



**WELCOMING  
CHILDREN  
in WORSHIP**

**THE CATHOLIC  
UNIVERSITY  
OF AMERICA**



## Discipleship

June

# 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

*Prayer leader reads the prayer and has persons participating repeat the lines that are in red.*

Leader: This month, we will be praying and learning about discipleship. Everyone can be a disciple of Jesus. Persons with disabilities walk a unique path of discipleship—one that can teach humility, surrender, self-sacrifice, and servant-hearted love to everyone around them. Their lives remind us that true greatness in God’s Kingdom is not found in ability or status, but in faith, perseverance, and love. As we grow together in Christ, may we learn from one another and encourage every person to follow Jesus in the way he has uniquely called them.

*Sign of the Cross.*

Loving Father,

Open our hearts to hidden realities:

*your love for all persons,  
your presence in the community,  
your call to justice and peace.*

May the sacraments stir in us

*that same love for persons with whom we worship*  
and all members of our human family.

Christ Jesus,

Help us to imitate your example:

*healing the sick,  
welcoming the stranger,  
assisting the poor and vulnerable.*

May the sacraments remind us

*of your love and self-giving,*  
which we strive to imitate.



Image by Rod Long from Unsplash

Holy Spirit,

Make visible to our eyes what is invisible:

your call to your people,  
your summons to live our faith daily  
as witnesses of justice and peace.

May the sacraments move us

to engage in love-inspired action

that transforms us and the world.

Amen.

Source: *Prayer to live the Gospel, Be Disciples*: <https://www.usccb.org/prayers/prayer-live-gospel-be-disciples> (Revised)



Image by Pedro Lima from Unsplash

# Reading of Sacred Scripture

Luke 9:23-27

A reading from the Gospel of Luke.

Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God."

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**



Simone Martini, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

## Gospel Reflection

This passage about the *Conditions of Discipleship* in Luke 9:23-27 was a critical moment for Jesus' ministry and for his apostles. Peter had just identified Jesus as the Messiah and some of the apostles anticipated Jesus would soon take control of Jerusalem. Rather than confirm their hopes, Jesus pivoted his ministry from fame to service. He shared with his apostles that he, the Son of Man, would have to endure great suffering and he expected his followers to also deny themselves and take up their cross every day. Such a message stood in stark contrast to what the disciples anticipated. The apostles had just witnessed multiple miracles outside of Galilee, including the feeding of 5,000, but now Jesus was calling them to a life of suffering and sacrifice. The disciples knew the prophecies and a "suffering servant" was far from Zechariah's description of a "triumphant and victorious king." The disciples also knew about Roman crucifixions, and the words "pick up your cross daily" meant they could lose their life any day. Why would Jesus ask this? How do you think this made the disciples feel? What do the words, "Deny yourself and pick up your cross," mean to you?

### The Cost of Discipleship

The word **disciple** means "follower of Christ," and it is a derivative of the Latin word "discipulus." It is the same Latin root for "discipline" which means "to train or develop especially in self-control." To be a disciple of Christ requires more than merely following our Lord. It includes self-discipline by placing Christ first in our lives.



Image by Meredith Spencer from Unsplash

Perhaps the disciple who best emulates discipleship is Mary. Not only was Mary a model of obedience and humility, but she was the first to accept God's will. This is why Mary is considered the first disciple. At the time of Gabriel's visit, which is called the Annunciation, Mary was scared. She had never seen an angel and many of Gabriel's statements left her with questions. Yet in faith, Mary responded to Gabriel saying, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord: let it be done with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38 NRSVCE). Mary sensed she would face hardships. She was an unmarried teenager who was pregnant with the Messiah, yet she placed faith over fear and trusted God. Can you think of a time you trusted God? What did it look like? What did it cost?

Like Mary, each of us needs to answer God's call and love like Christ. In John 13:34 Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you." What does this look like? What do you think one needs to do to be a disciple?

There are a lot of people in this world that claim to be Christians, but to love like Jesus is more than a feeling. True discipleship requires prayer and action.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that prayer is "the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God" (CCC 2559). It is not merely a means to fulfill our own desires, rather a relationship with our Lord. Like all relationships, prayer requires time, attention, and acceptance of both joys and trials. Do you make prayer a priority in your day? What about Mass? Where do you attend Mass when on vacation or involved in sports? Prayer is key to discipleship because it requires trusting God, accepting what God wants for us, and asking the Lord to help other people. When we make time for prayer, we learn more about God, ourselves, and others. This is why prayer is essential for discipleship.

Another key aspect of discipleship is our actions. Christ chose to give his life, and every action in it, out of love for the forgiveness of everyone. Are you willing to forgive like Christ? Do you think about others before you act? To be a disciple is more than doing loving, kind things for others. It's being intentional with our actions and spreading the Gospel for the Kingdom of heaven here on earth. Sometimes this means standing up to unfair or disrespectful circumstances in schools or the community. We should never be ashamed of Jesus and should speak up for his love even when it's uncomfortable or difficult. Can you think of a time when you faced unjust treatment or spoke up for someone who experienced inequality? When was a time that you put faith before social expectations?

Like Jesus, we might have to face unfair or difficult situations, but in everything we do, our prayers and actions should communicate love. Starting today, we can be patient, encourage others, offer comfort, and pray. Our words and actions don't necessarily need to be big or important. What matters is that they are life giving. The words we use and actions we take will lead people to or away from the cross.



Image by Mary Sankey, used with permission

At times this life can be confusing, but with the cross as our compass we will never be lost. This is why Jesus says, “whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” The Lord leads us in right paths that are well lit (Psalms 23 and 119:105). When we trust in the Lord and not our own understanding, our journey as disciples is smooth (Proverbs 3:5 and Isaiah 26:7).

Are you, like the apostles, willing to journey with Christ on the path of love and service? Though Jesus invites you to “follow him,” you are given the choice to pray and act. How might you be a disciple of Christ this day?

## Vocabulary

**Disciple:** Those who accepted Jesus’ message to follow him, are called his disciples. Jesus associated his disciples with his own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to the disciples and gave them a share in his mission, his joy, and his sufferings.

*Source: USCCB Catechism Glossary, p. 875.*



The story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

## Faith in Action

We are called to be disciples of Jesus every day, even when we are on vacation during the summer months. Spending time with Jesus and growing closer to him doesn't have to take a break when we are away from school or work. In fact, the slower pace of summer is the perfect time to nurture our faith in ways we may not be able to during times of the year when our schedules are busier. Summer will hopefully provide the opportunity for some time off and rest from our work. Whether we are at home or traveling, there are many ways that we can invite Jesus to be part of our summer. At home, we may have more time to pray together as a family or take walks together and notice the beauty of God's creation. We can participate as a family in service projects such as preparing meals for a summer nutrition program or simply looking for ways to help our neighbors. We can reduce the amount of time we spend on screens and use that time instead to read a daily Scripture passage or saint story together.

When we do go on vacation, we shouldn't leave our faith behind at home. Here are some specific ways we can incorporate Jesus into our summer travels:

**Start Every Trip with a Prayer:** Before heading out on any journey, we can pray together for God's protection over our family while we travel. We can call upon the intercession of St. Christopher or St. Raphael the Archangel, who are both patron saints of travelers. Gretchen Filz, in the article "Prayers and Blessings for Safe Travels," suggests this prayer from the Roman Ritual Blessing of Travelers:

*"All-powerful and ever-living God, when Abraham left his own land and departed from his own people, you kept him safe all through his journey. Protect us, who also are your servants: walk by our side to help us; be our companion and our strength on the road and our refuge in every adversity. Lead us, O Lord, so that we will reach our destination in safety and happily return to our homes. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen."*

Source: *Prayers and Blessings for Safe Travels*:

<https://www.catholiccompany.com/blogs/magazine/prayers-blessings-for-safe-travels-6115>



Image by Paul Hanaoka from Unsplash

**Make Mass a Priority:** One of the most important things about our faith that we can teach our children from an early age is that we don't take a vacation from Mass. When we intentionally include prayer and the sacraments during a family trip, we model for children the importance of living our faith every day and making the Eucharist a priority above other plans. Include finding a parish to attend Mass in your travel planning and itinerary and verbalize this with your child:

*"We'll be at the beach this weekend. I wonder where we'll go to Mass. Let's look together."*

*"When we visit Nana, we'll get to visit her church on Sunday too!"*

*"We'll be driving home from our trip on Sunday. We can get on the road after Mass."*



Image by Elhanan Shamla from Pexels



Image by Ben Elliott from Unsplash

If there are multiple options for churches to attend Sunday Mass while on vacation, allow your child to choose where you will go! Once you have selected a parish, show your child some photos to help get them acclimated in advance. Better yet, drive by earlier in the week, if possible, to show them where you will be attending Mass and allow them to be more comfortable with a new setting. The website [masstimes.org](http://masstimes.org) is a great resource for finding a Catholic Church no matter where you are in the world. Don't forget to pack your Mass bag with any items that your child would normally bring so that it's as familiar an experience as possible.

**Pray in Public:** The simple act of praying before meals when eating at a restaurant or visiting a family member's home can be a powerful witness to your child and others that your faith is something you don't just reserve for home. You never know the seed that is being planted in someone's heart by the example of seeing a family bow their head in gratitude before sharing a meal.

**Visit a Cathedral or Basilica:** A pilgrimage is a journey to a holy or sacred place to encounter God in a deeper way. There are many famous pilgrimage sites around the world, but you don't have to go far to visit a holy place. You can look for beautiful churches, cathedrals, or basilicas in any city you visit, even if you aren't there for a Sunday Mass. The word basilica comes from a Greek word meaning "royal house." Basilicas are given this title by the Pope because of their architectural beauty or significance as a place of worship. A cathedral is the main church of a diocese. Some churches are both cathedrals and basilicas. You can create a photo album or "passport" book of churches you visit together as a family. There are currently 94 basilicas in the US, and you can find a list of them here: <https://www.catholicbasilicas.com/basilicas-in-the-united-states.html>

It may take a bit of extra planning, but it's possible to have a summer vacation that includes God, the sacraments, family time, and fun!

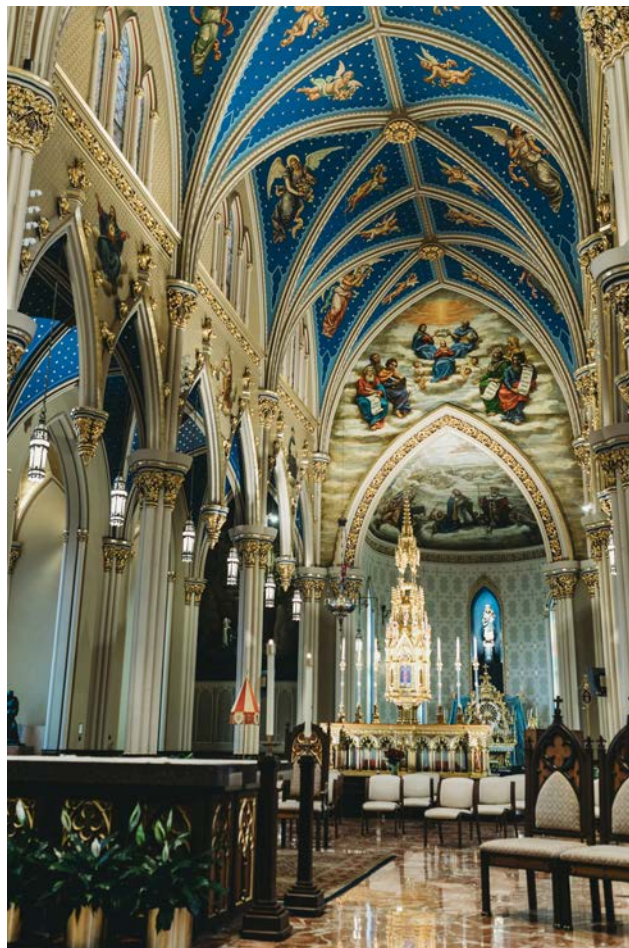


Image by Steven van Elk from Unsplash

# Activities with Children

**Let's Talk:** Talk with your child about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. A disciple is someone who follows Jesus, learns from him, and tries to live the way he taught us to live. Even young children can be disciples by praying, listening to God's Word, showing kindness, helping others, and trusting God each day.

Why is this important: Discipleship helps us grow closer to Jesus and teaches us how to live with love, kindness, and faith. When we follow Jesus, we learn how to make good choices, forgive others, care for persons around us, and trust God even during difficult moments. As disciples, we also share God's love with our family, friends, and community through our words and actions.



Image by Pavel Danilyuk from Pexels

Discussion questions:

- Why do you think Jesus wants us to follow him?
- How can following Jesus help us each day?
- What are some good choices we can make as disciples?
- How can we show God's love to others at home or school?
- Who helps us grow closer to Jesus?
- What is one way we can be more like Jesus this week?

**Let's Read:** This month, spend time reading and reflecting on Scripture passages that teach us how to follow Jesus and share God's love with others.

- **Gospel of John 13:34-35:** "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples."
- **Gospel of John 8:31:** "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples."
- **Gospel of John 15:8-14:** "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples... You are my friends if you do what I command you."
- **Second Letter to Timothy 2:1-5:** A reminder to stay strong in God's grace and faithfully share the Gospel with others.
- **Letter to the Ephesians 1:4-14:** A beautiful passage about being chosen and loved as children of God.

**Let's Pray:** This month, our prayer will focus on thanking God for showing us how to live like he wants us to.

Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us and showing us how to live. Help us to follow you every day. Teach us to be kind, loving, and helpful to others. Help us make good choices and trust you when things are hard. May we share your love with our family and friends. Thank you for always being with us. Amen.

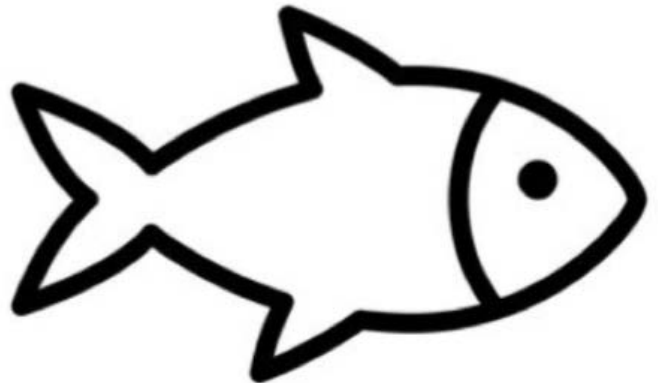
**Let's Make It:** "Fisher of Men" Game

**Memory Verse:**

- "Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.'"  
— Gospel of Luke 5:10

**What You Need:**

- Paper fish (cut out simple fish shapes)
- Crayons or markers
- Paper clips
- A magnet
- String or yarn
- Tape



**Set Up:**

- Help your child decorate the paper fish.
- Write the names of family members, friends, saints, or disciples on the fish.
- Attach a paper clip to each fish.
- Tie or tape the string to the magnet to make a "fishing pole."

**How to Play:**

- Spread the fish on the floor or table. Have your child use the magnetic fishing pole to "catch" the fish. As they catch each one, say the name written on the fish and talk about how we can share Jesus' love with that person.

**Talk Together While Playing:**

- What does it mean to be a "fisher of men"?
- How can we help others learn about Jesus?
- Who can we pray for today?
- How can we show kindness and love like Jesus?

## **Let's Cook:** Sharing God's Love Through Bread

This month, our cooking activity focuses on putting discipleship into action by serving others with love and kindness. As a family, make homemade bread together and share it with a neighbor, friend, grandparent, or someone who may need encouragement. Talk with your child about how small acts of kindness can help others feel God's love.

### **Ingredients:**

- 3 cups bread flour (or all-purpose flour with 1 extra teaspoon of yeast)
- Pinch of salt
- 1 packet active dry yeast (7g)
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil or melted butter
- 1 cup warm water
- 1 tablespoon sugar

### **Directions:**

- In a large bowl, mix the flour, salt, sugar, and yeast together.
- Make a small well in the center of the ingredients.
- Add the oil and warm water.
- Stir until dough forms.
- Place the dough on a lightly floured surface and knead for 5–10 minutes until smooth.
- Shape into rolls or place into a loaf pan.
- Cover and let rise in a warm place for about 1 hour, or until it doubles in size.
- Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
- Bake: 15–20 minutes for rolls or 20–30 minutes for a loaf



Image by Perry Stevens from Unsplash

### **Talk Together While Cooking:**

- Why do you think Jesus wants us to help others?
- How can sharing food show God's love?
- Who could we share our bread with this week?
- What are other ways we can serve people as disciples of Jesus?
- How do you think kindness makes others feel?

### **Family Challenge:**

- Before sharing the bread, say a short prayer together asking God to bless the person receiving it and to help your family grow as disciples of Jesus.

## **Let's Explore:** Discipleship Sensory Bin

### **What You Need:**

- A large bin or container
- Dry rice, beans, or shredded paper
- Small toy fish or paper fish
- Small crosses, hearts, or people figures (optional)
- Scoops, cups, or spoons
- Small slips of paper with kind actions written on them (examples: "Help a friend," "Pray," "Share," "Be kind," "Forgive," "Listen to Jesus")



Image by Mark Stebnicki from Pexels

### **Set Up:**

- Fill the bin with rice, beans, or shredded paper.
- Hide the fish and action slips inside the bin.
- Invite your child to search for the hidden items.

### **How to Play:**

- As your child finds each fish or paper slip, read the action together and talk about how that action helps us follow Jesus and be his disciples.

### **Talk Together:**

- What does it mean to follow Jesus?
- How can we help others like Jesus did?
- What is one kind thing we can do today?
- Why is it important to love others?
- How can our family be disciples together?

## Saint for June

# St. Albert Chmielowski

Patron saint of painters, servants of the poor, travelers

Feast day: June 17th

Albert was born in 1845 in Poland in a village near Krakow to a wealthy family and was given the name Adam. He was the oldest of four children who all were sent to be raised by an aunt after both their parents died during their childhood. When Adam was 18 years old, he joined a resistance movement to fight against Russian forces. During one battle, Adam was hit by a Russian grenade. His leg was so badly injured that it needed to be amputated, and he lived with a wooden leg for the rest of his life. Because he was involved in the uprising, he had to leave Poland. He spent time in Belgium, Germany, and France, where he found out he had artistic ability and began to study art.

When he was almost 30 years old, Adam returned to Poland and became an accomplished and successful artist. However, he found that he did not like being famous and even struggled with depression during this time. Adam was a devout Catholic, and many of his paintings had religious themes in them. He started to become interested in the life and spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi, growing concerned with the issues of poverty and homelessness. He decided that he was being called to serve the poor and gave up his career as an artist. He eventually joined a Franciscan order, taking the name Brother Albert, and professed his religious vows in 1888. For the rest of his life, Brother Albert dedicated himself to caring for the poor. He founded a branch of the Franciscans: The Servants of the Poor. They are often called the Albertine Brothers. Later he founded a women's order, the Albertine Sisters, with the same mission of service to the poor in Poland. The Albertine Brothers and Sisters opened homes for the poor, sick, mentally ill, and elderly all over Poland, where they still serve today. Brother Albert lived with the poor that he served. He believed that poverty existed because enough people didn't recognize the suffering of others and tried to help. Brother Albert died on Christmas Day in 1916.



File:Brat\_Albert.png, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In the 1930's, a young Karol Wojtyła started attending university and was considered a promising actor and playwright. However, he found that his calling to serve God in the priesthood was stronger than his desire for the arts. Later when Karol Wojtyła became St. Pope John Paul II, he shared that he was inspired by Brother Albert's example of giving up his career to devote his life to God. When he was still a young priest, St. Pope John Paul II even wrote a play about Albert's life called *Our God's Brother*. Brother Albert was canonized a saint by St. Pope John Paul II in 1989. The life of St. Albert reminds us that as Christians we are called to love the poor, marginalized, weak and persons with disabilities. His choice to give up the life of a celebrity artist to serve others can inspire us all to be more selfless.

Some ideas for celebrating St. Albert Chmielowski's feast day are:

- Painting
- Creating kits to keep in your vehicle that contain essential items such as socks, water bottles, non-perishable snacks, and hygiene products to give to the unhoused
- Learning about St. Francis of Assisi
- Donating art supplies to a homeless shelter



Albert Chmielowski, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

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