Papa Panov's Special Christmas
Sunday Service Children's Story
Second Sunday of Advent

Materials:

- Online video clip, "The Mental Body"

Preparations:

- Because online videos often take a few minutes to download, play the related video ***before*** the story begins to ensure that it will be ready when needed.
- Prepare any necessary materials.
- Invite children up to steps of altar.
- Reader of story sits in a chair with children sitting on floor in front of her.
- Include children's story, even if there are no children in your congregation, to welcome families who may come to the service.
- You can add your own creativity to the stories. You may feel comfortable using puppets, props or presenting them just as they are written.
- Feel free to adjust the content to fit your time frame. However, for the spiritual development of the child, we encourage keeping as much of the Ascended Master's Teachings as possible.

Good morning and welcome. Today we celebrate the second week of advent. In many churches people celebrate the virtue of love during this week. Our story today focuses on love.

The story also relates to what we have learned about the mental body of our four lower bodies. We know that the mental body is the aspect of God's consciousness where we can develop ideas, plan and

learn new concepts. It is the vehicle to lead us to the mind of the God and the mind of Christ and Buddha.

However, sometimes we allow our mental bodies to block our connection to our Christ self. We can do this by overthinking about a situation rather than accepting what our heart tells us is true. Can you think of a time that you might have overthought a problem? ***(Allow children to answer.) (Possible answers: children over-think test questions in school, rather than going with their first instinct, or they can overthink a situation when they think a friend might have wronged them.)***

Let's hear our Guru Ma give a teaching on the mental body***. (Play online video clip.)***

In this story Papa Panov is a very loving man who tended to overthink and to doubt his relationship with Jesus. "Papa Panov's Special Christmas" is a story written by Leo Tolstoy back in the 1800's.

Papa Panov's Special Christmas

It was Christmas Eve and although it was still afternoon, lights had begun to appear in the shops and houses of the little Russian village, for the short winter day was nearly over. Excited children scurried indoors and now only muffled sounds of chatter and laughter escaped from closed shutters.

Old Papa Panov, the village shoemaker, stepped outside his shop to take one last look around. The sounds of happiness, the bright lights and the faint, but delicious smells of Christmas

cooking reminded him of past Christmas times when his wife had still been alive and his own children little. Now they had gone. His usually cheerful face, with the little laughter wrinkles behind the round steel spectacles, looked sad now. But he went back indoors with a firm step, put up the shutters and set a pot of coffee to heat on the charcoal stove. Then, with a sigh, he settled in his big armchair.

Papa Panov did not often read, but tonight he pulled down the big old family Bible and, slowly tracing the lines with one forefinger, he read again the Christmas story. He read how Mary and Joseph, tired by their journey to Bethlehem, found no room for them at the inn, so that Mary's little baby was born in the cowshed.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" exclaimed Papa Panov. "If only they had come here! I would have given them my bed and I could have covered the baby with my patchwork quilt to keep him warm."

He read on about the wise men who had come to see the baby Jesus, bringing him splendid gifts. Papa Panov's face fell. "I have no gift that I could give him," he thought sadly. ***(Have you ever thought about a gift you could give to Jesus? Allow for answers.)***

Then his face brightened. He put down the Bible, got up and stretched his long arms to the shelf high up in his little room. He took down a small, dusty box and opened it. Inside was a perfect pair of tiny leather shoes. Papa Panov smiled with satisfaction. Yes, they were as good as he had remembered- the best shoes he had ever made. "I should give him those," he decided, as he gently put

them away and sat down again.

He was feeling tired now, and the further he read the sleepier he became. The print began to dance before his eyes so that he closed them, just for a minute. In no time at all Papa Panov was fast asleep.

And as he slept he dreamed. He dreamed that someone was in his room and he knew at once, as one does in dreams, who the person was. It was Jesus.

"You have been wishing that you could see me, Papa Panov," Jesus said kindly. "Then look for me tomorrow. It will be Christmas Day and I will visit you. But look carefully, for I shall not tell you who I am."

When at last Papa Panov awoke, the bells were ringing out and a thin light was filtering through the shutters. "Bless my soul!" said Papa Panov. "It's Christmas Day!"

He stood up and stretched himself for he was rather stiff. Then his face filled with happiness as he remembered his dream. This would be a very special Christmas after all, for Jesus was coming to visit him. How would he look? Would he be a little baby, as at that first Christmas? Would he be a grown man, a carpenter, or the great King that he is, God's Son? Papa Panov must watch carefully the whole day through, so that he would recognize him however he came.

Papa Panov put on a special pot of coffee for his Christmas breakfast, took down the shutters and looked out of the window. The street was deserted, no one was stirring yet, no one except the

road sweeper. The man looked as miserable and dirty as ever, and well he might! Whoever wanted to work on Christmas Day? And in the raw cold and bitter freezing mist of such a morning?

Papa Panov opened the shop door, letting in a thin stream of cold air. "Come in!" he shouted across the street cheerily. "Come in and have some hot coffee to keep out the cold!"

The sweeper looked up, scarcely able to believe his ears. He was only too glad to put down his broom and come into the warm room. His old clothes steamed gently in the heat of the stove and he clasped both red hands round the comforting warm mug as he drank.

Papa Panov watched him with satisfaction, but every now and then his eyes strayed to the window. It would never do to miss his special visitor.

"Expecting someone?" the sweeper asked at last. So Papa Panov told him about his dream.

"Well, I hope he comes," the sweeper said. "You've given me a bit of Christmas cheer I never expected to have. I'd say you deserve to have your dream come true." And the sweeper actually smiled.

When he had gone, Papa Panov put on cabbage soup for his dinner, then went to the door again, scanning the street. He saw no one. But he was mistaken. Someone was coming.

The girl walked so slowly and quietly, that it was a while before he noticed her. She looked very tired and she was carrying something. As she drew nearer he could see that it was a baby,

wrapped in a thin shawl. There was such sadness in her face and in the pinched little face of the baby, that Papa Panov's heart went out to them.

"Won't you come in," he called, stepping outside to meet them. "You both need a warm by the fire and a rest."

The young mother let him shepherd her indoors and to the comfort of the armchair. She gave a big sigh of relief.

"I'll warm some milk for the baby," Papa Panov said. "I've had children of my own. I can feed her for you." He took the milk from the stove and carefully fed the baby from a spoon, warming her tiny feet by the stove at the same time.

"She needs shoes," the cobbler said.

But the girl replied, "I can't afford shoes, I've got no husband to bring home money. I'm on my way to the next village to get work."

A sudden thought flashed through Papa Panov's mind. He remembered the little shoes he had looked at last night. But he had been keeping those for Jesus. He looked again at the cold little feet and made up his mind.

"Try these on her," he said, handing the baby and the shoes to the mother. The beautiful little shoes were a perfect fit. The girl smiled happily and the baby gurgled with pleasure.

"You have been so kind to us," the girl said, when she got up with her baby to go. "May all your Christmas wishes come true!"

But Papa Panov was beginning to wonder if his very special

Christmas wish would come true. Perhaps he had missed his visitor? He looked anxiously up and down the street. There were plenty of people about but they were all faces that he recognized. There were neighbors going to call on their families. They nodded and smiled and wished him Happy Christmas! There were beggars- and Papa Panov hurried indoors to fetch them hot soup and a generous hunk of bread, hurrying out again, so he wouldn't miss the "Important Stranger".

All too soon the winter dusk fell. When Papa Panov next went to the door and strained his eyes, he could no longer make out the passers-by. Most were home and indoors by now anyway. He walked slowly back into his room at last, put up the shutters, and sat down wearily in his armchair. So it had been just a dream after all. Jesus had not come. Then, all at once he knew that he was no longer alone in the room.

This was not dream for he was wide-awake. At first he seemed to see before his eyes the long stream of people who had come to him that day. He saw again the old road sweeper, the young mother and her baby and the beggars he had fed. As they passed, each whispered, "Didn't you see me, Papa Panov?"

"Who are you?" he called out to each one, bewildered.

Then another voice answered him. It was the voice from his dream- the voice of Jesus.

"I was hungry and you fed me," Jesus said. "I was naked and you clothed me. I was cold and you warmed me. I came to you today in everyone of those you helped and welcomed."

Then all was quiet and still. Only the sound of the big clock ticking could be heard. A great peace and happiness seemed to fill the room, overflowing Papa Panov's heart until he wanted to burst out singing and laughing and dancing with joy.

"So he did come after all!" was all that he said.

CONCLUSION:

So how did Jesus come to Papa Panov? ***(Allow children to answer.)*** Yes, he came in all the people that Papa Panov served. We have been told to honor the Christ in all we know and meet.
And how did Papa Panov let his mental body get in the way of recognizing the Christ? ***(Allow children to answer.)*** Yes, he was "thinking" that Jesus had to come in one of images that Papa Panov was familiar with. And he doubted that Jesus would really come.

Let's remember during this second week of advent to find ways to honor the Christ in all the people we meet. We can do this by seeing something good in each person and maybe we can find ways to help others. Can you do this?

Thank you for participating in our children's story and have a wonderful day.