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LESSON 1

THE MYSTERY OF EASTER

FOCUS: LENT, THE MYSTERY OF EASTER AND THE EASTER SEASON

- **LITURGICAL ACTION**
- **CORE PRESENTATION**

THE MATERIAL

- **LOCATION: EASTER SHELVES**
- **PIECES: PURPLE AND WHITE BAG, SIX PUZZLE PIECES**
- **UNDERLAY: NONE**

BACKGROUND

Lent is the season when we prepare for Easter. These six weeks are a solemn time, overflowing with meaning, when we view life from the perspective of our existential limits and the sacrifice of Christ. This lesson gives an introduction to the relationship of Lent to the Mystery of Easter as well as how Easter overflows into the *season* of Easter. Follow this introduction by presenting the lessons of the Faces of Easter during the weeks of Lent.

NOTES ON THE MATERIAL

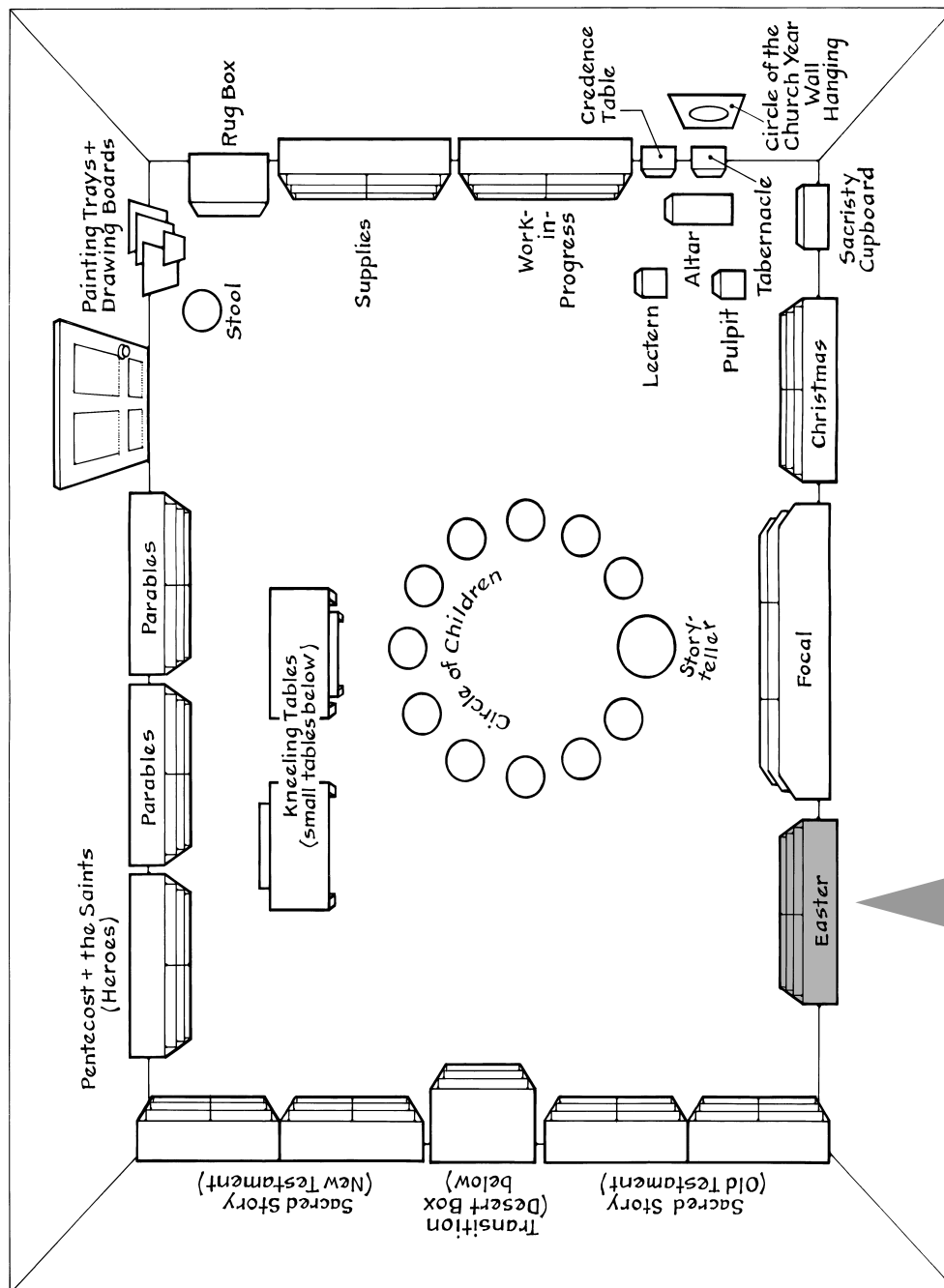
Find the materials for this presentation on the top shelf of the Easter shelves. To the right will be the material for the Faces of Easter.

A bag, which is purple on the outside and white on the inside, holds six puzzle pieces, which, when assembled, make the shape of the cross. One side of the cross is purple; the other side of the cross is white. It is much more than a puzzle with pieces that fit together, as you will see from how the lesson ends in the Mystery and season of Easter.

SPECIAL NOTES

Storytelling Tip: Remember that this story is called the Mystery of *Easter*, not the Mystery of Lent. The fullest meaning of Lent is that it gives us time to prepare for the great Mystery of Easter, the principal feast of the Christian Church. Similarly, we recommend that you not call the material a “cross puzzle” but always refer to it as “the material for the Mystery of Easter.”

On the First Sunday of Lent, we recommend that you first focus on the change of seasons. Use the Holy Family presentation to change the focal shelf color from green to purple. Then tell the Mystery of Easter. Most often, that will be all the material suitable for the First Sunday of Lent. You can combine two of the Faces presentations on the next Sunday.



WHERE TO FIND MATERIALS

MOVEMENTS

WORDS

Go to the Easter shelves and bring the tray with the bag on it. Put the tray at your side and place the bag in the middle of the circle. Unless you have a rug larger than the assembled cross, tell this lesson without a rug.

Watch carefully where I go so you will always know where to find this lesson.

Pick up the bag and explore it from the outside.

Now is the time for the color purple. It is the time for preparing. Purple is the color of kings. We are preparing for the coming of a king and his going and his coming again. We are preparing for the Mystery of Easter.

This is a serious time. It takes many weeks to get ready to enter the Mystery of Easter. Let's look inside to see how many weeks it takes and what Lent makes when it is all put together.

Place the bag back on the floor and reach inside. Pull out the first piece with the purple side up. Place it beside the bag. Turn it this way and that.

I wonder what this could be?

Encourage the children's guesses, then reach inside the bag and take out a second piece.

Look. Here is a second piece. I wonder what this could be?

Place the second piece on the floor, apart from the first piece. Turn the pieces, but do not fit them together.

Take out the third piece. Put the third piece beside the other two, but do not fit the pieces together. Move the pieces around and try combinations that do not work.

Look. Here's a third piece. They are all so different.

Take out the fourth piece. Put the fourth piece beside the other three, but do not fit the pieces together.

Here is a fourth piece. One, two, three, four weeks in Lent? That's the same as the time for getting ready for Christmas. Perhaps that is all we need for Easter, too.

Take out the fifth piece.

Oh, no! Here's another one. Lent is longer than Advent. The Mystery of Easter is an even greater mystery than the Mystery of Christmas, so it must take longer to get ready.

MOVEMENTS

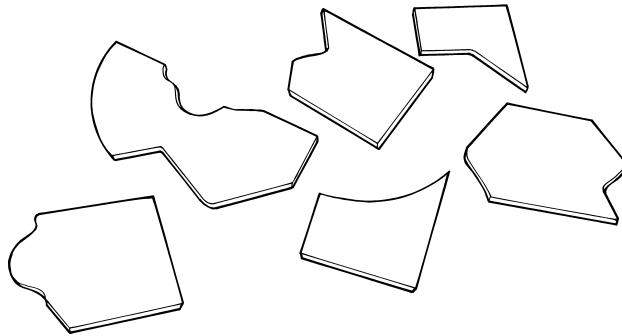
Touch the almost empty bag and “find” yet another piece.

Take out the sixth piece.

WORDS

That must be all there is. No. It is not empty. There must be another week inside.

There *is* another one! The time of Lent is six weeks. Easter is a huge mystery. Let’s see if there is another one.



THE PIECES OF THE CROSS PUZZLE

Look in the bag. It is now empty. Place the bag on the floor and sit back to wonder about it.

Touch one or more of the pieces as you talk about them.

Begin to move the pieces around, but do not yet fit them together. Experiment. Propose alternative constructions. Play.

Finally, assemble the cross.

Turn the pieces over to make a completely white cross.

Show the purple side of a few pieces.

Turn the pieces back to white again.

Lent helps us to get ready. It is a time to know more about the One who is Easter. It is also a time to learn more about who we really are.

The pieces are very purple. The One who is coming is very important, like a king. But purple can feel kind of sad, too. Perhaps what is going to happen is sad.

I wonder what all these make when you put them all together?

Oh, I see. It makes the cross, a serious cross. It is also sad. Jesus grew up to be a man and died on the cross. That *is* sad, but it is also wonderful.

Now look what happens.

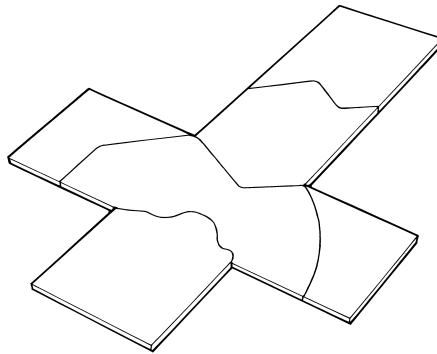
Jesus died on the cross, but somehow he is still with us. That is why Easter is not just sad. It is also wonderful.

Lent is sad...

...Easter is pure celebration.

MOVEMENTS

WORDS



THE ASSEMBLED CROSS (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

Reach inside the purple bag and take hold of the inside. Turn the bag inside out.

Count the white pieces.

Sit back and contemplate the Mystery of Easter for a few moments, and then begin the wondering questions.

➤ Easter turns everything inside out and upside down. The color of getting ready becomes the color of pure celebration. The sad seriousness and happiness join together to make joy.

➤ Look! You can't keep Easter in just one Sunday! It goes on for one, two, three, four, five, six weeks! All the way to Pentecost.

➤ Now I wonder if you have ever seen these colors in the church?

I wonder what happens when you see these colors?

I wonder what part of Lent you like best?

I wonder what part of Lent is the most important?

I wonder who takes care of the colors?

I wonder where these colors are when you don't see them?

I wonder if you see the white at some other time in church?

I wonder how sadness and happiness can make joy?

I wonder where joy comes from?

I wonder how you know when joy is here?

When the wondering is finished, put the pieces of the cross inside the bag, leaving it with the white on the outside. Return the material to the shelf and help the children begin to get out their work.