

Notes to parents:

- How does one describe the Holy Spirit to a young child? One way is to turn to the Hebrew word for spirit, *ruah*, which also means 'breath'. The Spirit is like the breath of God. We can't see the Spirit but we can feel the presence and see the effects of the Spirit at work.*
- One of the nice things about this prayer activity is that it provides a simple way for connecting Catholic children with their Jewish roots, even teaching them a Hebrew word. [Note: although Jesus would have spoken Aramaic in everyday life, Hebrew has always been the language of the synagogue.] This is a connection that the Church encourages us to make (spelt out in the Vatican II document on inter-religious dialogue: *Nostra Aetate*, 4).
- This prayer activity might be useful for Confirmation preparation for young children.
- It is part one of a two part teaching on the Spirit. The next part takes up the role of the Spirit in the Pentecost story.

* Note, as a point of interest: As part of the blessing of the oils in the Chrism Mass, the bishop breathes upon the oils.



Holy Spirit

'And God's spirit hovered over the water...' Genesis 1:

Gather

Try to settle your child/ren. Play some quiet music. Darken the room and light a large candle flame. Lower your voice and aim for a sense of mystery and anticipation. When pronouncing the word 'ruah' aim for a quiet but dramatic effect, gently accentuating the 'ah' sound at the end as if exhaling. Aim for a meditative style, with the repeated word 'Ruah' helping to create the rhythm.

Teach & Pray

"When Jesus was a little boy, he sometimes prayed in a language called Hebrew. And when he prayed to God in Hebrew he used a special name for God's spirit: *Ruah*. Can you say that? (*Invite your child to repeat the word.*)

"Now, if you put your fingers in front of your mouth like this, you can feel your breath as you say *ruah*....

(Model and do this with your child.)

"The Spirit is like God's breath. And when God created the world, God breathed into the darkness... *ruah* and the world came to life!

"When you were born, God breathed life into you! (*Ruah*...) And you became a son/daughter, and a part of this family.

"And when you were baptised, God breathed a special new life into you, the life of Jesus (*Ruah*...) and you became a part of the family of the Church.

"And when you are confirmed, God will breathe even more life into you (*Ruah*...) to remind you how special you are to God, and how you can be like Jesus and what a difference you make in our world....like Jesus did.

"What a great God to love us so much, and who sends us the spirit (*Ruah*) to fill us with so much life!

Let's think of Jesus praying in Hebrew...

And with him, let's breathe our special Hebrew word for 'spirit' one more time. *Ruah!*