

Teaching the Language of the Faith Series—

Read and Receive...Listen and Learn!

Forming the child...informing the adult—transforming both!

The Teaching the Language of the Faith Series
presents read-aloud books that foster reflective interaction
between the child listener and the adult reader.
Thoughtful religious art is chosen to interrelate with words
pertinent to faith understanding.
Each aspect extends the meaning of the other.
As children gain a familiarity with words and images
relevant to the Christian truth, they are prepared to enter
more fully and more personally into the beauty
and mystery of the Christian faith.

The Saving Name of God the Son

This is a first board book in a set on the Blessed Trinity. The aim of *The Saving Name of God the Son* is to help guide the child listener and adult reader into the mystery of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, using scripture-based text that centers on Christ's titles and works alongside scenes from his life as luminously portrayed by the art of Fra Angelico.

Illustrated in full color, each of the ten depicted events (plus the front cover picture) are referenced to the Scriptures and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* at the back of the book.

This book can be used as:

1. a read-a-loud approach to spending quality time with your preschool or primary age child;
2. an opportunity to introduce and enjoy beautiful theological artwork together;
3. a take-to-Mass book;
4. a springboard to on-going adult education for passing on the Faith, by using the listed Scripture and *Catechism of the Catholic Church* references at the back of the book.

Further Suggestions for using *The Saving Name of God the Son*

Please know that we think it is perfectly fine just to read this book aloud to your pre-school child and never do one of the activities suggested below! Reading aloud is a powerful agent for growth all on its own. If you'd like to do more, then here are some ways—fun ones, we hope—to do so.

How do preschool children learn?

*“Preschool children are in what can be called the **symbolic period** of their mental development which extends from age 2 to about 7 or 8. . . . Children's major mental work during this time is to acquire many symbols. . . . [There are] three major kinds of symbols—**words, pictures and images.**”* Ruth Beechick, *Teaching Preschoolers: It's Not Exactly Easy But Here Is How To Do It*; Accent-B/P Publications, Inc 1979; page 35.

Following are some further thoughts and specific applications based on these three major kinds of symbols. Understanding something about them will help you in the use of *The Saving Name of God the Son*. Once again, we are indebted to Dr. Ruth Beechick for her valuable research and commonsense approach in teaching spiritual truths to the young.

Words as Symbols

What does ‘words as symbols’ mean?

A preschool child is rapidly increasing his vocabulary. At this level most words are names for things, and all words are concretely understood, associated with an object, picture, person, or situation in a specific context. It is through the repetition of hearing and speaking a word that the child makes the word his own, coming to a broader understanding of its meaning by encountering it in various ways. It is important for adults to remember that just because a child *says* a word does not mean he knows it with the mature associations and levels of understanding of the adult. Dr. Beechick writes: *“So what we need is a balance. We need to teach words—not in isolation, but in a rich learning environment, in varied contexts. And at the same time we should not fool ourselves about the maturity of the children's thinking when we hear them beginning to use the words we teach.”**

Introducing the preschool child to words that are part of the Christian vocabulary and culture gives him the opportunity to grow up with words that will become more and more meaningful as he is taught the practices of Christian faith and charity and led into personal relationship with the Blessed Trinity.

**Suggestions for using the WORDS & VOCABULARY in
*The Saving Name of God the Son:***

- **Fun:** First of all, it is very important to NOT use this book as a way to “make” a child learn, but to use it to gently open doors to reveal the beauty of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. A primary goal is to allow the child to gain positive associations about God and his spiritual reality through the use of words and images that are beautiful and true, as well as through a warm, interested and fun relationship between the child and the adult reader.
- **Rhythm & Flow:** If at all possible, read the book to yourself first, familiarizing yourself with the flow of words—particularly noting the fact that thoughts begun on one spread (indicated by ellipses) are finished on the next. (The exceptions being the key center spread—Our Lord Jesus Christ!—and the final one.) Try reading the book aloud, putting slight emphasis on the verbs and the words in capital letters.
- **Pace:** Keep to a medium pace for reading aloud—not too slow and not too fast.
- **Titles:** For a very young child, you might want to try reading just the titles of Jesus Christ that are in capital letters on each page. You might preface each with the phrase: “*Jesus is...*” for example: “*Jesus is the Word*”; “*Jesus is the Son of Man*” and so forth.
- **Vocabulary:** Be ready in other contexts to use or quietly call attention to the vocabulary encountered in the book—at Mass (in the Creed: “. . . *God the Father, Almighty,*” etc.; in the Eucharistic Prayer: “. . . *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” and so forth); in the sacred art found in the church building itself; in the liturgical seasons (particularly, Christmas and Easter); and in other sacred art found in books and the Catholic home.
- **Repetition:** Encourage repetition of words while you are reading, making it a game (and never a lesson).
- **Interaction:** After a child has heard the book several times, see if he can finish the sentences following the ellipses, with you providing the first word of the part on the next page, drawing it out slightly.

For example from Spread 1 to Spread 2: *became flesh . . . aannndd*
(child supplies) *dwelt among us*.

Pictures as Symbols

What does ‘pictures as symbols’ mean?

“*[Pictures] have become so ordinary to us that we have difficulty realizing that a child has to learn to ‘read’ pictures just as he has to learn how to see the world in the first place.*” Ruth Beechick, *Teaching Preschoolers: It’s Not Exactly Easy But Here Is How To Do It*; Accent-B/P Publications, Inc 1979; page 37.

Different kinds of artwork serve different purposes for the preschool child. Simple, single object pictures can help the child to learn names of objects or to group objects in a certain way, while more detailed pictures can help the child to learn to relate things within a picture and to read a “story” into it. It is this latter, detailed type of art that has been chosen to illustrate this series.

Fra Angelico: (some appropriate links?)

Suggestions for using the PICTURES in *The Saving Name of God the Son:*

- **Look Ahead:** Familiarize yourself with the pictures in the book (note that they chronologically follow the earthly life of Christ and that they are referenced to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* at the back of the book).
- **Time to Ponder:** After the child has heard the book though a couple times, you can pause either during the reading of the text or skip the text and take time just to look at the pictures together. Engage your child in simple conversations about the pictures:
 - “**What do you see?**” The child may name something he recognizes, or point to something which you can name out loud. Then you can say, “**I see...**” and name and point to someone or something that the child probably wouldn’t be able to identify, such as Jesus, Mary, angel, halo, heaven, stable, etc. This can continue back and forth until the main contents of the pictures are identified (don’t be afraid to say “woman,” “man,” “apostle,” or “holy souls”—for the Resurrection, Last Supper, Ascension and Descent into Hell pictures—rather than more specific names).
 - You can also introduce questions such as, “**What is Jesus doing?**” for the Last Supper picture, or, “**What is the woman doing?**” for the

Resurrection picture. (This would be a good lead-in for the suggestions for images below.)

- **Discovery:** Here are some other suggestions for ways to talk with your child about the pictures:
 - Identify Jesus in all the pictures, including the front cover picture (note that he always has a special halo, usually marked with a cross or, as the Last Judgment, colored in shining gold).
 - Identify Mary in the pictures. Notice that she always wears the color blue—with red, or pink or, once again in the Last Judgment, gold. Think about how gold is especially used for the picture where Christ is shown in the glory of heaven.
 - Look for and identify different colors in the pictures.
 - Find and identify the golden light around Jesus in some pictures (Nativity, Descent into Limbo, Resurrection, Ascension—though not so evident—and particularly bright in the Last Judgment).
 - Discuss what is happening in the pictures:
 - Spread One:** The angel is coming to Mary; is speaking to her; the Holy Spirit (dove) is coming down; Mary is listening.
 - Spread Two:** Jesus has come down from heaven (heavenly light with angels above the stable), the shepherds are coming to see him; Mary and Joseph are praying; the animals seem also to be on bended knee.
 - Spread Three:** Jesus is the light and the men are bowing down, bringing him gifts.
 - Spread Four:** John is baptizing Jesus, the Lamb of God; the Spirit (dove) is coming down.
 - Spread Five:** Jesus is feeding his apostles his body and blood; he is serving them.
 - Spread Six:** Jesus is dying on the cross, the soldiers are kneeling; Mary is sad, but is being comforted.
 - Spread Seven:** Jesus is taking the Good News to people that have died; he will save them; he is stronger than death and the devil (under the door).
 - Spread Eight:** Jesus has risen from the dead; the women are looking for Jesus; the angel is pointing to Jesus or up to heaven.
 - Spread Nine:** Jesus is ascending or going back to heaven; all the people are looking up; the angel is pointing to Jesus, to heaven.

Spread Ten: Jesus is in heaven with the golden light of glory; there are angels all around him; Mary is with him; he wants us to know that he is coming again.

- **I Spy:** After your child is very familiar with the contents of the book and the contents of the pictures, you may try some simple finding games where you ask a question and the child looks through the pictures until he finds an answer.
 1. Where is Jesus holding a flag? (Descent into Hell and Resurrection)
 2. Where is Jesus on the cross? (Crucifixion)
 3. Where is the angel pointing up? (Annunciation, Resurrection and Ascension)
 4. Where is Jesus feeding someone? (Last Supper)
 5. Where are the people looking up? (Ascension)
 6. Where is Baby Jesus? (Nativity and Adoration of the Magi)

Images as Symbols

What does ‘images as symbols’ mean?

“Images are pictures we form in our minds—mental images representing real happenings or imaginary happenings, true to life or distorted. They are another of the symbols we need as fuel for thinking and...[children] need to learn this skill just as any other...A kinesthetic or movement and feeling sense is an important avenue for perceiving images and coming to internalize them.” Ruth Beechick, *Teaching Preschoolers: It's Not Exactly Easy But Here Is How To Do It*; Accent-B/P Publications, Inc, 1979; page 39-40.

Suggestions for internalizing images from *The Saving Name of God the Son*:

- **Modeling:** Take time to notice HANDS in the pictures. For example, find where figures are using their hands to show they are praying: Mary in the Nativity, Jesus at his Baptism and so forth. With your child, copy this position with hands together, palm to palm, as in prayer, and ask the child, “What does this mean?” or say something else about how we pray just as Mary and Jesus did. Hands in the various pictures express receiving, blessing, worship, giving, comfort, surprise and direction. See how many hands positions you can copy, talking briefly about what the hands are “saying.” (You might talk about how we use hand positions to “say” things like “stop” or “go” and other commonly used hand signals.)

- **Role-Playing:** Choose a key figure in a picture, such as the angel in the Annunciation (Spread One), and say, “let's be like the angel” and then show the child by demonstrating how to physically get into the stance of the angel: bending one leg while leaning forward, one hand pointing up, one hand pointing out. After the child has copied you to the best of his ability (don't worry if it's not perfect), look at the picture again and “be like Mary” together: sitting, bending forward, hands crossed on breast.

Use this technique with any of the pictures, including the front cover, choosing the figures that have the most distinct stances (remembering to keep this kind of activity FUN):

1. Child Jesus on front cover
2. Angel and Mary and the Holy Spirit (dove) coming down
3. Mary, Joseph, angels, kneeling cow
4. Baby Jesus, Mary, kneeling and bowing kings
5. John the Baptist, Jesus the Lamb of God, angels holding clothes, Holy Spirit (dove) coming down
6. Jesus offering the Eucharist, kneeling apostles
7. Jesus on the cross, kneeling soldiers, soldiers holding spears
8. Jesus holding flag reaching down and out, holy souls reaching up
9. angel pointing down and up, woman looking down, Jesus holding flag and palm branch
10. Mary looking up, hands folded, apostles looking up, angel pointing down and up
11. Jesus seated in glory, Mary, John the Baptist

- **Living Pictures:** If you have more than one child, as they get familiar with the various postures you may have fun making “living pictures” from some of the simpler images. Each person “images” a figure in the picture at the same time until the picture is represented (you do not need to represent all the figures in the pictures).
- **Guess Who I am!:** One of you might take up a position and ask the other to guess which person or picture you are representing.
- **“Sacred” Associations:** You might try having a special time in the day to read “God books” aloud, such as before bedtime, as an aid in concretely communicating that these books have a certain importance (also, having a specific place to keep books with a sacred theme could

be a tangible indicator to the child that these books are about someone/something special).

- **Link to USCCB's Guidelines for the Preparation and Review of Pre-School Materials:**
http://www.usccb.org/catechism/preschool_guidelines.pdf