

# The Faces of Easter I

**Lent is the season when we prepare for Easter.** We move toward the Mystery of Easter by hearing the stories of Christ's journey toward the cross and resurrection. This week's presentation—the first in a series of seven—focuses on the face of Christ as a newborn child.

## How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustrations below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense *relives*—the experience of today's Godly Play presentation. Invite your child to respond to the drawings. You might say, for example:

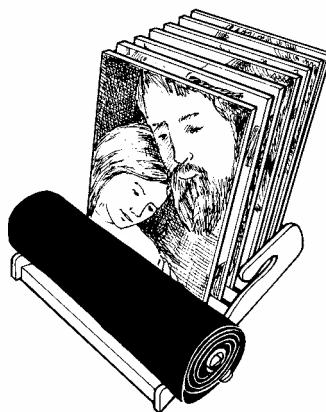
- I wonder what you can tell me about these pictures?
- I wonder what these pictures have to do with today's story?

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her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive way. You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

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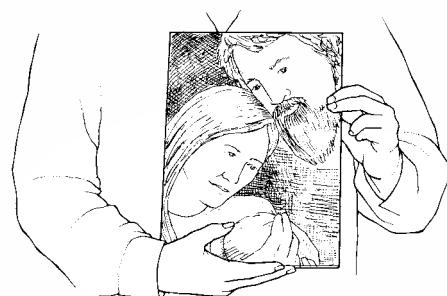
## The Presentation



The Mother Mary and the Father Joseph held the baby close. They kept the baby warm. They gave the baby everything it needed to grow. The baby began to grow.

In the beginning, the baby was born. God chose Mary to be the Mother of God, and the Word was born a wordless child.

When the baby looked up into the face of the Mother Mary, he already saw the cross. When he looked into the face of the Father Joseph, the cross was there, too.



Now, I wonder if there is anything here at home that can help us tell more of the story? Look around and see. Let's each go and get something to show more of the story of the Christ Child.

I don't know what you are going to get. You are the only one in the world who knows.

If you don't feel like getting something, that's okay. Let's just sit here and look at the picture a moment more.



## Godly Play More on the Faces of Easter

**In every Parent Page,** we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose.

In the Godly Play classroom, at the end of each lesson of the Faces of Easter (presented throughout Lent), your child is invited to choose materials from the room that will help tell more of the story. For example, when we tell today's story of the Newborn Child, one child might bring crèche figures to place by the plaque.

Children often make surprising connections as they explore the sacred language embodied in the materials. This activity is especially important because it provides movement and action to these stories and integrates the whole Godly Play classroom with Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection.

This will happen at home too. Allow time for your child—and you!—to consider what items at home can be integrated into the story of Jesus each week as your journey together through Lent.

# The Faces of Easter II

**Lent is the season when we prepare for Easter.** We move toward the Mystery of Easter by hearing the stories of Christ's journey toward the cross and resurrection. This week's presentation—the second in a series of seven—focuses on the face of Christ as the One who was lost and found.

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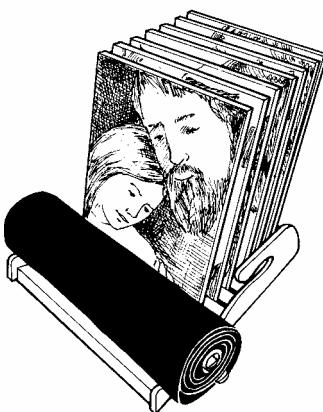
- I wonder what you can tell me about these pictures?
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meaning, and yet another talk about his or her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive way. You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

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## The Presentation



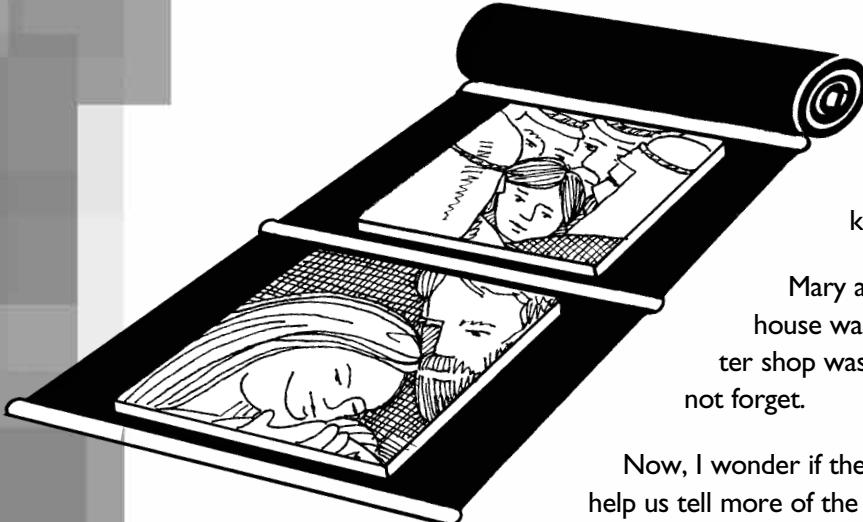
walked together. They hurried back into the great city of Jerusalem to find him.

Mary and Joseph looked in the dark and narrow streets. They looked in the marketplace where they had bought their food. They looked where they had spent the night. They looked everywhere!

The baby grew and became a boy. When he was about twelve years old, he went with the Mother Mary and the Father Joseph and with many other people from their village of Nazareth to the great city of Jerusalem to keep one of the high, holy days. When the celebration was over, the people from Nazareth went out through the great high gate and started on the road toward home.

Suddenly, Mary and Joseph discovered that Jesus was not there! They thought he had been playing with the other children from their village as they

Finally, they even looked in the temple—and there he was. He was talking to the rabbis and the priests. When he spoke, they listened, because he knew so much. When they spoke, he listened, because he wanted to learn more.



Mary and Joseph then asked Jesus the question all parents ask their children, the question you can never answer: "Why did you do this?" And Jesus said something very strange. He said, "Didn't you know I would be in my Father's house?"

Mary and Joseph did not understand. Their house was in Nazareth, where Joseph's carpenter shop was. They did not understand, but they did not forget.

Now, I wonder if there is anything here at home that can help us tell more of the story? Look around and see. Let's each go and get something to help us tell more of the story of the boy who was lost and found.

I don't know what you are going to get. You are the only one in the world who knows.

If you don't feel like getting something, that's okay. Let's just sit here and look at the picture a moment more.

## Godly Play A Godly Play Moment

In every Parent Page, we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose.

Occasionally, as in today's Paper, we share a "Godly Play moment." Godly Play trainer Sharon Greeley tells this story:

One Sunday morning during Lent, I told a portion of the story the Faces of Christ to about sixteen children, ages three to eleven. At the wondering, I asked the children if there was anything in the room that we could bring to the story to help us tell the story more. The children brought several

objects from the stories on the shelves and placed them by the story on the floor.

Then one six-year-old boy said, "We could bring God to the story." Amazed at his suggestion, I said, "I wonder how we could bring God to the story?" He said, "Well, we need to be very quiet and pray." At his suggestion, all the children became quiet and bowed their heads. After a moment of silence, the little boy said, "Amen," and then he said, "God is here." I was simply a participant with the other children, under the inspired leadership of this child and amazed at the self-directed silence of these children.

# The Faces of Easter III

**Lent is the season when we prepare for Easter.** We move toward the Mystery of Easter by hearing the stories of Christ's journey toward the cross and resurrection. This week's presentation—the third in a series of seven—focuses on the face of Christ as the One who was baptized and blessed.

## How to Use this Parent Page

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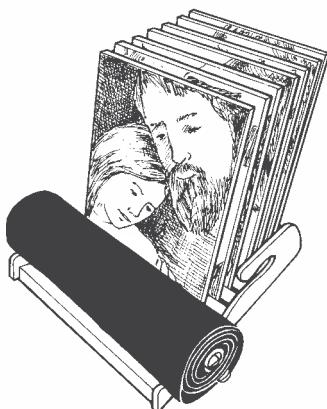
- I wonder what you can tell me about these pictures?
- I wonder what these pictures have to do with today's story?

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## The Presentation



Jesus grew and became a man. When he was about thirty years old, he went to the River Jordan where his cousin, John, was baptizing people.

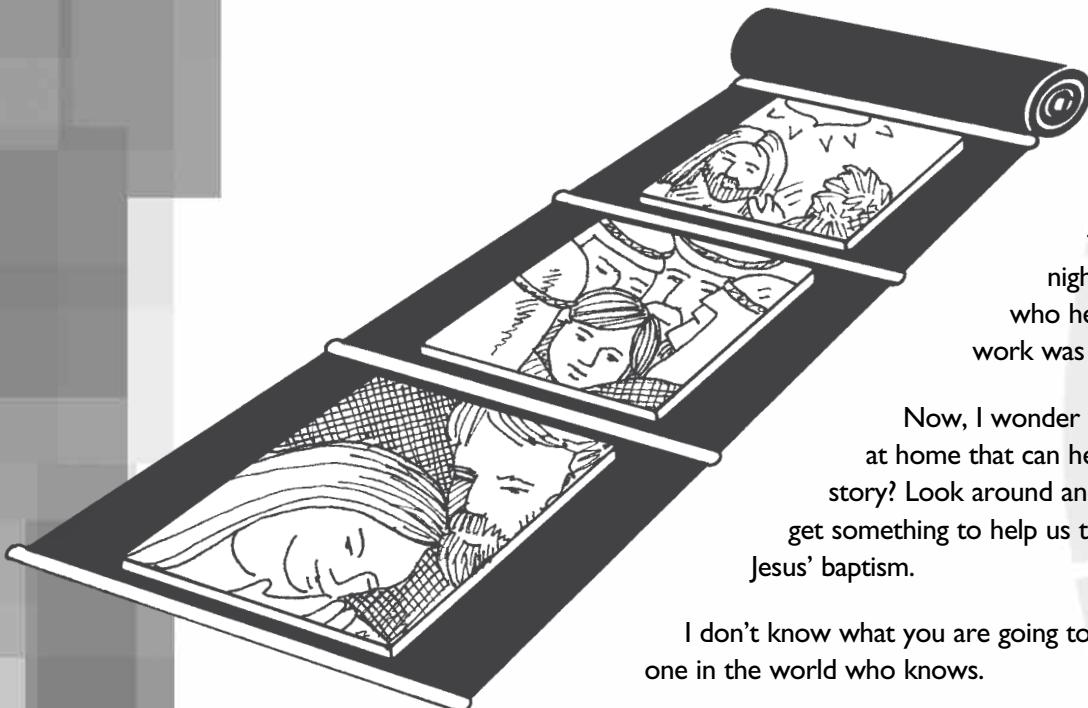
Jesus waded into the river until he was face to face with John. He said, "Baptize me."

John looked at Jesus and, for the first time, saw who he really was. "How can I baptize you? You are the Messiah, the one we have been waiting for. You must baptize me."

"No. It is written that you will come before me and prepare the way. You must baptize me."

Jesus went down into the darkness and chaos of the water. When John lifted him back up into the light, there were people there who said they saw a dove come down from heaven and come close to him.

There were also people there that day who heard a voice. The voice said, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased."



After Jesus was baptized, he went on across the River Jordan into the desert. He stayed there for forty days and forty nights to learn more about who he was and what his work was going to be.

Now, I wonder if there is anything here at home that can help us tell more of the story? Look around and see. Let's each go and get something to help us tell more of the story of Jesus' baptism.

I don't know what you are going to get. You are the only one in the world who knows.

If you don't feel like getting something, that's okay. Let's just sit here and look at the picture a moment more.

## Godly Play Godly Play in Other Settings (Part I)

**In every Parent Page**, we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. Godly Play is more than a Sunday school program. It finds a home wherever people want to play deeply and profoundly with the language of God's People.

Dr. Courtney Cowart presented Godly Play at a meeting in England and found special interest from the African bishops, restless from being treated so long as colonials by the church. Dr. Cowart acknowledged how

much more they knew about this than we do. Africa is still filled with storytelling people, and Godly Play provides a bridge between their religious traditions and ours.

One young priest from Africa wasn't sure that he *could* be that kind of storyteller yet, because he was young. In his culture, you have to earn the right to be a storyteller, by the wisdom and experience of old age.

# The Faces of Easter IV

**Lent is the season when we prepare for Easter.** We move toward the Mystery of Easter by hearing the stories of Christ's journey toward the cross and resurrection. This week's presentation—the fourth in a series of seven—focuses on Christ's temptations in the desert.

## How to Use this Parent Page

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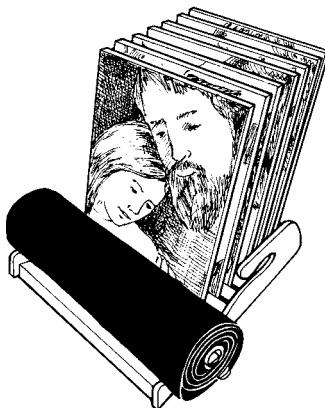
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## The Presentation



Jesus went into the desert to discover more about who he was and what his work was going to be. He was there for forty days and forty nights. There was little to eat or to drink.

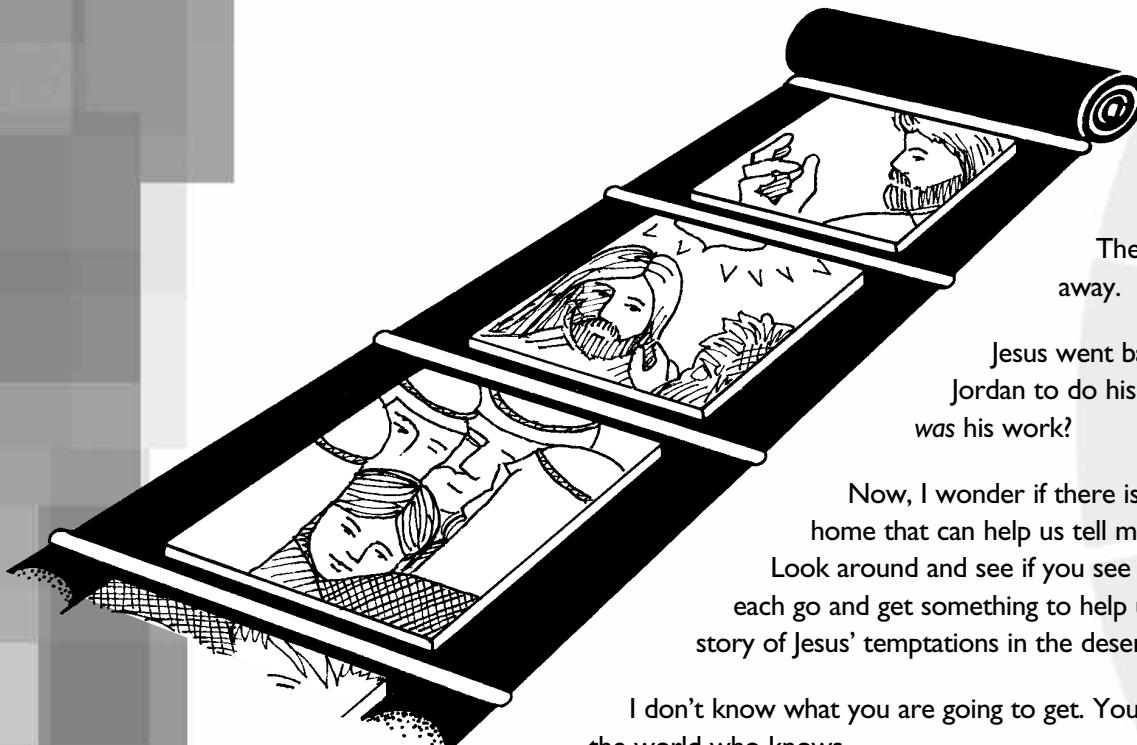
One day he heard a voice. It said, "Why don't you turn one of those stones over there into bread and have something to eat?"

Jesus said, "No. To be a real human being, we need more than bread to eat."

Suddenly, it was as if Jesus were on top of the great temple in Jerusalem. The voice came back, "If you are really the Son of God, why don't you jump and see if God sends the angels to catch you before you hit the stones below?"

Jesus said, "No. We do not need to test God."

Then it was as if Jesus could see all the kingdoms of the world. The voice came back again: “If you will follow me, I will make you king over all these kingdoms.”



Jesus said, “No. I am to be a king, but not that kind of king.”

Then the voice went away.

Jesus went back across the Jordan to do his work. But what was his work?

Now, I wonder if there is anything here at home that can help us tell more of the story? Look around and see if you see something. Let's each go and get something to help us tell more of the story of Jesus' temptations in the desert.

I don't know what you are going to get. You are the only one in the world who knows.

If you don't feel like getting something, that's okay. Let's just sit here and look at the picture a moment more.

## Godly Play Godly Play in Other Settings (Part 2)

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The Godly Play approach to religious education has found expression in religious traditions other than Christianity. In these cases, care has been taken to use the appropriate language and symbols of that tradition.

In London, for example, Rabbi Michael Shire is director of the Centre for Jewish Education and one of the leaders of Godly Play in England. He calls Godly Play “Doing Midrash with Jerome.” (*Midrash* is Jewish commentary on the Hebrew scripture, an ancient, on-going tradition in Judaism.) Rabbi Shire’s perspective reminds us that the sacred stories of what we call the Old Testament are stories we receive with respect from our Jewish teachers.

# The Faces of Easter V

**Lent is the season when we prepare for Easter.** We move toward the Mystery of Easter by hearing the stories of Christ's journey toward the cross and resurrection. This week's presentation—the fifth in a series of seven—focuses on Christ as healer and parable-maker.

## How to Use this Parent Page

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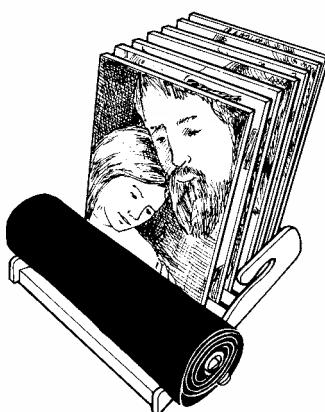
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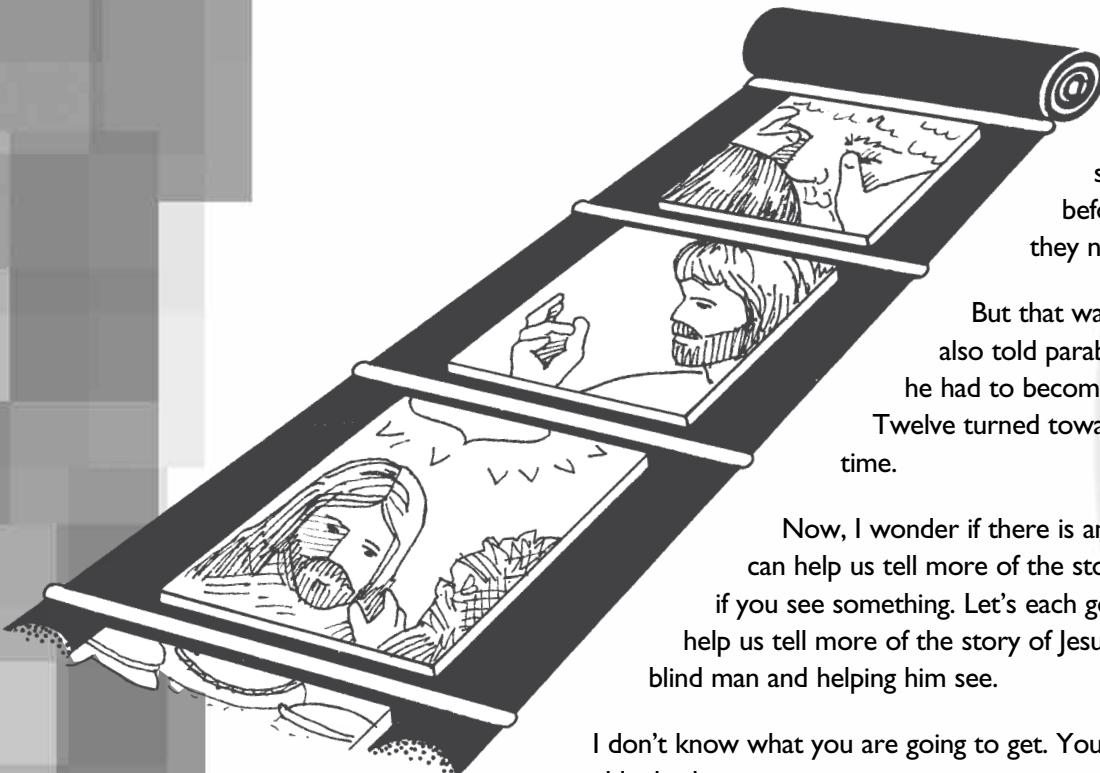
## The Presentation



Jesus came back across the Jordan River and began to do his work...but what was his work? His work was to come close to people, especially the people no one else wanted to come close to.

Jesus traveled about the land with the Twelve. He was teaching and showing people how to be real human beings. As he taught, people came to him to be healed. If they were hurt or sick or upset in some way, they sensed that Jesus could help them be well.

See? He has come close to the blind man in the picture. He is even touching the blind man's eyes.



When Jesus came close to people, they changed. They could see things they never saw before. They could do things they never did before.

But that wasn't all Jesus did. Jesus also told parables. Finally, he knew that he had to become a parable, so he and the Twelve turned toward Jerusalem for the last time.

Now, I wonder if there is anything here at home that can help us tell more of the story? Look around and see if you see something. Let's each go and get something to help us tell more of the story of Jesus' coming close to the blind man and helping him see.

I don't know what you are going to get. You are the only one in the world who knows.

If you don't feel like getting something, that's okay. Let's just sit here and look at the picture a moment more.

## Godly Play Godly Play in Other Settings (Part 3)

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Jerome W. Berryman tells this story:

In Houston, one setting for a Godly Play presentation for runaways was an auditorium. I walked in with a parable box under one arm, and said, "Hi. I've got something strange to show you, if you're interested."

Not many were! One or two came and looked at the box. I started telling the Parable of the Good Shepherd. Before I was done, about thirty out of forty teenagers in that room came and gathered around. Perhaps this is less surprising than it sounds. After all, if they weren't really scared and searching, they wouldn't have come into a religious shelter to start with. These kids were very involved in the wondering, because the existential questions were so close to their skin.

# The Faces of Easter VI

**Lent is the season when we prepare for Easter.** We move toward the Mystery of Easter by hearing the stories of Christ's journey toward the cross and resurrection. This week's presentation—the sixths in a series of seven—focuses on Christ as he goes to Jerusalem to become a parable and shows the Twelve—and us—the sacrament of bread and wine.

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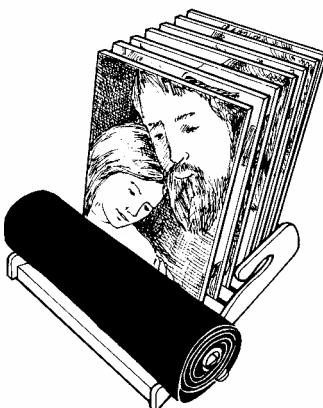
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## The Presentation

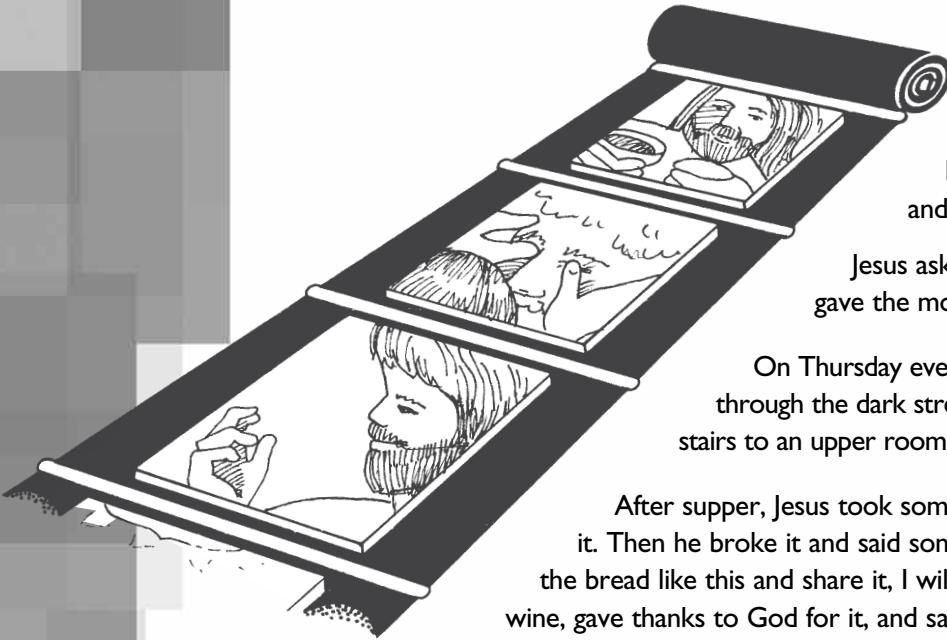


Jesus went to Jerusalem for the last time. It was the time of the Passover, and the city was full of people from many different lands. The people thought he was coming to be king, but they weren't paying attention.

He wasn't riding on a great white horse. He wasn't being carried by soldiers. He was riding on a donkey, and the donkey wasn't even his. He borrowed it.

Still, that Sunday when Jesus came into Jerusalem, people waved palm branches, which were a sign of kings.

On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, Jesus went into the temple to teach. One day when he was there, he said, "Do you see that old woman over there? She's going to put something in the money box. Listen. Did you hear anything? No. She put the tiniest of all the coins in the box. That was all the money she had."



Now, here comes a rich man. He has so much money to put in, he brought friends with him to help him carry it. His money clangs and clatters as they pour it into the box.

Jesus asked, "Now I wonder which one really gave the most?" That was how he taught.

On Thursday evening, Jesus and the Twelve hurried through the dark streets to a house. They climbed up the stairs to an upper room and shared their last supper together.

After supper, Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it and said something like, "Whenever you break the bread like this and share it, I will be there." He also took a cup of wine, gave thanks to God for it, and said, "Whenever you share a cup of wine like this, I will be there."

What was he talking about? He was always saying things like that.

Suddenly Judas got up and left. The rest went to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus wanted to pray. When he was finished, he joined the rest, but Judas came out of the dark and greeted him. This was a signal for the temple guards to come out of the shadows and take Jesus away with them.

Now, I wonder if there is anything here at home that can help us tell more of the story? Look around and see if you see something. Let's each go to get something to help us tell more of the story of Jesus' showing us the sacrament of the bread and wine.

If you don't feel like getting something, that's okay. Let's just sit here and look at the picture a moment more.

## Godly Play Godly Play in Other Settings (Part 4)

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Trainer Laura McGuire helped Beth McNamara, an Episcopal priest, carry out a Godly Play ministry on the streets of Baltimore. Beth said, "The trick is to find the right spot to tell the stories. We were blessed in having a small bit of green space

surrounding a library across the street from the church."

Beth and her helpers loaded up a cart with a Godly Play story, bath towels for the children to sit on, drawing boards with paper attached, juice and markers. They marched out of their church to the grassy space, like where Jesus shared bread and fish with many people. Soon dozens of children had joined the circle to share the story, engage in expressive art and enjoy a feast in this unusual Godly Play space.

# The Faces of Easter VII

**Lent is the season when we prepare for Easter.** We move toward the Mystery of Easter by hearing the stories of Christ's journey toward the cross and resurrection. This week's presentation—the last in a series of seven—focuses on the faces of Christ on the cross and on Easter.

## How to Use this Parent Page

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- I wonder what you can tell me about these pictures?
- I wonder what these pictures have to do with today's story?

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## The Presentation

The night was a confusing one. The next day, Jesus was taken outside the city and crucified.

That afternoon, Jesus died. The sky grew dark. Jesus was taken down from the cross and buried in a cave. A great stone was rolled into the opening of the cave to close it like a door.

Saturday was so quiet you could almost hear the earth breathing. On Sunday, it was the women who had the courage to go to the tomb just to be close to Jesus. They wanted to remember him, even if it felt sad. When they came to the tomb, they found that the stone had been rolled back and that the tomb was empty.

Jesus had died on the cross, but somehow he was still with them as he is with us, especially in the bread and the wine.

# Wondering

- **I wonder** what part of this whole story you like best?
- **I wonder** what part of the whole story is the most important part?
- **I wonder** where are you in this whole story? What part of the story is especially about you?

When we remember that Jesus died on the cross for us, we also remember that he is still with us. That is the Mystery of Easter. It includes all the sadness and happiness that could ever be. That is why the mystery is so huge.



## Godly Play Godly Play in Other Settings (Part 5)

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Cyndy Bishop, a Godly Play trainer, illustrates the power of Godly Play at home:

My four-year-old daughter Madeleine received a gift on the fourth anniversary of her baptism. Her godmother lovingly gathered all of the pieces of the Godly Play baptism lesson and placed them all in a white container so Madeleine could have her very own baptism story.

Madeleine has worked with her Baptism lesson several times now. (I supervise when matches are involved!) Madeleine told the story to her two-year-old sister, Isabel, who now talks about "changing the light." I have tried to get Madeleine to let the baby stay in the container with the other materials but she insists on sleeping with it every night.

The day after receiving her gift, she and a friend, Clare, were playing together. I heard the sink fill up with water and saw Madeleine walking to the bathroom with one of Clare's dolls behind her back. They proceeded to baptize every doll in the house they could find.