FINDING JESUS IN THIS LESSON
All the things we are learning about in this lesson are sacred - set apart for the holy purpose of use during the Mass. When we go in the sacred space of a church, see the beautiful vestments, chalice, paten, and tabernacle, it helps prepare our hearts to receive all the wonderful graces Jesus wants to give us during that Mass. Making these beautiful gifts and setting them aside for the liturgy gives honor to Jesus and remind us that He is worthy of the best we can give; both material offerings, and the offering of our whole lives.

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE
[Come to Jesus] “like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:5

Dear Lord Jesus, today we are learning about all the beautiful things in a church that lead us closer to You. Be with us as we learn and help us to remember that the best thing of all is to work on living in a way that will form our souls into something beautiful for you. We thank You for the gift of Your Church, for the gift of our parish, and for the gift of our family. Amen.

PREPARATION
The activity for this lesson is a scale model of all the pieces that are used at Mass. It is likely that this activity is too difficult for your littlest kids to put together on their own, but don’t let that prevent you from doing it. Your younger kids are the most likely to play with the set over and over again, so you or an older sibling should put it all together for them ahead of time. This set is the same scale as your priest paper doll, so if he is already assembled and ready to go you will have the added fun of a having a priest for your Mass!

Lesson
Watch at Mass on Sunday for the things mentioned in this lesson.

If you are having a fancy dinner, you know that a lot of things need to be prepared. What are some of them? (Set the table with a tablecloth, napkins, the best dishes; prepare the food; etc.)

When you prepare for a special dinner, you use your fanciest dishes, lay out your most elegant tablecloth, and dress up in your most beautiful clothes. Each Eucharistic banquet is much more important than even the fanciest meal, and we should be surrounded by the most beautiful
things we can offer. Gold vessels and a beautiful altar are signs that something very important is about to happen. The priest wears beautiful vestments, and we wear our Sunday best, too.

This very important event is the family meal we Catholics share each week—the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass!

When we walk into a church, the first thing we do is reach into the font and make the Sign of the Cross with holy water, which has been blessed by a priest or deacon. By doing this, we bless ourselves and remember that through our Baptism, we became members of the Church and can share fully in the Mass! After that, we enter the nave of the church, which is the area with the pews where the people sit.

Before Mass begins, we can already see many of the things that will be used in the sanctuary, which is the part of the church where the altar is. Because this is where the Mass is celebrated and where Jesus comes to us in the Blessed Sacrament, the sanctuary is raised up or marked off in a way to show that it is a very holy place.

The first thing you probably notice, because it is one of the most important, is the altar. This is where the bread and wine will become the Body and Blood of Christ. The altar is a table made of stone, or sometimes of wood, in the center of the sanctuary. The top of the altar is covered with a white altar cloth, and often the front and sides are decorated with a cloth called an altar frontal in the liturgical color for the day.

Some altars have a relic of a saint inside of them. This comes from the custom in the Early Roman Church of building altars directly above the tombs of saints.
An ambo can be very large and decorated with carvings, with stairs leading up to it, or it can be a simple stand to set the book on. The Scripture readings and Gospel are proclaimed from the ambo.

The book of readings is called the lectionary. There is a different lectionary for each of the three years in the cycle of Mass readings. Sometimes, there is a separate Book of Gospels (Evangelium) that contains just the Gospel readings. This book is often decorated with a fancy cover and is carried in the procession at the beginning of Mass.

Also in the sanctuary is the credence (KREE-dehns) table, which sits off to the side and holds the hosts, wine, chalices, patens, and other things used during Mass. The priest’s chair and chairs for the deacon and altar servers are usually to one side of the sanctuary as well.
In the sanctuary, lit candles are a symbol of the presence of Christ, the “Light of the world.” Candles are lit on either side of the altar to remind us that Christ becomes truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. A candle, called the sanctuary lamp, is always kept lit near the tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament is kept.

From Easter Sunday to Ascension, a very large candle, called the Paschal candle, is kept in the sanctuary and lit during Mass to symbolize Jesus’ glorified presence with the apostles on Earth. The candle has five grains of incense in it, in the shape of a cross, as well as an Alpha and Omega and the year.

When the procession enters the church at the beginning of Mass, many of the people in it are dressed differently than the rest of us. The altar servers wear either albs (long, plain white robes) or cassocks and surplices, which are ankle-length black robes with shorter white garments on top. The priest wears an alb, with a cord called a cincture (SINK-tsher) tied around his waist. He also wears a chasuble, (TSHAZ-yoo-buhl) which is open on both sides and has a hole in the middle for his head. The chasuble is the color of the day (white, green, violet, rose, red, black, or gold), and is often beautifully decorated. His stole, a long, narrow piece of fabric, also in the color for the day, is worn around his neck so that it hangs down on both sides in front. The stole may be worn under or over the chasuble.
If there is a deacon, he also wears an alb, cincture, and stole, although his stole is worn over one shoulder and fastened at the side of his waist. He might also wear a vestment called a *dalmatic*, which is a shorter robe with sleeves in the color of the day.

Several things are carried in the procession. The altar servers might carry a *processional cross*, *candles*, and a *thurible* or *censer*, which is a container on a chain used to burn incense. The lector often carries the Book of Gospels.

At the Offertory, when the gifts are brought up, several items are set out on the altar. First, a square white linen cloth called a *corporal* is laid out on the altar. Then, the *chalice* and *paten* are placed on the corporal. The chalice is a cup, with a stem and usually decorated, that holds the wine that becomes the Precious Blood. The paten holds the hosts that become Jesus’ Body. It can be either a small plate that holds just the priest’s host, or a larger, deeper one that holds hosts for all the people. Both the chalice and the paten are made of precious materials, and are usually at least lined with gold, so that the Blessed Sacrament only touches the gold.

The *Roman Missal*, the book that contains all the instructions and prayers for the Mass, is laid open on the altar for the priest to read the Eucharistic Prayer.
The priest pours wine and water into the chalice from little glass pitchers called *cruets*. He pours the wine into the chalice and then just a little bit of water. This symbolizes our humanity sharing in Christ’s divinity, and also the blood and water that flowed from Jesus’ side. The cruet of water is also used later when the priest washes his hands.

The priest prays, “By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, Who humbled Himself to share in our humanity.”

After Communion, the Hosts are placed in a metal dish with a lid called a *ciborium* (sih-BOHR-ee-uhm), which is placed in the *tabernacle*.

Then the priest uses water and a linen cloth called a *purificator* (PYUR-ih-fih-kay-ter) to purify (wash) the vessels, making sure that all the precious drops and crumbs of the Blessed Sacrament are consumed and that the vessels are clean.
What the Vestments Mean
for older saints

Each of the vestments has a special meaning:

ALB: The alb represents our souls that are washed clean at Baptism. Any baptized Christian may wear the alb.

“Then one of the elders spoke up and said to me, ‘Who are these wearing white robes, and where did they come from?’ I said to him, ‘My lord, you are the one who knows.’ He said to me, ‘These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’” Revelation 7:13-14

CINCTURE: Over the alb, the priest or deacon wears a cord, called a cincture, around his waist. It is usually white, representing the virtue of chastity. If the alb has a waistband, the cincture is not necessary.

STOLE: The stole is a long piece of cloth in the liturgical color of the day. It represents the authority that the priest or deacon received in the sacrament of Holy Orders. A deacon wears the stole over one shoulder and fastened at the waist on the opposite side. A priest wears the stole over his neck, with both ends hanging down in front.

CHASUBLE: The chasuble is worn only by the priest. It is also the liturgical color of the day and is usually decorated. The chasuble symbolizes charity (love), which is the greatest of virtues. (See 1 Corinthians 13:13.) The chasuble is worn on top of all the other vestments to remind us to keep love at the forefront of our lives. Without love, authority and chastity and all the other virtues become meaningless.
3-D Holy Mass Set

Carefully read the directions on the ledger-sized pages for instructions on how to create your Holy Mass Set. Assign each family member a different task, or share the responsibilities of cutting, coloring, gluing or taping, and assembling.

When assembly and construction have been completed, review with your family the name of each vessel and its purpose, and talk about the significance of the altar setting. Your priest paper doll will also work nicely with this Mass set.