

HOW GOD SAVED HIS PEOPLE

UNIT ONE: God Rescued His People

Lesson 1: A Baby in a Basket**CONTENT:**

1. For many years Jacob's family (the Israelites) lived peacefully in Egypt, but then a new king began to ill treat them. He made them slaves and ordered their baby boys killed.
2. A baby boy was born to an Israelite family. They hid him for some time, and then made a 'basket boat' and hid him among the reeds on the river. The older sister, Miriam, watched and prayed from a distance.
3. The king's daughter found the baby and decided to adopt him. Miriam offered to get a nurse for him and then fetched her own mother. The princess called him 'Moses', which means 'taken out'.
4. Saint Joseph also saved baby Jesus from King Herod, who wanted to kill him.
5. God wants to save his children who are in trouble. [CCC2447] He can use us if we are ready. The Missionary Childhood Club asks children to help other helpless children by praying for them daily and sending money for them.



ASSIGNMENT: Read handout at home. Pray the Missionary Childhood prayer daily; send money for the children.

REFERENCES: Exodus 1, 2:1-10; Matthew 2:1-23. CCC 2447-2449, 2634-2636.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Baby doll with a basket; handouts, craft handout, scissors, glue, colour pencils, cotton wool, card paper (about 6x 6 inches), paper punch, cord/ribbon.

NB. The Holy Childhood Association is now renamed Missionary Childhood Association. The goal of MCA is to gather prayers and financial support for children in mission countries, while at the same time animating a missionary spirit and inviting all children to help spread the Good News of Jesus to other children around the world. MCA endeavours to attain its ends through the united efforts of all Catholic children who are taught to recognize that sensitivity to others is an essential dimension of Christianity. MCA's motto of "**Children Helping Children**" continues to guide the program today.

I. STARTER:

[Show the children a baby doll or a picture of a baby. Allow them to pass it around.]

- In this lesson we are going to talk about babies. Do any of you have a baby brother or sister at home? Can babies look after themselves? What do we need to do for them? (*Feed, bathe, clean and dress them; watch them so they don't get hurt.*)
- The baby we are going to talk about was one of Jacob's family. Do you remember how Joseph brought them all to Egypt when there was no food anywhere else?

[Allow the children to tell the story briefly.]

II. DEVELOPMENT:

STORY: Miriam and her Baby Brother

Jacob's family lived happily in Egypt for many years. They were called Israelites, because they had come from Israel. (*Write ISRAELITES on the blackboard and ask the children to say the word a few times*) The Israelites had many children and their children had children and soon there were thousands of them living in Egypt.

But then something bad happened. A new king came to power. He said, "There are so many Israelites living here! They are too powerful. What if they fight against us? We must make them weak!" So he ordered that the Israelites should be caught and made to work for him as slaves. (Slaves are not free. They are forced to work for their masters.. Remember Joseph?)

The poor Israelites had to work hard in the hot sun, making bricks out of mud and building houses for the king. They were treated very badly.

Then the king had another cruel idea. He told his soldiers, "If any of the Israelites have a baby boy, throw him into the river to drown. But let the girls live."

At that time there was an Israelite family living in Egypt: A father, mother, a brother and sister. The boy's name was Aaron and the girl was Miriam.

One day, Miriam was very worried. Her mother had just had a beautiful baby boy. Miriam loved her baby brother very much, but her father had said, "We must not let the baby cry, because Pharaoh's soldiers might get to know and kill him" (The king of Egypt was called Pharaoh)

Miriam and Aaron would take turns to sit near the new baby. Whenever he started crying, they would pick him up and rock him, and cover his mouth. But the little baby's voice started getting louder, and some of the neighbours began to ask, "Is there a baby somewhere around?"

At last they realised that they could not keep the baby any more. Miriam's mother had an idea. She got a basket made of reeds (long grass) and covered it with tar, so that water would not get in. (Remember what Noah put on the ark?) When the tar was dry, she wrapped her little baby and put him into the basket. All of them couldn't help crying as they kissed their baby goodbye. While it was still dark, Miriam and her mother went to the river and put the little basket-boat into the water of the river. There were tall reeds growing in the river, so the basket was hidden. "Miriam, stay here and see what happens!" her mother said.

Miriam sat near the river, pretending to play there. She was very, very sad and afraid. "What is going to happen to my darling brother? Will the soldiers find him? Or will he just die there?" Then she remembered God. She began to pray, "God, please look after my baby brother. Please save him! Don't let the soldiers find him."

Just then, Miriam saw someone in the water, swimming closer and closer to the basket. It was a beautiful lady, with gold earrings and bangles. She looked like a princess! Then Miriam saw many maids standing nearby. "It is the Pharaoh's daughter! I hope the baby doesn't wake up and cry now!" But even as she thought that, she heard, "WAA! WAA!"

The princess stopped swimming and looked around. The basket was rocking and moving. The princess called out to her maids, "Go and see what there is in the reeds over there!" The maids went and came back pulling the basket. Miriam closed her eyes. "God! Can you hear me? My brother!" She opened her eyes and saw the princess with her baby brother in her arms. He had stopped crying and was smiling and patting her cheek. The princess was also smiling and hugging the baby. "What a beautiful baby! I shall keep him as my own son!... But he needs a mother's milk. Where will I find someone who has a baby and can feed my baby too?"

Miriam felt her heart go 'thud- thud- thud' inside her. She thought, "I can help my brother now." She was very scared, but she bravely went up to the princess and said, "Princess, shall I find someone to feed the baby for you?" "Yes! Please do, little girl!"

Miriam ran home as fast as she could and found her mother. "Come soon! Pharaoh's daughter wants to adopt our baby! He will be safe! She wants someone to feed the baby."

The princess asked Miriam's mother, "Please will you take care of this baby for me till he is older? I will give you money and I will see that no one harms him!" Of course, Miriam's mother was very happy to take care of her own son!

As they walked home carrying the baby, Miriam smiled and looked up. "Thank you God for hearing my prayer and saving my brother!"

When the baby was two years old, the princess took him to the palace to live as her own son. She said, "I will call him Moses, because I took him out of the water!" (Moses means 'taken out')

[Give out handouts and read the first section. The children write the word 'MOSES' in the space given and colour the picture. If time permits they could enact the scene at the river. The baby doll and basket would be useful as props.]

NEXT CLASS:

- At our last class we heard about how baby Moses was saved. Who helped to save him? *[Miriam.]*
- How did she do this? *[By keeping him quiet, praying for him, and talking to the princess and bringing her mother.]* (The mother also helped and so did the princess!)

Many many years later there was another cruel king. This king lived in Israel at the time when Jesus was born. His name was Herod. One day some rich men came from a foreign country and asked King Herod, "Is there a new king born here in the palace? We saw a special star in the sky and know that a king has been born."

When Herod heard this he got very worried. He thought, "This child will grow up and kill me and become king in my place. I must kill him now when he is still a baby!" He called all his priests and asked them, "I know that you are waiting for some great king. Where is he to be born?" The priests said, "The holy books say that he will come from Bethlehem."

Herod told the foreigners, "Go look in Bethlehem. When you find this baby, come back and tell me where he lives, so that I can also go and see him and give him gifts."

The wise men followed the star and found baby Jesus, with his mother Mary and Joseph her husband. But they didn't go back to King Herod. They quietly went back to their own country.

Of course this made King Herod even angrier. He couldn't stop thinking about the new king. He called his soldiers and told them, "Go to Bethlehem and kill all the baby boys there."

But God didn't want baby Jesus to die yet. He had a special plan for him. That night Joseph had a dream. An angel told him, "Get up quickly and take the baby and his mother out of here. King Herod is planning to kill him. Go to Egypt. You will be safe there."

Joseph always listened to God. He got up and woke Mary up. Then they quickly packed up their things and were off. After a long journey they reached Egypt and lived there for some years.

III. REFLECTION & PRAYER:

- So now we know two stories about special babies and how they were saved. Who was saved? And who helped to save them? *[Baby Moses-Miriam; Baby Jesus-Joseph]*
- Are there any helpless babies nowadays who need to be saved? *[Yes!]* Some parents don't want to take care of their babies. They leave them lying on the road or near a hospital. If no one rescues them the babies die.
- Do you think God wants you to help to save these babies? What can you do? *[Listen to suggestions]* Like Miriam you can do one very good thing. You can pray for them. God can use your prayers and send some good person to pick up a helpless baby. There are some sisters and other good people who take care of these children till they are grown up.
- The Holy Father (the bishop in charge of the whole Church) has a special club for children who want to help other children. It is called the Missionary Childhood Association. All round the world there are children who join this club. They promise to pray every day for poor helpless children and they send some of their own pocket money for these children. They try to help other children to follow Jesus.
- Would you like to join this club? If you do, you will be helping other children and you will become holy. *[Children read the prayer from their handouts.]*

IV. ACTIVITY:

[Read the rest of the handout together and then make the 'Baby in Basket' as instructed on the craft sheet. The prayer should be taken home and said every morning with the family. It could also be said at subsequent RE classes.]

<p>Home assignment: Read handout at home. Pray the Missionary Childhood prayer daily; send money for the children.</p>
