



### *For the Young Child (Ages 3-6)*

The 3-6 year old child is particularly capable of receiving and enjoying the most essential elements of our faith—the announcement of God’s love especially experienced through Jesus the Good Shepherd, who died and is risen.

Materials on the life of Jesus Christ and his teachings help to make the mystery of God concrete for the child. The geography materials establish Jesus as a real person in time and space and Israel as the land through which God realized salvation for all. The Infancy Narratives announce the Incarnation of God moving from the Annunciation to Mary, to the Birth of Christ, to the Presentation in the Temple. Models of a map of the city of Jerusalem and the empty tomb engage the child in the Paschal Narratives which the child experiences in a special way through the celebration of the Liturgy of the Light.

Selected parables serve as keys to unlock the mystery of the Kingdom of God and nurture the child’s natural sense of wonder. How

God! How small it begins! How slowly it grows and yet how magnificent it becomes!

Through the arranging of the chalice, paten, altar cloth (fair linen), candles, and crucifix, the child becomes familiar with the articles of the Eucharist. The child lives this relationship with God in a particular way in the liturgy. The 3-6 year old child enters the mystery of the Eucharist through the most important gestures including the preparation of the chalice, the epiclesis and offering, and the sign of peace. From these gestures the Eucharist emerges as the Sacrament of the Gift. The child becomes acquainted with the historical character of the liturgy through the events of the Last Supper, Christ’s death, and His resurrection.

The liturgical colors and calendar situate the child in the church year expressing the Paschal Mystery—Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again. A prayer table in the atrium reflects the liturgical cycle with appropriate colors for the prayer cloths and selected prayers and scripture verses. Songs, banners, and readings enhance the

### *For the Older Child (Ages 6-12)*

While the heart of the catechesis for the child under six revolves around the Parable of the Good Shepherd, the elementary age child is captured by the image of the True Vine. “I am the vine, you are the branches, whoever remains in me, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing.” The proclamation responds to the deep need of the older child to better know his or her relationship with God, family, friends, and the larger community.

The child at this age seeks guidelines. Moral parables offer a model for comparing their behavior with that of the Pharisee, the Tax Collector, or the Good Samaritan. The Found Sheep, the Found Coin, and the Prodigal Son are examined as the children prepare for the sacrament of reconciliation. The proclamation and meditation of these parables stress God’s love, which is constantly forgiving.

The elementary children see the parts of the Mass—the Liturgy of the Word, the Preparation of the Gifts, the Eucharistic Prayer, and the Communion—as one unified prayer made of many smaller prayers. Children prepare for the celebration of First Communion (or Solemn Communion) through a series of communion meditations that focus on their relationship with Jesus. These meditations lead to a three to four day retreat prior to the celebration of the First Communion. Preparation of personal missals filled with illustrations and prayers is also part of this preparation which helps to deepen their love and understanding of the Eucharist.

The imagination of the older child and his or her agility with the concept of time are powerful stimuli to explore the past and the future. The first timeline, a ribbon fifty meters long, focuses on the unity and vastness of the History of the Kingdom of God. It illustrates the highpoints in the history of salvation from creation to redemption to parousia. Another presentation focuses on the many gifts we receive from God—rocks, minerals, flowers, fruit, friends, family—culminating in God’s gift of His own divine life in the person of Jesus, a gift which will pervade the whole universe at the completion of history.

With the older child (ages 9-12) a third presentation of the history of salvation focuses on the plan of God in history as a plan of communion, a plan which links all people together through God’s love. The emphasis is on our response to this unfolding generosity of God and recognition of the responsibilities that come with receiving God’s great gifts and seeing oneself as a collaborator with God. “What is the kingdom of God and my place in it?” is a cosmic query which lays the foundations for a life commitment in relationship with God.

