



**WELCOMING
CHILDREN
in WORSHIP**

**THE CATHOLIC
UNIVERSITY
OF AMERICA**



Road to Emmaus

March

Adaptive Activities for Children



**National Catholic
Partnership on Disability**

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Introduction

Welcome and thank you for your ministry that serves the liturgical formation of children for their participation in the Eucharist, the “source and summit of the Christian life.” This resource is provided by the Committee on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD). It aims to offer an adaptive catechetical opportunity for all who have a heart for disability ministry to reflect on the liturgical year. We welcome you to this virtual community and hope you find this resource beneficial.

Here you will find reflections to guide children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, or diverse learners, through the current liturgical season with adaptive catechesis to help them to participate fully. Each offering includes prayer, Scripture, activities and more that incorporate the senses and take into consideration the needs of all learners. We invite you to gather children around the table of the home or the table of the classroom as preparation for their participation at the sacred table of the Eucharist.

Each monthly edition incorporates the following:

- 1. Prayer**
- 2. Sacred Scripture**
- 3. Reflection**
- 4. Faith in Action**
- 5. Activities**
- 6. Saint**
- 7. Resources/Bibliography**

Prayer

Leader: Our lives and our faith are a journey we take with the destination being heaven. With God's love, guidance, support, and mercy we can make it. The prayer includes some statements and I would like you to repeat the second part of each.

I will also include some movements during each. You can repeat the movements, repeat the words and the movements, or just repeat the words.

Sign of the Cross.

Leader: Lord, as we walk down the journey of life, we ask that you would be our constant companion, particularly on those days when we are disheartened or when we have strayed off of your path.

When we are downcast, we ask that you lift our spirits. *(possible movement: arms and eyes moving upwards)*

All: **We ask that you lift our spirits.**

Leader: When we are confused, we ask that you enlighten our minds. *(possible movement: a hand waving around the head)*

All: **We ask that you enlighten our minds.**

Leader: When we are disappointed, we ask that you give us hope. *(possible movement: hands in prayer)*

All: **We ask that you give us hope.**

Leader: You, Lord, have blessed us with your Gospel. Open our minds and hearts to receive your Word, and send your Holy Spirit to give us understanding. May your teaching take root in our lives and guide us in your ways.

While we have faith in you, Lord, we also have our moments of doubt. *(possible movement: puzzled expression/eyebrows down and pointer finger tapping on side of forehead)*

All: **We also have our moments of doubt.**

Leader: We ask that you would deepen our faith, so that rededicated to you, we would give bolder witness, and freely and gladly give generous service. *(possible movement: smile on face, pretending to pass things out)*



Image by God Bless from Pixabay

All: Freely and gladly give generous service.

Leader: You gently ask us to invite you into our hearts and homes. With a spirit of welcome and humility, we invite you to dwell with us always. *(possible movement: the sign for “always” in American Sign Language)*

All: We invite you to dwell with us always.

Leader: We offer our praise and thanks for the many ways that you feed us and provide for our many needs. *(possible movement: pretending to take something from the air around you and eating it)*

All: That you feed us and provide for our many needs.



Image from Canva

Leader: Keep us closely connected to our brothers and sisters in faith. Help us to see others with the eyes of love. *(possible movement: form a circle with your fingers and hold them up to your eyes like glasses)*

All: Help us to see others with the eyes of love.

Leader: Fill us with your compassion. *(possible movement: hands over heart, peaceful smile)*

All: Fill us with your compassion.

Leader: May we work tirelessly to foster relationships in our community built on the foundations of truth, mutual respect, cooperation, and trust.

All: Amen.

Sign of the Cross.

Prayer by Father Michael Van Sloun and published at <https://www.thecatholicspirit.com/commentary/hotdish/emmaus-prayer/>

Reading of Sacred Scripture

Luke 24:13-35

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, “What are you discussing as you walk along?”

They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?”

And he replied to them, “What sort of things?”

They said to him, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they

were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see.”

And he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter



Christ on the Road to Emmaus; Unidentified painter, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther.

But they urged him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.

Then they said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?” So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!” Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



Supper at Emmaus by Carl Bloch,, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Gospel Reflection

The Scripture you just heard is sometimes called the ‘Appearance on the Road to Emmaus’ and it tells about two disciples on their way from Jerusalem to a nearby town after the death of Jesus. Discouraged, the two begin to argue on their seven-mile journey, and without notice, the resurrected Jesus, comes into their midst. At first, the two are do not see that it is the Lord, but after hearing Scripture and sharing Christ’s bread, their eyes are opened.

Hearts Burning Within

The ‘Road to Emmaus’ is only found in the Gospel of Luke. Luke wrote about Jesus and he was a doctor who referenced the body. In this gospel passage, Luke noted that the disciples could not recognize God with their eyes, but their hearts were burning within. What does this mean to you?

Our body can sometimes tell us things before our mind can. For instance, goosebumps signal cold, excitement, fear, or change. How has your body helped you?

Our bodies also communicate emotions, letting us know when we’re happy, sad, scared, angry, or surprised. Think of a time when you experienced joy. How did your body feel?

When Jesus approached the disciples, they were arguing and looking sad. Their hearts wanted Christ, but their sin and sadness prevented them from seeing Jesus. Have you ever argued? What about on a long trip? The disciples walked for hours in the heat of the day, following the death of Christ. Imagine how they felt!! Unfortunately, the two disciples focused



Image by Suraaj M from Pixabay

on the negative or “darkness,” fought with each other, and couldn’t see the Son lighting their path. Have you ever failed to see the goodness that surrounds you? When have you failed to see God?

Life is a journey and heaven is our final destination. We may not know how to get to heaven, but Jesus told us in John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” What this means is that for us to reach heaven, we must follow Jesus.

How do we do this? For starters, we must train our hearts to recognize God’s voice. Not all persons can listen with their ears, but in reading Scripture, going to Mass, and praying, we learn to hear God with our hearts. Just like sheep can come to understand their shepherd, we can come to better understand God when we spend time with him. This is what is meant in John 10:27, “My sheep hear my voice...and they follow me.”

In addition to hearing God, we need to train our hearts to see God. Matthew 5:8 says, “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God.” When we serve and love like Jesus, it helps us to see Christ in others. This is because we were created in God’s image and were designed to spiritually see as God sees. In 1 Samuel 16:7 we are told, “God does not see as a mortal...the Lord looks into the heart.”



Image from Canva

Lastly, we can break bread. It was no coincidence that Christ revealed himself in the breaking of the bread in the Emmaus story. It took place on Easter, the fulfillment of God's promise. Prior to his death, Christ had told his disciples that he was the bread of life and told them to share it. He said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Christ fulfilled his promise that Easter evening, giving himself physically and spiritually not only to the two Emmaus disciples, but the entire world through the Eucharist. At every Mass we break bread and Christ's true presence is among us. It is a time that we also become both recipients and contributors of Christ's body. What this means is by consuming our Lord in word and Eucharist, our hearts become more like Christ's.

As you journey on toward Easter, remember the resurrected Christ. Just like in the story of the road to Emmaus, he wishes to draw near to you. May you pray, love, and serve like Jesus so that your heart can burn like his.



Image from Canva

Faith in Action

As Jesus' disciples traveled the road to Emmaus, they didn't recognize him at first, even as he walked right beside them! His friends who knew and loved him were so focused on their sadness about his death that they couldn't see that the man walking with them was the risen Jesus. It wasn't until they sat down and he broke bread with them that Jesus' true identity was revealed.

Jesus promised us that he would never leave us, even after his Ascension to heaven. We know that Jesus gave us his true presence in the Eucharist, but it's easy for us to forget sometimes that Jesus is also with us in our day-to-day activities, even when we don't feel anything or notice his presence.

How can we learn to see Jesus each day? How can we help children recognize his presence in their daily lives? We can look for Jesus working through persons around us, and we can spend time getting to know him in the gift of the Eucharist.

See Jesus in Others

To see how Jesus is working in others, we have to know what we are looking for. Together with your child, make a list of attributes of Jesus. The list might include:

- ◇ Jesus is kind.
- ◇ Jesus helps others.
- ◇ Jesus listens.
- ◇ Jesus is patient.

When you observe others displaying those qualities through their words and actions, be sure to point it out to your child:



Photo by RDNE Stock project

- ◇ That was kind of _____, just like Jesus!
- ◇ _____ helps others, just like Jesus!
- ◇ _____ was being a good listener, just like Jesus!
- ◇ Look at how patient _____ is, just like Jesus!

As you take the time to notice and affirm these attributes, not only will you start to marvel at all of the ways Jesus is present in your daily life, but you may also be inspired to grow in those same qualities that you observe in others.

See Jesus in the Eucharist

Jesus gifts us an amazing gift in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. How wonderful that we can provide children with an opportunity to encounter our Lord each time we attend Mass or visit an Adoration chapel to pray!

In her article, “How to Take Your Child to Adoration,” Siobhan Benitez shares some ideas to help make their time praying with the Blessed Sacrament fruitful:

1. Talk about Adoration with your child before you go, letting them know what to expect. Discuss that Jesus is really present in the Eucharist even though we can't see him.
2. Pack an Adoration bag with items such as books, a rosary, a coloring sheet, and markers or crayons. You can also include sensory items, fidget toys, and a wiggly seat in your Adoration bag to aid your child in participating.



Image by Idenir from Pixabay

3. Keep it brief, stay just two to three minutes at first, and add time as your child is able.
4. Guide your child by modeling kneeling or bowing before the monstrance, making the sign of the cross, and leading them in one or more of the types of prayer below.
5. Talk afterward about what they did and how they felt during Adoration.

Siobhan suggests some specific concrete ways to pray in the presence of Jesus in Adoration:



Photo by RDNE Stock project

- ◇ Adoration: tell God something you love about God and his creation. Ex: “God, thank you for creating mountains. They are beautiful to look at and fun to hike in.”
- ◇ Contrition: tell God about something you are sorry you did. Ex: “God, I am sorry I did not clean my room when Mom told me to.”
- ◇ Thanksgiving: say “Thank you!” to God for something wonderful in your life. Ex: “Thank you, God, for my mom and dad, my sister, my dog, and for spaghetti night.”
- ◇ Petition: ask God for something for yourself or someone else. Ex: “Please, Lord, help Granny feel better.”
- ◇ Color a coloring page linked to the Eucharist or recent Gospel readings.
- ◇ Smile at Jesus or simply talk to him. Ex: “Hi, Jesus.,” or “I love you, Jesus.”
- ◇ Have a conversation with Jesus in your heart. Tell him how you are feeling, what you are looking forward to, and what or who you are worried about.

Some additional ways you can help your child build a devotion to the Eucharist:

- ◇ Remind them that at Mass Jesus is really present just like he is when you go to Adoration to pray.
- ◇ Encourage your child to actively participate more in the Liturgy by taking up the gifts or being a greeter. Often the whole family can serve together.
- ◇ Make a point to attend Mass in addition to Sundays, such as feast days of saints that have special meaning to your family.
- ◇ Provide interactive, tactile items such as Mass kits for your child to explore at home through play.
- ◇ If your child has sensory challenges, seek out a Sensory Friendly Mass in your area, or ask your parish to consider offering one! If you don't know where to look for a Sensory Friendly Mass, contact your diocese.

Source:

Beneitz, Siobhan. (2022, April 22). How to take your child to Adoration. <https://www.theholyruckus.com/spirituallife/2022/04/22/how-to-take-your-child-to-adoration>



Image from Canva

Activities with Children

Let's Talk: Talk with your child about what happened on the Road the Emmaus and why it is important. Let's break it down:

What happened: Two of Jesus' friends were walking to a place called Emmaus. They felt sad because Jesus had died. Jesus came and walked with them, but they didn't recognize Jesus. Jesus talked to them and helped them understand God's plan. When they stopped to eat, Jesus broke the bread. Then they knew it was Jesus! The friends were so happy. They ran to tell everyone, "Jesus is alive!"

Why is this event important:

This showed persons who believe in Jesus' teaching and in God that Jesus beat death, that what he taught about eternal life was true.

It shows that God is always with us, even when we don't see him.

It reminds us that Jesus is always there to help us see joy in him even in our sadness.

Discussion Questions:

- ◇ How did the two friends feel when they were walking to Emmaus?
- ◇ Who walked with them on the road?
- ◇ Why didn't they know it was Jesus at first?
- ◇ When did they finally recognize Jesus?
- ◇ How did they feel when they realized Jesus was alive?
- ◇ What did the two friends do after they recognized Jesus?
- ◇ How does this story help us remember that Jesus is with us today?



Otto Mengelberg (1817-1890), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Let's Read: This month we can read the Sacred Scripture of the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35.

This is a long passage, so you might want to break it into four weekly readings this month and take time to focus on what each part of the story teaches. Focus on the sadness when we don't know Jesus is with us and compare it to how he changed our heart to joy when we realize he never left us.

Let's Pray: This month, our prayer will focus on thanking God for standing with us even when we don't know he is there.

Dear Jesus, thank you for walking with us, even when we don't recognize you. When we feel confused or

sad, help us understand your Word. Open our hearts and our eyes to see you at work in our lives. Fill us with hope and joy and help us share the Good News that you are alive. Stay with us as we walk with you each day. Amen.



Photo by nappy

Sensory Play: Breaking Bread - Make your own play dough and then you and your children can mold bread and break it just like Jesus did. You can also retell the story using play dough!

Materials:

- ◇ 1 cup of flour
- ◇ 1/4 cup of salt
- ◇ 1 Tbsp cream of tartar (can be skipped, just makes it softer)
- ◇ 1/2 cup of warm water
- ◇ food coloring

Directions:

- ◇ Measure the ingredients (a hidden math lesson) and pour the flour, salt, and cream of tartar (if using) into a bowl and stir.
- ◇ Slowly pour the water into the flour mixture, stirring as you pour. Stir until combined, then knead with your hands until the flour is completely absorbed. If the dough is too sticky, add more flour until it doesn't stick.

- ◇ This makes the most bread-like color for realistic breaking bread play. However, if you would like to add colors here is how:
- ◇ Sperate the dough into different segments.
- ◇ Make a small well in the center of each piece of dough. squirt a few drops of food coloring into the center of the well and then work the color into the dough (this can be messy).

Resource: <https://www.tulsakids.com/easy-playdough-for-toddlers/>

Let's Make it: Road to Emmaus Binoculars: Children can make binoculars to “look for Jesus” in our everyday lives!

Supplies:

- ◇ 2 toilet paper rolls
- ◇ construction paper
- ◇ masking tape
- ◇ yarn
- ◇ scissors
- ◇ hole punch



Directions:

1. Tape two toilet paper rolls together using masking tape.
2. Wrap construction paper around the toilet paper rolls, then trim it to the correct length.
3. Now comes the fun part: decorating your binoculars! Use stickers, glitter, markers, crayons, anything you have on hand. While decorating, talk with your child about how each decoration can reflect the glory of God.
4. Once decorated, wrap the paper around the binoculars and secure it with masking tape.
5. If you like, punch a hole on each side of the binoculars and thread a long piece of yarn through them so they can hang around the neck. Make sure the yarn is long enough to be comfortable and not tight around your child’s neck.

Let's Cook: This month, make bread as a family and share it with loved ones, church friends, or neighbors. Making and sharing the bread helps us remember how Jesus was revealed to his friends when he broke the bread. While sharing, talk about the Road to Emmaus and remember that God is always with us, even when we don't realize it.

Ingredients:

- ◇ 3 cups all-purpose flour (separated into 1 cup and 2 cups) plus 1/4 cup more for kneading
- ◇ 1/4 cup sugar
- ◇ 1 packet active dry yeast (or 2 1/4 teaspoon)
- ◇ 1 cup warm water
- ◇ 1/4 cup butter, melted
- ◇ 1 teaspoon salt



Photo by August de Richelieu

Directions:

1. Combine 1 cup of flour plus all the sugar and yeast in a bowl. Add warm water. (The temperature of bath water.) Set on a warm counter for 10 minutes.
2. When the yeast mixture looks puffy, add 1 cup of flour plus the teaspoon of salt and melted butter. Stir. Add the last cup of flour and stir again.
3. The dough will be VERY STICKY. Pour 1/4 cup of extra flour on a cutting board or clean countertop then put the dough on top.
4. Knead the dough with your hands 10 minutes. Press down with the heel of your hand, then fold the dough in half. Press down again, fold. Repeat. When the dough changes from sticky to silky, place it in a greased loaf pan.
5. Lay a clean towel over the loaf pan & set it in a warm spot. Allow the dough 45 minutes to rise.
6. Punch it down and let it rise for 10 more minutes. While it's rising again, preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
7. Bake at 375 degrees for 25 minutes.

Recipe from: <https://foodlets.com/2018/10/22/the-easy-bread-recipe-your-kids-can-make-themselves/>

Saint for March

St. Patrick

March 17

Patrick was born in or near England a very long time ago, about 400 years after Jesus died. When he was a child, Patrick did not believe in God. When he was about sixteen years old, he was captured by pirates and taken to Ireland where he was forced to work as a slave. Life was very hard for Patrick, and he was often lonely and afraid. During this difficult time, he began to pray to God every day, and his faith grew stronger. Patrick was thankful that God forgave him for not believing and that God gave him the time to grow his faith and become closer to God while he worked as a shepherd while a prisoner.

After six years, Patrick heard a voice telling him it was time to escape and that a boat was ready.

Patrick escaped and overcame many obstacles including when workers would not let him on the boat and when he and others traveling with him were nearly sick with hunger. His friends felt that Patrick's faith saved them. Patrick returned home to his family and continued to study Christianity. As he grew older, he became a priest. Even then, he felt God calling him to return to Ireland—the same place where he had once suffered so much. Trusting God, Patrick went back, not with anger, but with forgiveness and love, to teach the people about God.



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Ireland is known for having a lot of Catholics now, but that was not true when Patrick returned. Patrick claims to have baptized thousands of people and he did help a large number of people convert to Christianity. Patrick shared God's message using simple and meaningful examples. One of the most famous was the shamrock. He used its three leaves to explain the Holy Trinity—three persons in one God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Today, Saint Patrick is remembered not only for shamrocks and celebrations, but for his deep faith, courage, and willingness to forgive those who had once hurt him. His life reminds us that God can turn suffering into blessings and use ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Like Saint Patrick, we are called to trust God, share our faith, and believe that he has a plan for our lives, even when we do not fully understand it.

Activity: Trinity Shamrock Craft

- Use green construction paper to create a three-leaf clover. Label each leaf to represent the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, just as Saint Patrick did.
- Then write prayers for different people or parts of the world, reflecting on how Saint Patrick brought the Gospel to Ireland.

Additional Resources:

My Catholic Kids. (n.d.). *Meet Saint Patrick*. <https://mycatholickids.com/saint-patrick-story-and-coloring-sheet/>

The Religion Teacher. (n.d.). *The Christian Symbolism of the Shamrock*. <https://youtu.be/FpDydJMPba0>



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March Resources

Beneitz, Siobhan. (2022, April 22). *How to take your child to Adoration*. <https://www.theholyruckus.com/spirituallife/2022/04/22/how-to-take-your-child-to-adoration>

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Shining Light Dolls. (n.d.). *Wooden Mass kit playset*. <https://shininglightdolls.com/collections/wood-toys/products/wooden-mass-kit-playset>

Wilson, C. (n.d.). *God sightings: Helping kids look for and recognize God*. Wonder Ink. <https://wonderink.org/god-sightings-helping-kids-look-for-and-recognize-god/>

Courses from the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD):

Sensory Friendly Masses: In an effort to embrace and welcome members of our Church who have autism, Down syndrome, and other intellectual and developmental disabilities, some churches have begun offering sensory friendly Masses. In this course we will explore the logistics of such a ceremony.

Mass for All: In these 8 modules, we will explore the many aspects of liturgical access - pastoral, practical, theological, and even financial. Tapping into a variety of perspectives - from those in lay ministry (both with and without a disability), from priests, and from loved ones of persons with disabilities - we will learn what needs to be considered when aiming to make a parish's/diocese's liturgical life fully accessible to persons with disabilities and their families.

Sensory Friendly Mass – Advanced: A sensory friendly Mass is a special religious service tailored to accommodate persons with disabilities, providing a more accessible environment to participate in the Catholic Mass. This course provides in-depth guidance to plan a sensory friendly Mass, including forms and sample communications.

Sensory Friendly Adoration Guidebook: This 32-page guidebook covers many considerations from planning team roles and responsibilities, items to have on-site, a large print Worship Aid, training materials for volunteers, a feedback form, and much more.