

God Gave Me His Friendship

Objective: The students will appreciate God's friendship and learn that they communicate with God through prayer.

For the Catechist

For children the knowledge that God made them and loves them is fundamental. However, just as important is the knowledge that they can communicate with the One to Whom they owe their existence. God desires their friendship through prayer. Children are open to learning to pray. We begin to pray by quieting ourselves so we can open our mind and heart to God.

Sign of the Cross. When the children learn the sign of the cross, teach the correct hand position: thumb and first two fingers together to represent the Trinity and the last two fingers on the palm to represent the two natures of Christ—divine and human. Also teach the correct way of moving their hands: In the name of (forehead) the Father (breast) and of the Son (right shoulder, for He sits at the right hand of the Father) and of the Holy Spirit (left shoulder). However, correct only gently so as to encourage their desire to learn to pray. Praise them for their efforts.

Trinity. The Trinity is presented as a fact and without further definition or explanation. It is enough for the students and, indeed, was enough for the Eastern theologians to simply state our belief without having to explain how there could be three persons in one God. When speaking of the Trinity, only the term "persons" should be used for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted.)

Pray Always

"As did the Jews before them, the early Church taught that believers should pray through the day because they never stopped living in the heavenly realm. As a rule, Christians might gather once or twice a day for common prayer, but in addition to that personal, private prayer—the communication of each believer with the Lord—was considered indispensable. The usual times for prayer even then were in the

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: "To You, O Lord."

Introduction: Discussion of friendship

Need: Photo of friends talking (provided on following pages)

Read Text Aloud: Hold text up for students to see as you read each page aloud. After each page, use the questions in the shaded box at the bottom of that page to discuss the lesson with the students.

Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity to reinforce the lesson (detailed on the pages that follow).

- **Basic:** Adam Was God's Friend
- **Group:** Prayer Intentions
- **Craft:** "I Can Make the Sign of the Cross" Badge

Closing: The Sign of the Cross

Come Bless the Lord Icon:

Packet I:

Packet II:

morning, before the day's tasks were begun, at the evening at their conclusion, and before retiring" (DC 23).

A Rule of Prayer

"In the same way today prayer in the domestic church is both private and communal. There are times when a person needs to be alone for prayer and times when the whole household can gather together for prayer, either in the home or in the wider Church. Because each person's responsibilities and schedules are different, especially in our society, and because each person is at a different stage in the spiritual journey, the quality and kind of prayer for each individual will be different. This is why Eastern Christians have the custom of setting up a personal **Rule of Prayer**, usually with the help of their spiritual guide. In setting such a rule of prayer, we would consider the time realistically at our disposal each day, as well as the kind of prayer which would most suit our degree of spiritual maturity" (DC 23).

When to Pray

"In choosing times for daily prayer, we need to ask ourselves when are we most able to assure that we will not be rushed, disturbed or too tired to give full attention to what we are doing. Some people decide to get up an hour earlier than usual to pray in the early morning quiet. If you are a 'morning person,' you may find that your best time for prayer. 'Night people' may prefer to pray after other family members have gone to bed. Each person will be different" (DC 23).

How Long to Pray

"Our Rule of Prayer would also include an idea of how long to pray. This generally depends on how much prayer is a part of our lives. If you are a beginner, you should not expect that your attention would last over ten or fifteen minutes. By that time you would have run out of things to say and would probably just be 'putting time in'" (DC 23-24).

Where to Pray

"Personal Rules of Prayer should also consider where best to pray. Someone alone at home during the day may find the family icon corner a good place to pray. You may prefer the icon corner in your bedroom, a nearby church or the outdoors. What matters is that the place you select makes it possible for you to spend your prayer time alone with God" (DC 24).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Let's talk about praying to God. The first thing we do is stand quietly. Let's try it. Let's stand quietly before the icon. [Gather the children before the icon.] Next, we hold our hands palms up. Let's try it; this is our prayer position. When we hold our hands open, we are telling God, "I am giving myself to you." That's how we'll pray right now—hands open, together, and palms up. When we pray, we give ourselves to God. [Move hands upward and outward toward icon as you say] "To You, O Lord." We also are ready to receive what God gives us. [Move hands back to self.] Let's all say together, "To You, O Lord." Now let's try it as our prayer. Let's be quiet for a moment and look at how beautiful our icon is. [Say prayer with children.]

Introduction

So far we have learned two very important facts about God. In our first lesson we learned that God made us and God loves us. We are wonderful persons. What did I bring in to help teach how wonderful we are? (Flowers) Like a bouquet, each of us and all of us together are wonderful in God's eyes. This week we'll talk about prayer. Let's begin by talking about friends. What are friends? [Allow responses. Show photo of friends talking.] Here is a picture of two friends. What are they doing? (Talking/sharing) Is it important to talk with your friends? Why? [Allow responses.] Our lesson today is about a most wonderful friend that each of us have. Do you know who that is? [Allow responses.] The most wonderful friend that we have is God. God, who made us and loves us, wants us to talk to Him like a friend. God has given us His friendship. Do you know how we talk to God? [Allow responses.] We talk to God in prayer. When we begin our prayer, we make the sign of the cross. We say [demonstrate] "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Why do we say that? We say that because God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is three persons. Our first lessons this year are about God. We will learn a lot about our wonderful God. Let's read our lesson.

Reading of Text

Hold text so that children can see the page as you read it. Read slowly and draw their attention to the illustrations. After reading each page, use the questions below (given also on the bottom of the student text) to review.

Page 1

• *We say God is the Trinity. Trinity means three persons. Look at the icon. It is the icon of the Trinity. We can't see God, but this is how one artist represented God. Do you see three figures? God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They look at each other with loving eyes.*

Page 2

- *We pray in the name of the Trinity. Who are the three persons of the Trinity? (The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)*
- *Let's make the sign of the cross. [You may wish to place stickers on the children's right shoulders.] We use our right hand with our thumb and first two fingers together and the other two fingers in our palms. "In the name of [touch forehead] the Father [touch breast] and of the Son [touch right shoulder, for He sits at the right hand of the Father] and of the Holy Spirit [touch left shoulder]."*

Page 3

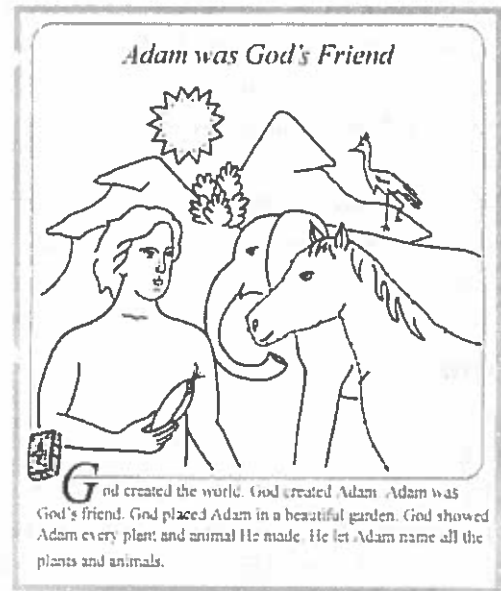
- *Do you pray? [Allow responses.] What do you thank God for? Do you ask for His help in anything? Do you ask God to bless anyone?*
- *[Share a few of your own prayer habits.] God wants us to talk to Him in prayer every day. God wants us to be happy and to tell Him when we're not. We will talk more about this next week. We have a wonderful God.*

Activity Tracks

Basic: "Adam Was God's Friend"

The basic activity is the fourth page of each student text. It is a paraphrase of the Bible story where God let Adam name the animals. Read the title and the story to the children. They may color the illustration. Questions to reinforce the reading are as follows:

- *Who was God's friend? (Adam)*
- *What special job did God give Adam? (He let him name all the plants and animals.)*
- *There are two drawings that have dots in them. See if you can complete them, and then you can color the worksheet.*



Group: Prayer Intentions

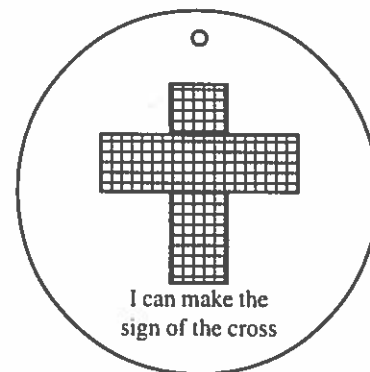
Materials: index cards, pen, markers, parent to help

Today we learned that God has given us the gift of His friendship. When we have friends, we talk to them. We talk to our God through prayer. We can ask God to help us with something or to bless our friends and family. We'll practice this today with prayer cards. [Show example.] On your prayer card you can draw and color a picture of something you need God to help you with. [In lesson 16 they will have a prayer intention activity where they pray for other people.] Then I'll come around and help you print what is on your mind. Afterwards we'll gather at our icon corner and pray to God with our cards. I'll say, "Let us begin with the sign of the cross. Thank You, God, for the gift of Your friendship. Here is what we would like to talk with You about today." Either you or I can read your card, and then you can place it by the icon of Christ. After each one speaks, we'll say "Lord, have mercy," as we do in church. We'll end with, "Thank You, Lord, for hearing our prayers," and then we'll make the sign of the cross.

Craft: "I Make the Sign of the Cross" Badge

Materials: "Sign of the Cross" worksheet, construction paper, scissors, hole punch, glue, markers, yarn

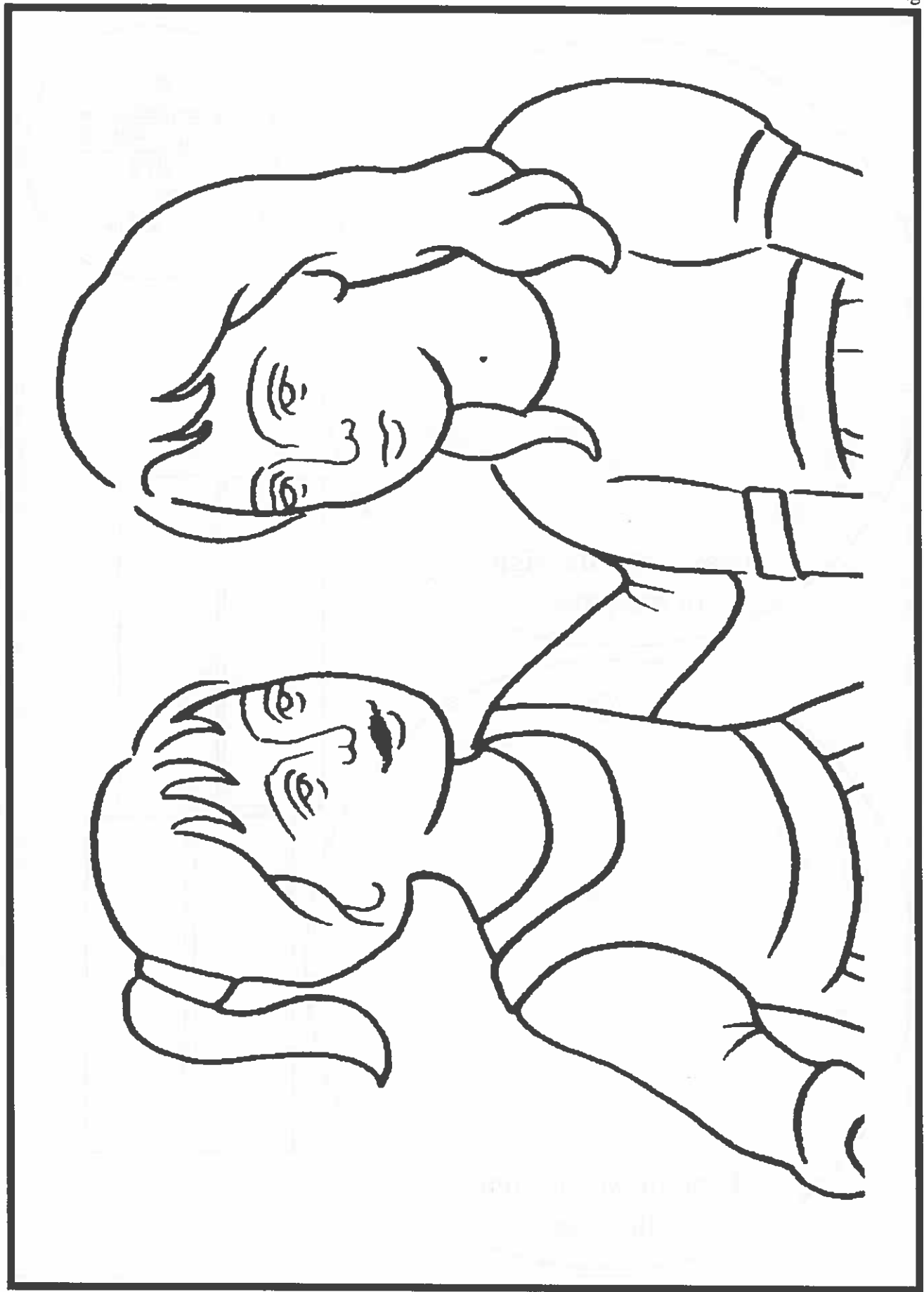
[Ahead of time, cut out the crosses from construction paper. Even if some children are not correctly making the

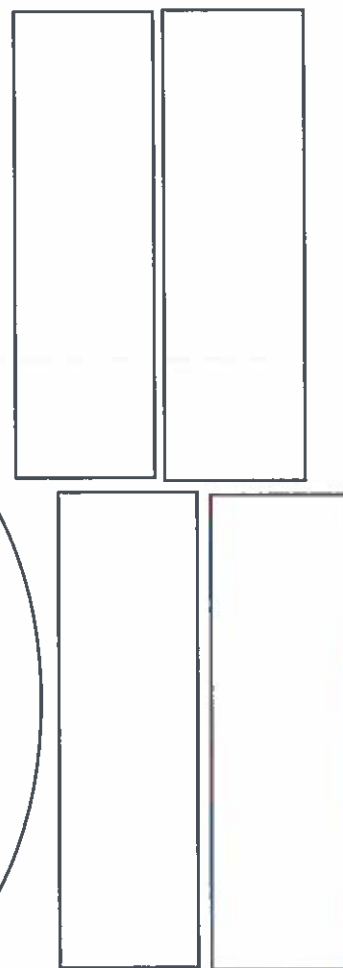
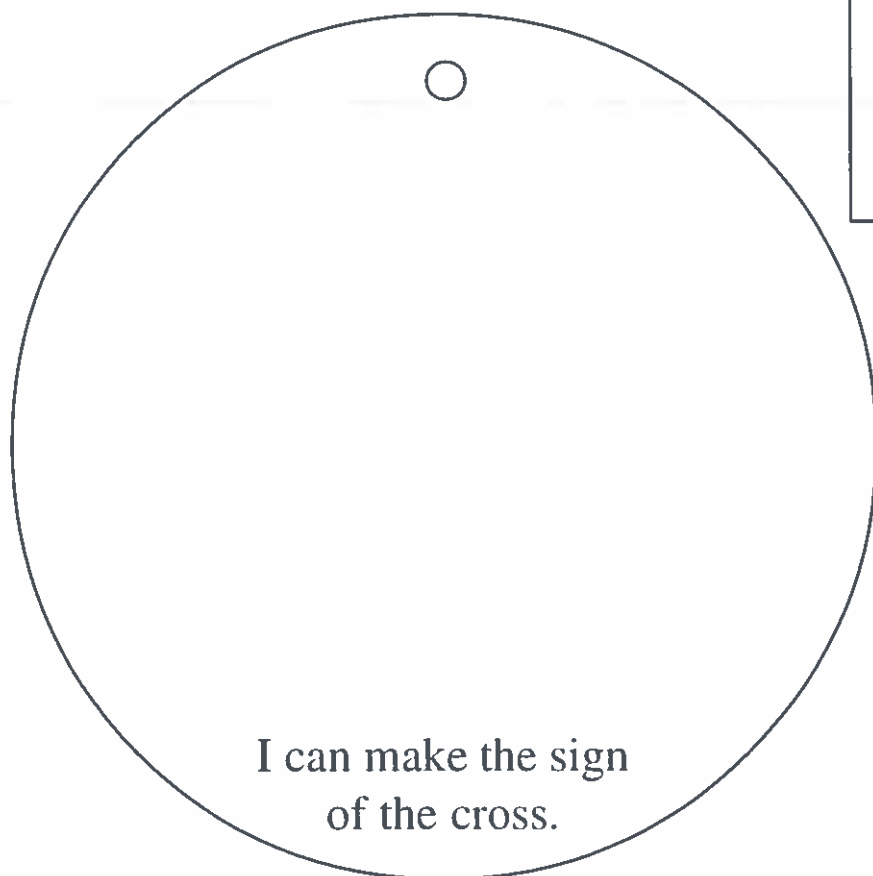
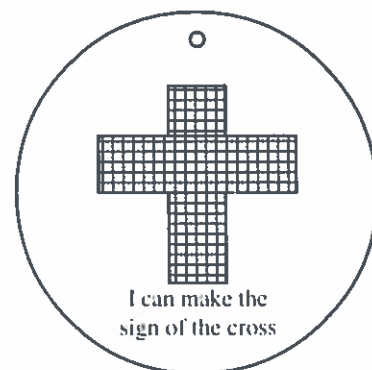
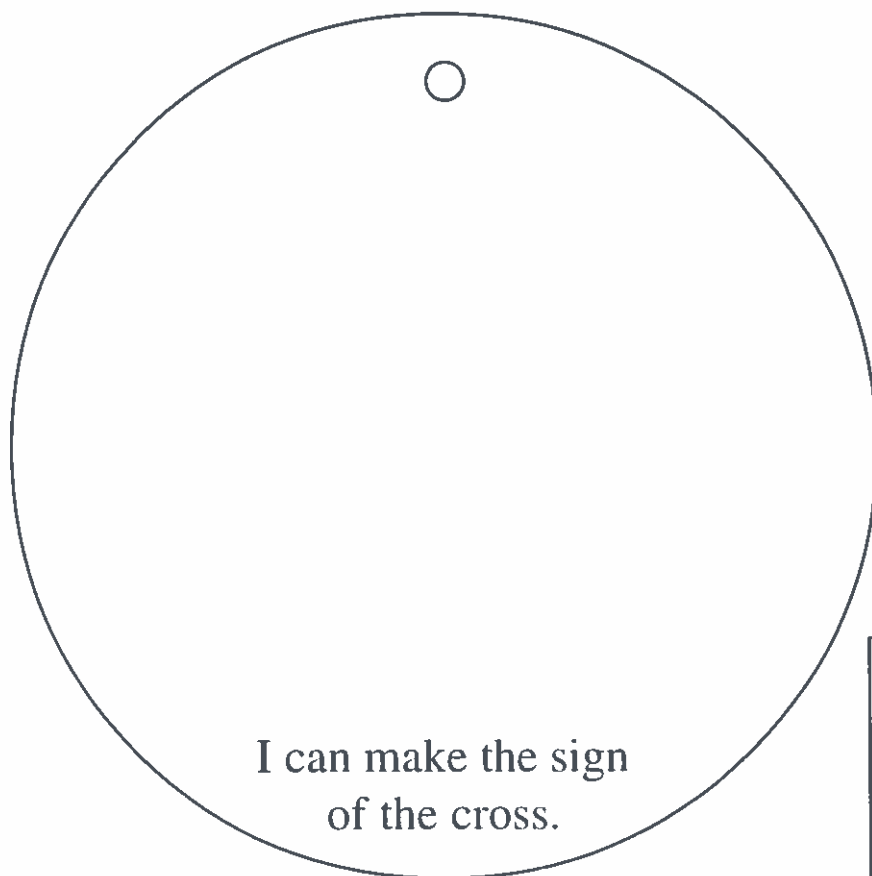


sign of the cross, they are to make a badge.] *Today we learned how to make our sign of the cross. To let everyone know that we have learned something so important, we have a special badge to make and wear. [Show sample.] It reads: "I can make the sign of the cross." You will get to paste the cross onto the circle; try not to cover the writing. Then punch a hole to put yarn through so you can wear it. We'll practice making our crosses after we are wearing our badges.*

Closing

When we prayed earlier, we learned that the first thing we do is stand quietly. Let's try it. Let's stand quietly before the icon. [Gather children before the icon.] Now with our right hand, let us hold our thumb and first two fingers together like this [show the children], and put our other two fingers in our palm like this [show the children]. For our closing prayer let's make the sign of the cross and bow as we say "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."





(Patterns for cross)