

The Play

RACHEL AND MICHAEL'S MIRACLE

A First Communion Story

Feast

First Communion / Easter Season

Characters

Narrator

Michael

Rachel

Michael's Grandmother

Rachel's Grandfather

Jesus

Peter

Props

Several baskets.

Suggestions

This is an example of what can be called a tangent story. It imagines and extrapolates a story for more or less anonymous characters in the gospels. Such tangents are excellent starting points for creating your own stories. Peter's mother-in-law, the centurion's daughter, a servant at the high priest's house, all can inspire little midrashes. The story you create can intersect the gospel at any point—beginning, middle, or end.

The children in this story have a fair amount of lines. If they cannot memorize, simply have them use a script. The characters can mime the various actions—casting a net, kneading bread. Set up Michael and his grandmother on one side of the playing area and Rachel and her grandfather on the other. Jesus can be encountered in the center closer to the congregation who serve as the crowd. An effective trick is to use two sets of four baskets nested together (a total of eight baskets). As the fish and loaves multiply, separate the baskets and pass them into the congregation.

Running Time

15 minutes.

NARRATOR

*We discover
Rachel and
Michael in their
places.*

*Her grandfather
enters carrying
his nets.*

Once upon a time in a village near the sea of Galilee, there lived a boy named Michael and a girl named Rachel. Rachel's grandfather was a fisherman, and more than anything she loved to go down to the blue sea and watch her grandfather get into his boat with the nets. Each day when he returned with his nets full, she would be there waiting. One morning she asked:

RACHEL

Grandfather, may I go with you?

NARRATOR

Her grandfather would say:

GRANDFATHER

Someday. You are not ready yet. You might be frightened by the fish or fall out of the boat!

RACHEL

But when will I be ready?

GRANDFATHER

Someday. We will know when you are ready to go with me.

NARRATOR

*Michael is asleep
at first and
wakes up on cue.
He rushes to his
grandmother who
is nearby.*

And there was Michael. Now Michael's grandmother was a baker. Each morning Michael would wake up to the wonderful smell of bread baking. He would rush into his grandmother's arms and ask:

MICHAEL

Is it time for the bread yet?

NARRATOR

*She mimes
breaking a piece of
bread from a loaf
and giving it to him.*

And his grandmother would give Michael the first piece, a special morsel of bread. Michael knew that his grandmother loved him in a special way, for she always would give him this special bread. One morning, Michael woke up as usual, smelled the bread and asked his grandmother:

MICHAEL

Grandmother, how do you make the bread?

GRANDMOTHER

I could tell you, but to understand fully you must see for yourself. Besides, there is a secret ingredient in my bread. I don't know if you are ready yet to discover this secret.

MICHAEL

But when will I be ready?

GRANDMOTHER

Soon. We will know when you are ready.

NARRATOR

Now it just so happened that Michael and Rachel had the same birthday. They both were going to be seven. On Rachel's birthday her grandfather said to her:

GRANDFATHER
*They travel together
towards the
congregation to
cast the nets.*

Now you are ready to come with me. Come, Rachel, help me with the nets.

NARRATOR

Rachel couldn't believe her ears. She was so happy to be with her grandfather. As they lowered the nets for the first time, her grandfather would say these words:

GRANDFATHER

Blessed are you God of the universe for all the creatures of the sea you have made.

NARRATOR
*They mime the
action of pulling in
the nets.*

They waited and when they pulled up the net, it was empty! As they lowered the nets again, grandfather said,

GRANDFATHER

Blessed are you Lord of the universe for the seas and the rivers and all that dwell within them.

NARRATOR

They waited and when they pulled up the net, it was empty! Now Rachel was very disappointed. Her first time fishing and the net was empty each time.

RACHEL

Grandfather, why do you pray each time? God must not hear your prayers. The net is empty.

GRANDFATHER

Rachel, are you ready to understand the secret? I give thanks to God whether the net is empty or full. If my net is empty, maybe it means someone else's is full and God knows they need it more than we do. Let's try again.

NARRATOR

Rachel didn't really understand, but they threw the net out a third time.

GRANDFATHER

Blessed are you Lord of the universe for you have given me this granddaughter whom I love!

NARRATOR

A false climax here.

The nets are heavier this time.

And again they waited, but this time when they drew up the net it was . . . well, actually there were just a few fish . . . but Rachel was overjoyed.

RACHEL

She takes the fish from the net and places them in a small basket.

Oh, grandfather, look what God has given us.

GRANDFATHER

Yes, Rachel, this is God's gift to us and we are thankful! Now we must return to shore.

NARRATOR

Grandmother wakes Michael.

That very same morning, which was also the day Michael turned seven, Michael was awakened in the middle of the night by his grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER

Michael, are you ready? Come with me and we will make bread together.

NARRATOR

They mime assembling the bread.

Michael was so excited, especially to see what the secret ingredient was. His grandmother prepared the ingredients: flour, water, salt and sugar and then yeast. He helped her mix the ingredients and his hands kneaded the dough.

GRANDMOTHER

They sit in a rocking chair if one is available.

Now we must wait, Michael.

MICHAEL

Wait for what? Isn't the bread ready yet?

GRANDMOTHER

Wait, Michael. Wait . . . and pray. Blessed are you Lord of the universe, for through your goodness we have this bread to feed us, to satisfy our hunger. And blessed are you, my God, for my grandson, Michael, whom I love.

NARRATOR

And so they waited, and his grandmother told Michael stories of how she had first learned from her mother how to make bread. Finally, the bread was ready for baking. Michael could not believe what he saw . . . the dough had increased in size.

MICHAEL

*They return to
the bread.*

Is that the secret ingredient, grandmother? Is it yeast?

GRANDMOTHER

*Michael picks up a
small basket for the
bread.*

The yeast is very special, but it is not the secret ingredient. When the bread comes from the oven, I want you to take some loaves to the market. Whatever is left you can have for yourself.

NARRATOR

*They walk toward
the center.*

Later that day, as Rachel and her grandfather were returning home with their few fish, they saw something remarkable. There in a large open space were thousands of people sitting and listening to someone speaking.

RACHEL

Grandfather, who are they listening to?

NARRATOR

*Michael walks
toward them so that
all arrive together
nearly in the midst
of the congregation.*

At that very moment, they met Michael who was returning from the market carrying the few loaves that were left for himself. Rachel asked:

RACHEL

Hi, Michael. Do you know whom everyone is listening to?

MICHAEL

I heard his name is Jesus. He's from Nazareth, but that's all I know.

GRANDFATHER

Yes, Jesus, from Nazareth, the rabbi, the teacher. I have heard he speaks like no one ever has, even more boldly than our prophets. Let's get closer to see if we can hear him.

NARRATOR

Jesus enters from the back of the congregation, walking forward as he speaks.

As they drew closer, they heard the words.

JESUS

Unless you become like a little child, you cannot enter the reign of God.

NARRATOR

Jesus then came straight to Michael and Rachel.

JESUS

Rachel and Michael, do you see all these people here? They are hungry, but there is nothing here to eat for so many. All that is here is what you have. Will you share it with them?

RACHEL

Oh, Rabbi, these are special fish. I caught them with my grandfather. How could I give away what is so special to me?

MICHAEL

Rabbi, this is special bread. I made it today with my grandmother. How can I give away what is so special to me?

NARRATOR

At that very moment, the children looked into Jesus' eyes, and saw a beautiful light and a wonderful smile come across his face. All of a sudden Rachel remembered her grandfather's words about the secret. "If our net is empty, another's is full" . . . and she was ready to give Jesus what was so special to her . . . these few fish, this sign of her grandfather's love for her. And Michael, too, remembered his grandmother's words about the secret ingredient in the bread. He realized it was the love with which she made it for him each day.

RACHEL
*They hand the
baskets to Jesus*

Here, Jesus, take this and eat.

MICHAEL

This is given for you.

NARRATOR
*Jesus raises the
baskets.*

Jesus took Michael's few loaves and the few fish that Rachel had caught with her grandfather. And raising his eyes to heaven, he said words like they had heard from the lips of their grandparents.

JESUS

Blessed are you, Abba, Father, for the gifts of the earth and these children.

NARRATOR
*If you have used
nested baskets,
separate them here.
It is important to
avoid this looking
like the collection.*

Rachel and Michael could not believe what happened next. As they looked in the baskets they were carrying, there were not few but many. What was almost empty was now full to overflowing. There was more than enough. There was an abundance. It was a feast, a banquet. Everyone who was hungry was fed, thousands fed by Michael's gift of a few loaves and Rachel's gift of a few fish.

JESUS

Rachel and Michael, today you have learned the secret of the Reign of God. Thank you for sharing and giving what was so special to you.

NARRATOR

And Rachel and Michael, on their seventh birthday, were ready . . . ready to receive the gift of love and give that love in return.

