



# Formative Parenting

*Cultivating Character in Children*

*A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania*

## **Create a Liturgical Classroom Environment** **Back-to-School: The Close of ORDINARY TIME in Liturgical Cycle B**

Much like the ebb and flow of the ocean, two life-seasons intersect with each other from September through November. Fall initiates a new year in the lives of students and simultaneously marks the closing of one liturgical year and the beginning of another. To a catechist, the intersection of the two presents an opportunity for Christian character development.

The Liturgical Year is the Church's annual remembrance of the events of the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is divided into the two major seasons of Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter/Pentecost with Ordinary Time occurring between them. Each season has a time of preparation and a time of celebration. The liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church changes yearly in a three-year cycle. This makes it possible, over the course of three years, for the faithful to hear the whole of the Gospel. For this reason we speak of liturgical cycles A, B, and C. The cycle begins on the First Sunday of Advent and it ends the following November with the feast of Christ the King. For example, Cycle A began on November 28, 2010 (First Sunday of Advent) and ended on November 21, 2011 (the feast of Christ the King).

*Though this newsletter focuses on CYCLE B,  
the ideas and attitudes suggested can be adapted to Cycles A and C.*

### **"Who is Jesus?"**

Back to school days, September through the end of November, bring Cycle B to a close. Cycle B concentrated on the Gospel of Mark and Old Testament prophets. In this shortest of all the Gospels, Mark wrote to a Gentile audience. His Gospel strengthened new Christians to stand firm in companionship with Jesus, despite persecution or personal rejection. The stories, characters, relationships and interactions in Mark's Gospel helped Christians, then and now, to answer the primary question, "Who is Jesus of Nazareth?"

Beginning with the proclamation of John the Baptist, Mark concentrates on ministry and the last week of Jesus' life. He presents a Jesus who is passionate about bringing the kingdom of God to the "here and now," to the rich and powerful as well as the poor, outcasts and sinners. It is Mark's Jesus that we will meet in the Sunday Gospels from September to November.

The liturgical year ends with the celebration of the feast of Christ the King. We will see Jesus stand before Pilate. We will hear him say, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Even though the Gospel will be John's (John 18:33–37) it adds a final comment to Mark's mosaic. It suggests Jesus'

answer to the question, "Who is Jesus of Nazareth?"

### Create a Liturgical Classroom Environment

Catechists with a permanent classroom might dedicate a bulletin board to the liturgical season as the backdrop for a class prayer table. The table can display the Bible and, perhaps, a mini-easel to feature a Sunday Gospel character, personality traits or "one liner" Scripture quotes. Mobile teachers can create a similar effect via a tri-fold presentation board or portable easel display. Make green, the liturgical color of Ordinary Time, the predominate color. Here are a few additional ideas to engage children in the moment and also to prepare them to hear God's word in the Sunday Gospels.

- Display the Sunday dates with corresponding Gospel citations.
- On colorful person-die-cut(s) name the character featured in the Gospel and, perhaps, a characteristic that emerged. For example, the apostles, arguing about unclean hands (Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 22–23), the deaf man with speech impediment, cured in private (Mark 7:31–37), or Peter, being reproved by Jesus (Mark 8:27–35).
- Make a list of character lessons learned from the Gospel story. For instance, when Jesus said, "Do you not yet understand?", we might conclude that the apostles were not different from us. Like us, they did not always understand even though they walked daily with Jesus. Or, that we, like them, forget too easily the wonders that Jesus has already worked in our lives. Or, that Jesus is calling us to trust him even when we do not understand.
- Print a "one liner" to serve as a mantra for the week. For instance, "He has done everything

well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak." or "Who do people say that I am? ... Who do you say that I am?" or "For God all things are possible."

- Depending on age level, students or groups could be responsible for one of each of the above parts. In class, proclaim the Sunday Gospel followed by students announcing their "piece" and adding it to the display.
- Celebrate "*A Moment with Jesus.*" Weekly a group of students act out the Sunday Gospel. Follow it with silence, then faith sharing.
- Throughout the season assemble a word-portrait of Jesus. For instance, Jesus preferred to avoid the limelight, Jesus was respectfully assertive, compassionate, focused. . .

As children learn more about Jesus each week through the Gospel of Mark, they can see how the Gospel is a living word—God's word for us today.

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Dr. Patricia McCormack, IHM, a former Catholic schoolteacher and catechist, is a formation education consultant, an author of several books as well as the **Parent Partnership Handbook** feature of *Today's Catholic Teacher*, and director of IHM Formative Support for Parents and Teachers, Arlington, VA. She speaks and writes frequently on topics of child formation.