Father...the Son...and the Holy Spirit.

The Creator, the Redeemer, the Sustainer.

MOVEMENTS

WORDS



THE THREE CIRCLES OF THE TRINITY (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

Pour the water into the glass bowl, listening to the sound of the water. Then put your hand in the water and move it as you begin to name it. Then cup your hand to draw out some water and pour it back as you continue.

✦ This is the water of creation, the dangerous water of the flood, the water the people went through into freedom, the water Jesus was baptized in, the water you were—or will be—baptized in, and so much more.

When you have contemplated this for a moment, take a match from its container and point to the Christ Candle.

✦ There was once someone who said such wonderful things and did such amazing things that people just had to ask him who he was. One time when they asked him who he was, he said...

Strike the match and light the Christ Candle.

✦ "...I am the Light."

Take the stopper from the container of oil. Move the container slowly around the circle so children can catch its fragrance.

✦ The Holy Spirit goes where it will. It rides the invisible wind like a dove and comes to us when we need its comfort and power. It is invisible, like the scent of this oil. It is invisible but still there.

People are baptized when they are babies, or children, or teenagers, or grownups, or when they are very old. We will use a baby doll to see how this is done.

Pick up the doll and hold it in your arms.

✦ We ask the person about to be baptized questions, or if it's a baby too little to answer, we ask the parents or godparents. We say prayers for them. Then we are ready.

MOVEMENTS

Take the first name you get and quickly move on.

Stir the water and put it on the doll's head, or pour some on, or immerse the doll.

Put some of the oil on your fingers or thumb and make the sign of the cross on the doll's forehead, if that is your church's custom.

Carefully place the doll back in its basket. Then, pick up a candle from the candle basket.

When you or the children respond, "Bobby," continue.

Light Bobby's candle and place it in the bowl of sand. Pick up another candle from the candle basket to use for yourself.

Place your candle in the bowl of sand. Pass the basket of candles so each child can have one. Repeat the naming and candle-lighting ritual for each child. The children can hold the lit candles, or, if they are not ready for this responsibility, can place them in the bowl of sand.

As the candles are being lit, call the children's attention to the expanding circle of light.

WORDS

But wait. What is the name of this child? Names are very important in baptism.

☛ "Bobby." That's a good name.

☛ Bobby, I baptize you in the name of the Father...and of the Son...and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

☛ Bobby, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ's own forever. Amen.

☛ This is the day when Bobby receives her light. We light it from the Christ Candle.

Name this child.

☛ Bobby, remember the day of your baptism.

☛ Name this child. (*Say your own name.*) Remember the day of your baptism.

☛ Look. The light is growing bigger and bigger. Look here. The light that all the light is coming from is not growing smaller. I wonder how so much light can come from one light?

See. Look at all this light.

MOVEMENTS

Pick up the candle snuffer.

Slowly place the candle snuffer over the flame. Hold it down until the flame is out. Raise the candle snuffer slowly and allow the smoke to rise and expand into the room.

The children take turns changing their light. Then pass the candle basket again so the children can place the extinguished candles in it. Finally, change the light of the Christ Candle.

Some children may not want to change their lights. They can leave them lit by placing them in the sand of the bowl (if they have not already done so). During the session, the candles will melt down and form a single candle with several wicks still flickering with light.

You can omit the wondering after this lesson. The lesson itself holds enormous wonder, and it is somewhat long. Put everything carefully back on the tray and in the baskets. Return the materials to the appropriate shelves. Carry the bowl of sand to the top shelf beside the Christ Candle if there are candles still burning in it. Otherwise, you can replace it on the lowest shelf.

Often there will be no time for a work period after this lesson, so you may proceed directly to the feast.

WORDS

Now let me show you something. Let's change the light. No. I did not say we were going to put it out or extinguish it. Watch. I will show you with mine first.

Do you see how all the light is right here in the flame? It is easy to see then. Now watch. It changes.

See? The light is still spreading out. It is filling up the room. Just because you can't see it anymore doesn't mean that it is gone. Anywhere you go in the room today, there it will be. Our room will be full of invisible light. Your light. The light you received on the day of your Baptism or the light you will receive.

If you don't want to change your light, you may come forward very carefully and put your candle in the sand.