FAMILY CATECHETICAL GATHERING #2
THE GATHERING RITES

* Before Family Gathering

- gather student helpers
- gather supplies (will vary according to parish)

Supplies:

- cross & stand
- lectionary
- paschal candle
- banner
- musical instruments
- pom poms
- tape
- Cross Banner
- LCD projector
- music
- laptop
- portable microphone
- handout
- pens & pencils
- attendance list
- treat sign-up list
- wooden crosses
- posting of mass

Stuff from last session:

- list of names
- copies of schedule
- family books
- song books and cds
- tea
- juice
- sugar
- cream
- coffee cups
- dixie cups
- serviettes

1. Before you Begin:

At each of the next four sessions we will focus on one of the four main parts of the liturgy. We had parishioners make up letters (approximately 12" x 8" in size spelling out the words Gather, Listen, Share & Go Forth.

- prepare the letters. You can place letters for the word G-A-T-H-E-R randomly under the seats with tape already on the back... tape side up. Alternately, you can give out the letters by asking for volunteers once the meeting has begun.
- Set-up Prayer centre: Processional Cross, Candle, Children’s Lectionary or Large Bible, Lectern, “Gather” banner
- set up overhead projector and screen.
- put out wooden crosses or cross making supplies.
- put out recycling bins,
- set up student helpers making treats.
2. **Announcements:**

Make any announcements regarding organizational matters that need to be made (e.g. signing up for treats, mass lists, attendance, etc.).

3. **Opening Activity & Preparations:**

At different times, we have done different activities with the candidates for First Eucharist.

   * We have had them make popsicle stick crosses at the beginning of the session using coloured popsicle sticks and yarn.
   * We have had them make crosses out of wooden sticks which we had collected in the fall and had cut into two different sizes by student volunteers.
   * We have purchased inexpensive wooden crosses from a local craft store and handed these out to be taken away and decorated at home. I usually have a few examples of crosses that children have decorated from previous years. This is by far the least messy as well as easiest (though not the least expensive) version of the activity. I have come to prefer it as it extents the catechesis into the home environment.

1. Invite people to pick up a wooden cross as they come in.

2. Ask for children to volunteer for the following:

   2 · cheerleaders (2 children)
   6 · letter carriers or ask children to look under their seats to see if there is a letter
   1 · cross bearer
   1 · candle bearer
   1 · lectionary bearer
   1 · child for each instrument (e.g. bongos, maracas, shakers) (A reminder that musical instruments should be played in the entrance procession only and afterwards should be stowed in the basket provided or under the seats.)
3. Ask for adults or teen assistants to volunteer for the following:

- put the letters up on the wall.
- read Scripture
- play CD or lead music of you have the resources

4. "The Parts of the Mass"

- Remind the children that at the last session we talked about being called to belong to the family of God. Now the Lord is inviting us to join us at the Feast of the Eucharist.
- For the next four sessions, we will look at what this feast or celebration at the table of the Lord looks like.

- The mass is a mirror of our lives.
- We do the same things at mass in an abbreviated fashion that we do in our ordinary lives.
- Whenever we gather for any kind of celebration there are four important parts.
- Think of a party - birthday party, thanksgiving, any kind of party.

At a Party:

a) GATHER: before anything can happen we must GATHER
b) LISTEN: then we chat a little bit
c) SHARE: then we usually share something - food, friendship, gifts, song
d) GO: then we leave... our hearts happier, our friendships deeper, etc..

At the Lord's Feast/Party:

a) GATHER: before anything can happen we must GATHER
b) LISTEN: then we Listen to the Word of God
c) SHARE: then we respond with praise and thanksgiving
d) GO: then we go forth to live the Word.
5. "The Rite of Gathering"

Today/tonight we will focus on the first thing we do at any celebration.

Before we can do anything we must "GATHER" or "COME" together

Get kids to bring up the words G-A-T-H-E-R and put them on the wall. I usually have cheerleaders with pom poms call out:

   Give me a “G” after which the crowd shouts out “G” and the child with that letter comes up and puts the letter on the wall.
   Give me an “A”, etc.

After the last letter is placed, the cheerleaders say,

   “What have you got?” and everyone calls out “GATHER”

After this, ask children: "How do we gather together at mass?"

   a) greet our neighbours (hi, how are you?)
   b) we sing a song (voices are one)
   c) a procession (ask why? God's fishing net...)
   d) we make the sign of the cross together. (all under one single symbol)
   e) greeting: the Lord be with you. Response????
   f) Confetior/Lord, have mercy
   g) Opening Prayer

All of these things together are called the GATHERING RITES.

After all of this we are ready for the next part of mass which we will talk about next time.

- It is called the Liturgy of the Word.
6. Liturgical Celebration: Gathered under the cross of Jesus

- have children procession gather.
- put up overhead of Come All You People
- as first verse of song finishes they can begin.

Opening Prayer:

Presider:  With care and with love, let us begin with the sign of the cross:
         In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All:    Amen.

Presider:  The Lord be with You.

All:    And with your Spirit.

Presider:  Let us pray, (pause)
         Loving God,
         you gather us today around the cross of your Son Jesus.
         We come as friends and followers.
         Help us to treasure the cross in our hearts and in our minds
         as the sign of how much you love us.
         May it always remind us of your great love for us.
         We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All:    Amen.

Children place processional cross, candle, & lectionary in appropriate places
and return to their seats. Instruments may be placed in a basket.

Gospel Acclamation: (any gospel acclamation that is familiar to the children
may be used. We use Halle, Halle, Halle.)
Scripture Reading: (Matthew 16:24-26 - Take up your Cross and follow me.)

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

The Gospel of the Lord! Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ!

Reflection on the Reading:

- After we read the cross is one of our most important symbols.
- it reminds us that Jesus lived, died and rose again for us.
- and that he is still with us.

- it is the symbol of God's great love for us
- Jesus even risked death to show us the way.

As followers we are also asked to take up our cross.

Why did Jesus become human?

The Farmer and the Sparrows

One raw winter night a farmer heard an irregular thumping sound against his kitchen storm door. He went to a window and watched as tiny, shivering sparrows, attracted to the evident warmth inside, beat in vain against the glass. Touched, the farmer bundled up and trudged through fresh snow to open the barn door for the struggling birds. He turned on the lights and tossed some hay in the corner. But the sparrows, which had scattered in all directions when he emerged from the house, hid in the darkness, afraid.

The man tried various tactics to get them into the barn. He laid down a trail of Saltine cracker crumbs to direct them. He tried circling behind the birds to drive them to the
barn. Nothing worked. He, a huge, alien creature, had terrified them; the birds couldn’t comprehend that he actually desired to help. The farmer withdrew to his house and watched the doomed sparrows through a window. As he stared, a thought hit him like lightning from a clear blue sky: If only I could become a bird – one of them – just for a moment. Then I wouldn’t frighten them so. I could show them the way to warmth and safety. At the same moment, another thought dawned on him. He grasped the reason Jesus was born.

From: www.reformedpraise.org/blog/general/a-sermon-on-the-incarnation/

Jesus took on all the suffering (crosses) of being human to teach us how to live.

- we are also called to take risks because of what we believe.
- to take up our cross and follow Jesus.

**Is it easy to be a Christian?**

- tell the story from the book of the child who thought his/her cross was too heavy (page 34).

- have the kids close their eyes and think of one thing that is really hard for them to deal with.
  - one personal cross they have to bear.
  - ask them to offer it to Jesus and ask him to help them with it.

Remind the children that at the end, when Jesus was carrying his cross to Golgotha, it was too heavy.
- he had to have someone help him.
- Simon, a complete stranger, helped him.

We also cannot always carry our crosses alone.

- Also Jesus give us the church to help us.
- we have other people to help us carry our crosses...
In the gathering rites, when we gather together under the sign of the cross, we acknowledge that we gather as brothers and sisters in Christ who need each other as cross bearers for each other.

- we gather as church to love and support one another.

**Rite of Signing with the Cross:**

- Explain to the children that as symbol that God gives us the power of the cross to strengthen us in all that we do we will do a cross blessing ritual.
- Some of the children may have seen this particular ritual is during the Rite of Acceptance with adults and older children preparing for baptism.
- ask if anyone has seen this being done.

- announce that we have adapted the ritual for them and will have now parents trace the symbol of the cross on their children.

Presider:  Let us pray,

Receive the cross on your forehead.
It is Christ who now strengthens you with this sign of his love.
Learn to know him and follow him.

While the ears are being signed, the presider says,

Presider:  Receive the sign of the cross on your ears, that you may hear the voice of the Lord.

While the eyes are being signed,

Presider:  Receive the sign of the cross on your eyes, that you may see the glory of God.

While the lips are being signed,

Presider:  Receive the sign of the cross on your lips,
that you may always speak words of kindness and peace.

While the heart is being signed,

Presider:  Receive the sign of the cross over your heart,
that you may love as Jesus loved.

While the shoulders are being signed,

Presider:  Receive the sign of the cross over your shoulders,
that you may have the strength to carry the crosses of life.

While the feet are being signed,

Presider:  Receive the sign of the cross on your feet,
may you may walk in the paths of the Lord.

The presider alone makes the sign of the cross over all the candidates at once, saying:

Presider:  Dear children, as your parents traced the sign of the cross on your forehead, God signed you in your hearts. All through your life, the cross will remind you of God's great love for you.

So now we place you entirely under the sign of Christ's cross in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Candidates:  Amen.

As the candidates hold up their crosses:

Presider:  We ask God to bless these crosses we have made with our own hands. May they always remind us that we are clothed in Christ and loved and supported by his people.
Now, go in peace to live like Jesus.

All: Thanks be to God!

**Closing Song:** A closing song could be sung, but we always seem to run out of time in this session, so we have never done one.