



January 2006
Members' E newsletter
Volume 4, Issue 1

The Storyteller

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Making Things Complicated

This is the first of a series of three issues of *The Storyteller* about doing Godly Play when the storyteller cannot get on the floor. Jerome W. Berryman is learning a lot about this these days with five surgeries in the last four years. The children are adjusting more quickly than he is.

In this picture you see a storyteller at work during Pentecost. (Look carefully at the altar cloth. It is red and so are the flowers!) The lesson these two children have chosen for their work is The Mystery of Easter (Lesson 1, Volume 4, *The Complete Guide To Godly Play*, pages 27–31). The storyteller is complicating the lesson, so the children cannot put the lesson's pieces together too easily.

Why? Aren't teachers supposed to make things easier? Isn't this a puzzle? Shouldn't the teacher just show the children how to put it together?

In Godly Play sometimes the teacher makes things harder. In this case there are only two more pieces to fit into the purple cross. Now is when the storyteller's art shows its true quality. How can you playfully complicate the last two pieces?

"What in the world could this be," the storyteller asks. "Does this piece belong in another lesson?" Which way does it go?"

The pieces are turned every which way but the right way. The children begin to think the storyteller is demented. Finally, they "finish" the puzzle despite these complications and feel the satisfaction of having had to think hard to make it all come together, but this lesson is still not nearly over. This is no "Easter puzzle," because Easter is not a puzzle that can be put together with no pieces left over. It is a mystery, so the storyteller moves on.

"What does this (The storyteller makes the sign of the cross over the material.) make when it is all together?"

The children say, "a cross."

"I know, I know, but what kind of cross? There are many kinds of crosses. We have a whole

lesson about crosses. This is only one of many. Is it the right one for you? Wait a minute. Is it happy or sad? Is it old or new? Does it have a story to tell?

The storyteller leans over and puts his ear to the wood. "I can't hear it talking. I wonder if there are too many words? I wonder if there are not enough? I wonder what words you can use to tell this story?"

The storyteller looks at the children for a long time. Neither the cross nor the children say anything. The purple cross is then slowly turned over, piece by piece, with astonishment by the storyteller. It slowly becomes white.

"Look. Now it is the color white, the color of pure celebration. I wonder what happened?"

"You turned the pieces over!"

"Oh that. Yes. That's not what I mean. I mean what really makes Easter something to celebrate? I have wondered about that forever. What is really, really going on?"

Again the children don't know what to say, but do adults know any better how to really, really say what the mystery of Easter is?

