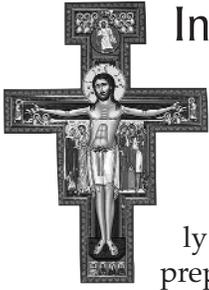


Angelo Stagnaro's
Magic Tricks for
Catholic Catechetical
Instructors



Introduction

The following classical magic tricks have undergone a further sleight of hand: a connection between the effects of the magic has been forged with some important lessons of faith. These tricks are intended for catechists to supplement and enliven class periods, further participation, or otherwise have some fun.

The tricks have been classified on a scale from easy (1 star) to challenging (3 stars), typically based not only on the skills needed to perform the trick but also on a combination of skills, preparation, and materials needed. However, this should not discourage you from attempting some of the three-starred tricks. They are among the most enjoyable and rewarding.

Each trick is organized under a lesson of faith title. However, you can freely adapt any of the tricks to fit several other religious-themed lessons. The individual sections of each trick include the following:

The **effect** describes the final illusion or trick. The special materials needed for the trick are listed under **equipment needed**. The explanation under **method** explains how to do the trick. **Patter**, another word for “chatter,” offers some words for connecting the illusion with a faith lesson.

About the Author

Angelo Stagnaro is the author of the critically acclaimed *Conspiracy, Something from Nothing* and *The Other Side*, the first three titles in his six-volume Psi-Book Series. He has also written *The Erasmus Books*, *Catechism Magic*, numerous articles in Catholic and secular journals, and the soon-to-be-released “Psi-Wars” Strategy Game. Angelo edits “Smoke & Mirrors,” the online magazine for professional illusionists and mentalists. He graduated from SUNY-Albany and is a professional stage magician and mentalist. He holds degrees in anthropology and philosophy and lives in New York City.

For more information on the magic tricks contained in this file or other tricks related to catechesis, visit Angelo through his website at www.KismetMagic.com.

I.

Lesson Themes

Original sin, Man's fall, Redemption, Incarnation

Rating:

★★ (2 stars)

Effect:

A volunteer is asked to come forward. Two large silks are tied together and placed in a small box. The ends of the silk remain out of the box. The catechist stands to one side of the box while the volunteer holds the other end. At the count of three, the catechist and the volunteer pull on the silk. The two silks are now separated by a third silk.

Equipment Needed:

two red silks, two white silks, permanent marker, sewing machine, a cigar box

Method:

Cut out two identical squares of thin white cloth (18" square) and hem them. To one of these squares, add a small funnel-shaped pocket as depicted in the diagram below. Next, cut out two identical squares from red fabric and hem them. Place one white square aside as it won't be needed for now.

Before performing this effect, tie the two white squares with one of the red squares at their closest corners. Next, stuff the center red square into the funnel-shaped pocket. When this is done, the two white-colored squares will look as if they are tied together.

Patter:

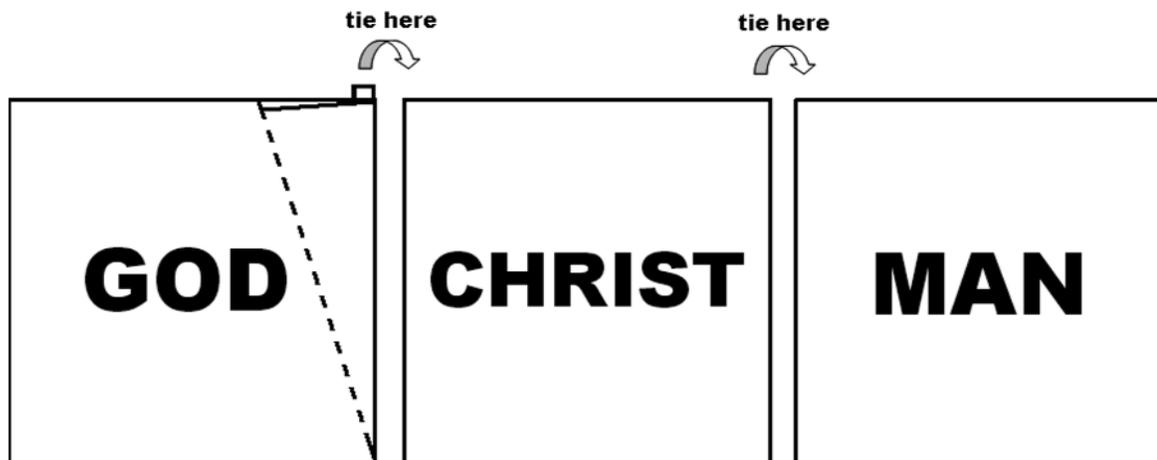
"Man's fall from grace is what separated us from God. Let's use this silk to represent God and this one to represent us. God still loved us even despite our sinfulness. He's always loved us, but because of original sin, we needed to repay a debt to him. This debt was so great that no person in the whole world could repay it."

Have the volunteer hold one end of the silk.

"Now, when I say 'Pull!' I want you to pull hard.

Quickly pull your end and the silk representing Christ will be pulled out of its hidden space.

"... and that is why God sent his only son. It was his sacrifice that returned us to God's grace."



2.

LESSON THEMES:

Trinity, Belief in One God

Rating:

★ (1 star)

Effect:

A rope is shown to have three knots on it. The catechist runs his hand along it and seemingly pulls off the knots in his hand. Both the rope and the knots may be examined.

Equipment Needed:

A 3'6" length of rope, scissors

Method:

Prepare a rope by forming three slipknots spaced equidistant along it. Looping a bit of rope and then pulling a small bit of the same rope partially through that newly formed loop creates a slipknot. You should tighten these fake knots as much as possible. Remember that the slightest bit of pressure on them will dislodge them.

Also, create three fake knots. To do so, simply tie a knot in a rope and cut it off the rope as closely as possible. Hide these three knots in your right palm.

As you run your hand across the rope, the slipknots will dissolve. When you get to the end of the rope, open your hand to reveal the three fake knots. Toss them out to the audience.

Patter:

"God is in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the Holy Trinity. But though we describe God as being a Trinity, he is One. Even though we see three knots on this rope to represent the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we believe in one God."

3.

LESSON THEMES:

Jesus Christ, Resurrection, Faith

Rating:

★★ (2 stars)

Effect:

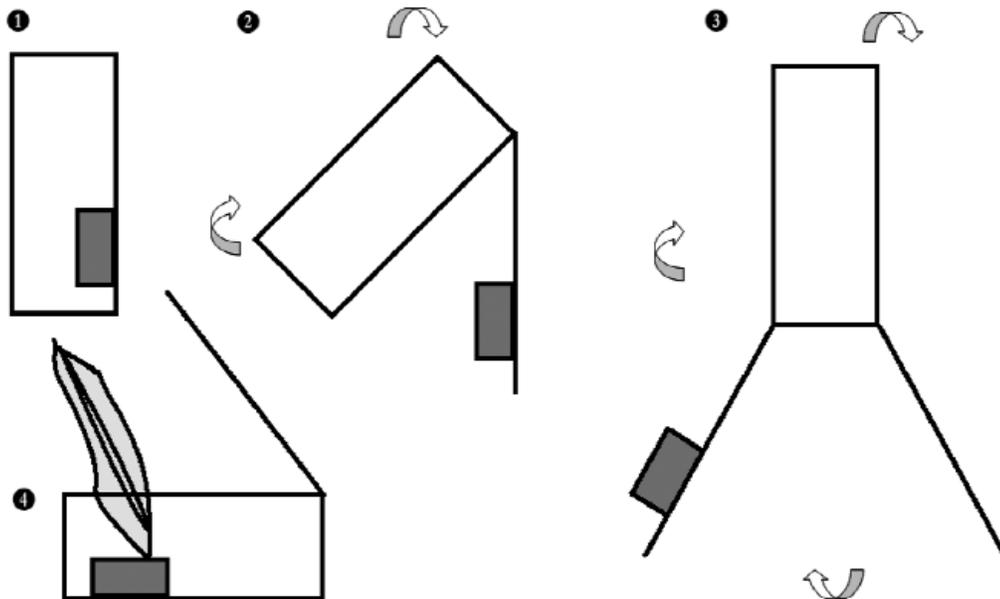
A small box is shown to be completely empty. It is closed, and immediately, silks and a crucifix are pulled out of the erstwhile empty box.

Equipment Needed:

a cigar box, box-cutter, smaller cardboard box, silks, a crucifix, duct tape

Method:

Procure a cigar box. Carefully cut out the bottom so that it swings out in the same direction as the top lid. Affix it in place with duct tape. Decorate the box appropriately. Glue a smaller box to the top lid in the position described in the diagram below. Fill this box with silks and a crucifix.



Patter:

"There are those in the modern world that don't believe in Jesus and the Resurrection. They come to see our claims and those of the Apostles of having experienced the Risen Lord as being empty . . . just like this box. They say, 'Show me the proof!' and 'Where is this God of yours?' We, who are believers, know that he speaks to us in the quiet of our hearts. He guides us, and we can feel his love. St Thomas the Apostle couldn't or wouldn't believe his friends when they told him that they had seen Christ resurrected from the dead. Finally he believed. Christ saw his disbelief and offered proof. He said, 'touch my wounds so that you might believe.' As you see, confusion and doubt in the Lord is greeted with love and compassion. If you have doubts, ask God to give you the answers you seek. Touch him in your mind and heart and you will find many treasures. And when you do, you will come to understand the great sacrifice that he made for you and me."

4.

LESSON THEMES:

Incarnation, Creation, Free Will

Rating:

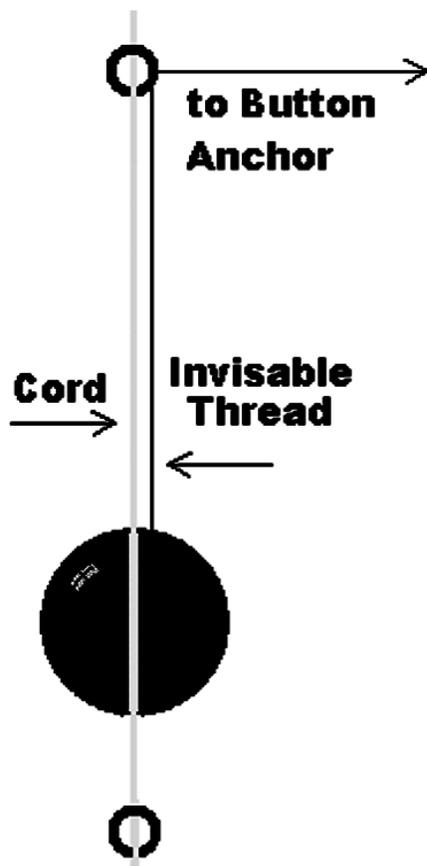
★★★ (3 stars)

Effect:

A wooden ball strung on a cord stops, moves up and down, and stops on command as it travels along the string.

Equipment Needed:

A wooden ball, an electric drill, a 2' length of cord, a length of invisible thread, two metal rings



Method:

Procure a large bead or drill a hole through a large, colorful wooden or plastic ball. You could also use a handball. You will need to experiment with diameter of the holes, the diameter and smoothness of the cord, and the weight and density of the ball you've selected. Glue one end of the invisible thread to the ball and anchor the other end of the thread to a shirt or jacket button. Simply thread the cord through the hole and hold the ends of the cord vertically in front of you. To engage the ball and make it rise and fall at your command, simply straighten your arms or bend your elbows while rubbing your arms closer to your chest.

String the rings on the cord along with the invisible thread. The rings are meant to allow the thread to move unencumbered. They also help to stabilize the entire assemblage.

Patter:

"God always was and always is. God is begotten not made. And with free will came the possibility for evil. That means that God knew and accepted us as free beings even before he created the universe. And yet he works to call us to come back to him when we sin. What does it mean to be obedient to God? It means to not only follow his law but also to go further and to give over ourselves and our wills to the Lord of Creation. Just like this ball, our will must follow God's will."

5.

LESSON THEMES:

Trinity, The Holy Spirit

Rating:

★★ (2 stars)

Effect:

The catechist shows three short pieces of rope. A volunteer places these ropes into a cloth bag. The catechist immediately takes the rope out of the bag and shows the audience that they were magically tied together. He rolls the rope up and hands it out for examination. The volunteer opens the rope to find that the knots have disappeared and that the rope is now one long, continuous piece.

Equipment Needed:

A "Change Bag" as described below, one three-foot piece of rope, three one-foot pieces of rope

Method:

This is a common piece of magic equipment that is easy to make and extremely useful. Take three pieces of fabric, 10" x 10", preferably plaid or black, and sew them together to make a double pocket. Plaid is frequently used for this device because it best hides any bulge in the bag. Experiment with different types of fabric, colors, and patterns to find which works best for you.

Prepare a three-foot rope by tying two small pieces of rope to form little knots. Space these two knots out



at the one-foot and two-foot mark as shown in the diagram above.



Hide this prepared rope in one of the pockets of the double-walled Change Bag. To begin the performance, ask a volunteer to place her hand into the bag's empty pocket. Avoid allowing her to touch the secret pocket. Have her place the three cut ropes into the other pocket. Once she has done this, explain that you actually wanted a small bit of the rope to hang out of the bag. Place your hand into the other pocket and pull out the prepared rope a few inches.

After explaining the mystery of the Trinity, ask the volunteer to pull the rope out completely. She will note that the rope is now tied end-to-end. Take the rope from her and as you speak about the Trinity, roll the rope around your hand. As you do so, you will note that the knots that have been tied on to the rope will be easy to pull off. Do not make a great show of this. Instead, simply look at your audience and disregard the fact that the knots are coming off your hand. As you hand the now rolled up rope to your volunteer, pocket the two knots in your hand. When she opens it, she will see that the three tied ropes have now transformed into a single, long piece of rope.

Patter:

“I have three ropes here. They represent the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: three persons in one God. If I tie them together, end to end, three ropes become one rope. But this is not the real Trinity because you can see the individual parts. Would you please put this combined rope into the bag? Oh! Not all the way. I want one end of it to stick out so that you can keep an eye on it at all times.

“Even though we sometimes speak about the Creator, the Savior, and the Advocate as if they were separate, they aren't. At all times and in all places, the Trinity is always present to us. Here, I'll show you. Would you please pull on this rope very slowly? As you see, three ropes are no longer separate but unified just as God in three persons is one.”

6.

LESSON THEMES:

Mystery of the Church, Inspiration, The Cross, Magisterium

Rating:

★ (1 star)

Effect:

Four volunteers are asked to mentally select any graphic image in a series of sixteen and then to make several completely free choices in order to obscure the location of their selected images. They are then asked to concentrate on the symbol they have randomly landed upon. The catechist then reveals that symbol.

Equipment Needed:

Access to a photocopier, access to a laminator

Method:

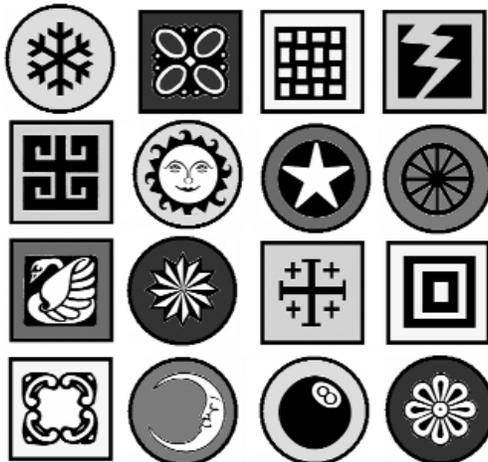
Place a photocopy of the **cross** icon in a sealed envelope and hand it to the volunteer before starting the effect. Photocopy the entire chart of icons onto an A4 sheet of paper and laminate it. This effect is a version of the classic “Knight's Tour” effect. No matter where the volunteer begins his journey around the board, he will always land on the **cross**. Use the following patten when performing this effect.

Patter:

“What does it mean when we talk about the mystery of the Church? The Church lives and functions under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as determined by the Magisterium, Church leaders. What would it be like to concretely see how we, as Church, can be directed to the same goal? Let's try this experiment.

1. Choose any of the **square** images.
2. Now move **LEFT** or **RIGHT** to the nearest **circle**.
3. Now move **UP** or **DOWN** to the nearest **square**.
4. Now move **DIAGONALLY** to the nearest **circle**.
5. Now move **RIGHT** or **DOWN** to the nearest **square**.

“Now, everyone concentrate on the symbol you landed on. Think about the shape. Think about how you were guided to it. You are all thinking about the cross. That's the shape you landed on.”



7.

LESSON THEMES:

The Church, Apostolic Succession, Church hierarchy, Peter and the Apostles, Sacraments, Holy Spirit

Rating:

★ (1 star)

Effect:

The catechist places seven large paperclips into a cup. He turns the cup over and all of the paperclips are now linked.

Equipment Needed:

Fourteen large paperclips, a Styrofoam cup, a strong magnet.

Method:

Glue a strong magnet to the bottom of a Styrofoam cup. Prepare a chain of seven large paperclips and hide them in the palm of your hand that holds the cup. During your performance, openly drop the seven large paper clips into the cup. Make sure they engage the magnet. When you turn the cup over to pour out the paperclips, the magnet will grab hold of the individual clips. At the same moment, release your hold of the paperclip chain in your palm. This will give the illusion that the paperclips have fallen out of the cup have linked together.

Patter:

"Does anyone know the meaning of 'Apostolic Succession?' When you study the history of the Church, you hear that phrase a lot. It means that we modern Christians are connected through time all the way back to Jesus. Before Jesus died, he commissioned his Apostles to spread God's word to all the people of the world. Peter was the head of the Apostles, and he became the first pope. After Peter came a long line of popes and bishops, all of them commissioned in the chain begun by Peter. Those popes and bishops commissioned other popes and bishops all the way until our present pope.

"Imagine that these paperclips are individual Christians. This one is from 2,000 years ago. This one is from 1,000 years ago. This one is from 500 years ago. This one is from 100 years ago. This one is from today.

"The Church is like a big chain connecting you and me with all of the Christians that have ever lived all the way back to the Apostles and to Jesus himself. When you receive the Holy Spirit during the sacrament of Confirmation or when you receive forgiveness during the sacrament of Penance or share in the Eucharist, you are connected with Christ and all of our ancestors of faith. Just like these linked chains."

8.

LESSON THEMES:

The Church is one, Christ's Mystical Body

Rating:

★ (1 star)

Effect:

A volunteer is led through several mathematical calculations and is asked to concentrate on his final result. The catechist then reveals the volunteer's thoughts.

Equipment Needed:

Paper and pens for all participants, a calculator if necessary

Method:

This is a fun one that tries to get across the idea that we are all the Church. Simply follow the instructions listed below and everyone will naturally wind up at the same number: **4**.

Patter:

"There is only one Church, instituted by Christ. Even those people who have for historical or personal reasons placed themselves outside of the Church are still a part of Christ's Mystical Body.

"Let's have an experiment. Let's see what it would be like if we all could have the same idea in mind. Let's see what it would be like if we were really united.

1. Think of any number
2. Double it
3. Add 10
4. Divide by 2
5. Add 5
6. Subtract original number
7. Subtract 6

9.

LESSON THEMES:

Communion of Saints, Forgiveness of Sins, Eternal Life, The Sacrament of Penance

Rating:

★★ (2 stars)

Effect:

A silk is inspected and handed back to the catechist. Using a pair of scissors, he cuts a hole in the swatch of the silk. The silk is then handed out for inspection once again, but no sign of the damage can be found in the piece that is whole.

Equipment Needed:

A silk, a small swatch of cloth exactly matching the silk you are using, a pair of scissors

Method:

Palm the extra swatch of cloth in your right hand before starting the performance. Have a volunteer inspect the silk. Take it back from her and pull it through the hole made in your fist allowing its center to poke upwards through your fist. Before actually pushing the center of the silk through your fist, push the extra swatch of cloth through instead. Pick up the scissors and cut the very tip off. Make a second cut about halfway down the swatch peak. Pretend to make the third cut but, instead, allow the remainder of the swatch fall to the table. Pick up the pieces that you've cut off and place them under the silk. While your hand is thus hidden, push the pieces into your sleeve or under your watchband. This will let you end clean; you will only have the unmarred cloth in your hand. Ball up the silk and have your volunteer blow across your closed hand. At that, open your hand and reveal the intact silk.

Patter:

"Reconciliation is a sacrament of healing. How do you think we need to be healed? Do you receive the sacrament when we have a cold or a bruise? Of course that's not the kind of healing that we need. But it's a similar feeling. When you are sick, how do you feel? Now, when you've done something wrong, how do you feel? It seems a little the same. Imagine this silk is us and the sins that we commit are like the damage that you see done to this silk. God's love and forgiveness can heal us just like this silk."

10.

LESSON THEMES:

Papacy, Saint Peter, Kingdom of Heaven, Forgiveness of Sins

Rating:

★★ (2 stars)

Effect:

An old-fashioned key is displayed and placed across the catechist's palm. Without moving his hand, the key mysteriously starts to tremble and then turns of its own accord.

Equipment Needed:

An old-fashioned key approximately 4-inches long

Method:

This is an extremely easy magic effect to perform. The only difficulty is finding a suitable key. You will probably have to go through quite a few until you find a perfectly balanced key. Most established hardware stores have such keys. The longer the shank, the better the effect. A heavier key will function better than a lighter one. If necessary, a gimmicked key can be found at most magic stores that functions as described above.

Lay the key across your left palm making sure that the key's handle is off the palm so that its turning is unobstructed. Carefully and imperceptibly move your little finger downward. The key will turn over. The effect is quite startling and inexplicable.

Patter:

"Simon correctly identified Jesus as the 'Messiah, the Son of the living God. One way that Jesus rewarded him was to change his name to Peter. Peter's commissioning was so important that Christ gave him 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven; what you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and what you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.' The 'Power of the Keys' refers to the function of the Church and her representatives to forgive sins in Christ's name. Has anyone ever given you the keys to their house or car? If they did, they must have trusted you a great deal. It's an awesome responsibility. It's very powerful because keys are very powerful. Let me show you how powerful keys can be."

II.

LESSON THEMES:

Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism, Original Sin, Redemption

Rating:

★★ (2 stars)

Effect:

A black silk is examined and placed into a bag. Immediately, a white silk is withdrawn from the same bag. The bag is shown to be empty.

Equipment Needed:

A "Change Bag" (described in Magic Trick No. 5), a piece of black silk, a piece of white silk

Method:

Load the white silk or cloth into one of the pockets of the Change Bag. When performing, show the empty pocket to be empty. Have the volunteer place the black silk into that pocket. Immediately, pull a small corner of the silk out so that it protrudes from the bag slightly. After you repeat the patter listed below, push that corner back into the bag while simultaneously pulling out the white silk. Again, have the other empty pocket examined.

Patter:

"Did you ever try to be very, very good? Maybe your mom or dad told you that you couldn't expect any Christmas presents unless you improved your behavior. Having that threat hanging over your head, you realized that you had best change your behavior immediately or you could kiss your presents good-bye.

"How long did your good behavior last? Probably not indefinitely. No one can be perfectly good. It's impossible. Why? It's because humans are sinful. That's why Jesus Christ had to come to save us. It is only through Baptism, our initiation into the Church, and our faith in him that we are saved. Accepting God's will in our lives, receiving Baptism and the other sacraments, and committing our lives to God cleans us from original sin and helps to orient us toward God."

12.

LESSON THEMES:

Gifts of the Holy Spirit, The Sacrament of Confirmation

Rating:

★★★ (3 stars)

Effect:

The catechist gives a volunteer a free choice of cards. A selected card is shuffled into a deck and the deck is placed into a clear drinking glass on the table before her. Mysteriously her selected card rises from the glass. The card is picked up and handed out for examination.

Equipment Needed:

Black thread, a deck of cards, a drinking glass wide enough to accommodate a deck of cards, a dab of Blue Tac©

Method:

Force the Queen of Hearts using either of the two methods described below. Once the card is returned to the deck and shuffled, fan the cards toward you and cut the deck at the Queen of Hearts making it the top card in the deck.

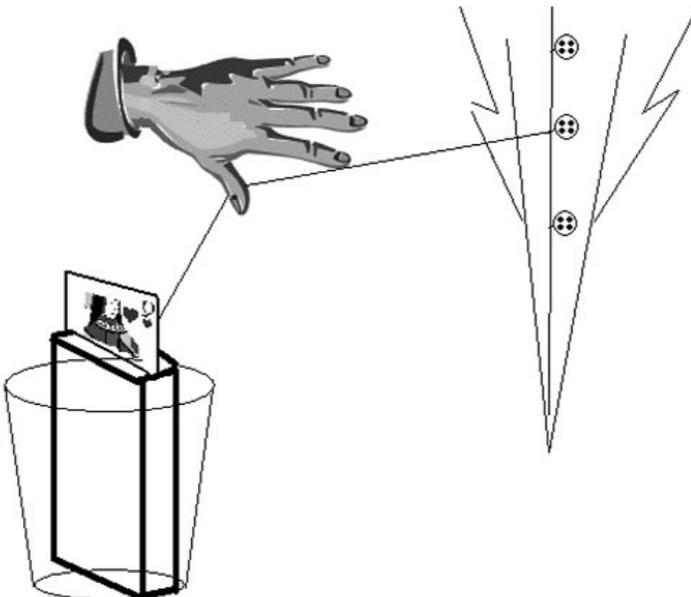
The card rises from the deck with the assistance of a strand of invisible thread (black thread.) Magicians would normally use a substance called "magicians' wax," but in lieu of that, you can use Blue Tac©. The advantage of it is that it leaves no telltale trace on the card once it is handed out for inspection. Roll a small ball of it and add one end of the thread to the pellet. Tie the other end of the thread to your shirt/blouse or jacket button. Hide the pellet of Blue Tac© in your hand as you handle the deck.

Once you've maneuvered the Queen of Hearts to the top of the deck as described in the "How to False Shuffle" section that follows, attach the pellet of Blue Tac© at the end of the black thread to the back of that card as you place the deck upright in the drinking glass.

The best way to use invisible thread is to avoid looking as you pull on it. Instead, keep your hands completely still and watch the card as it rises. To manipulate the rising card, simply straighten up or turn your torso on its axis. This will be a less suspicious way of affecting the card.

Patter:

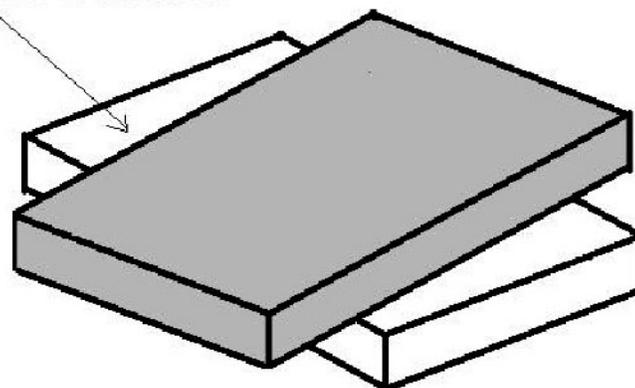
"Clearly as humans, we cannot raise ourselves to meet God on our own. We are sinful and full of pride, the main obstacles keeping us from a deep relationship with God. The sacrament of Confirmation gives us the gifts of the Holy Spirit that can help us to meet God."



How to False Shuffle

Holding the deck in your left hand, remove a third of the cards from the bottom of the deck and place them squarely on the tabletop in front of you. Take the bottom half of the cards remaining in your hands and place them on top of the cards you just laid down. Place the remainder of the cards in your left hand on top of the pile on the table. This may seem simplistic, but if done immediately after the false shuffle described above and the top part is placed down quickly, casually and absentmindedly, your audience will be convinced.

The Queen of Hearts



13.

LESSON THEMES:

Healing, The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

Rating:

★★★ (3 stars)

Effect:

The catechist threads a bracelet on a piece of rope and has the ends of the rope tied to each wrist, thereby trapping the bracelet. A spectator lays a foulard across the rope and, seconds later, the foulard is whisked away to find the bracelet off the rope. Everything can be examined afterwards.

Equipment Needed:

Two matching bracelets, a length of string approximately 3' long, a large foulard

Method:

Hide one of the matching bracelets in your front pocket. Have a spectator tie a string around one of your wrists. Have your spectator thread the other bracelet through the rope and then tie the other end of the string around the other wrist.

Under the cover of the foulard, take the bracelet that is threaded on the rope and hide it as far up your forearm as possible. Grab the loose bracelet that is hidden in your pocket and ask a spectator to remove the foulard. Hand the bracelet out for examination.

Patter:

"The Anointing of the Sick is a sacrament of healing. We accept the healing power of prayer whether that healing is physical or spiritual. The sacrament doesn't release the soul. Instead, it releases sin's grasp on our souls, just like this ring is released from its entrapment."

14.

LESSON THEMES:

Sacrament of Holy Orders, Magisterium, Grace

Rating:

★★ (2 stars)

Effect:

The catechist shows a champagne bucket to be empty. Immediately, he pulls a coin out of a volunteer's ear and drops it into the bucket. He pulls another one out of thin air. Other coins appear from a variety of other places. Each coin that is produced is thrown into the bucket with a loud clink. When all of the available coins are exhausted, the catechist empties his bucket to show all of the coins.

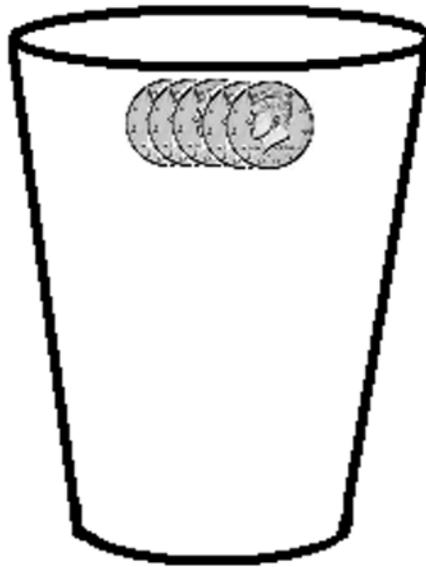


Equipment Needed:

Monofilament, eleven fifty-cent pieces or similar-sized coins, a small wastepaper basket or a champagne or ice bucket

Method:

"The Miser's Dream" is a very old magic effect. There are two parts to this trick. First, the coins that are pulled out of spectators' ears aren't "actually" pulled out of their ears. It's actually the same coin used over and over again. This is accomplished with the help of a small loop of monofilament glued to a fifty-cent piece. The filament should be long enough so that the loop can fit comfortably over the thumb of one's dominant hand while allowing the coin to rest exactly in the middle of one's palm.



Magicians will more likely use a special type of wax simply known as Magicians' Wax but unless you wish to buy it at a magic store, experiment with different adhesives to find one that you prefer. Affix the monofilament to the coin and hang the coin on your thumb. If you use a mirror, you will note that the coin can be swung to rest on the center of your palm. To make a coin appear in thin air or behind someone's ear, all you need do is swing the coin sufficiently to make it fall at your fingertips.

The reason the coins make a sound in the bucket and accumulate therein is because you are holding approximately ten loose coins in the hand with which you are grasping the bucket. As you pretend to drop the coin looped on your thumb, you drop a single loose coin from the hand holding the coins at the bucket's inside rim.

Patter:

"While we are all part of the Church, like every community, we need leaders who can teach with authority and transmit tradition to us. The pope, bishops, and priests serve this function for the Church. They teach and they are given the task of protecting and administering the sacraments, sources of God's grace. Without the sacrament of Holy Orders and the ordained ministers, we would have no access to the sacraments.

"Priests work for us and help the Church by offering us opportunities to experience God's grace. God easily, lovingly, and willingly gives us his gifts. Do you know how precious these gifts of grace are? How would you feel if you could just pull money out of the air? Well, God showers us with his grace through the sacraments just like that. But his gifts are worth much more than money. Always accept God's gracious gifts anytime they are offered. Don't miss the opportunity every Sunday to receive the Eucharist. Don't forget to prepare yourself to receive the Eucharist by celebrating God's forgiveness in the sacrament of Penance."

15.

LESSON THEMES:

Morality, Sinfulness, Forgiveness

Rating:

★★★ (3 stars)

Effect:

A piece of rope is held out for examination and is tied around the catechist's wrists. The catechist slowly turns his hands and, immediately, the rope slips off his hands without a struggle.

Equipment Needed:

A four-foot piece of rope

Method:

This is the only actual escape effect I list here in this book. I'm unsure who invented this effect, but I attribute it to Ali Bongo, who taught me. I came up with the idea of using it as a magic performance when he suggested performing this in front of an audience instead of squirreling away someplace and escaping away from their view. Use a four-foot piece of soft magician's rope whose ends have been carefully whipped.

The first volunteer is a confederate or "planted" volunteer. This is necessary to tie the rope correctly without having to bark orders at an uninitiated volunteer. The second time you escape, you can use any volunteer. The tying process is a relatively easy one, but it really needs to be seen once before a layperson can be trusted to do it with minimum amount of instruction on your part. Here are the instructions (see photos):

1. Tie a loose overhand knot in a piece of rope.

2. Places your hands into the loop.

3. Keep your wrists as tight as possible. **IF YOU RELEASE THE PRESSURE ON YOUR WRISTS YOU WILL BE TRULY TIED. YOU WILL HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF DIFFICULTY RELEASING YOURSELF.**

4. The volunteer takes both ends of the rope and pulls them, effectively tightening them against your wrists.

5. The end in his right hand goes through your arms and down and around your wrists. The other end of the rope goes in the opposite direction. He can alternate which end is used but ultimately the entire rope will need to be used up.

6. What remains of the ends are tied in at least two more overhand knots.

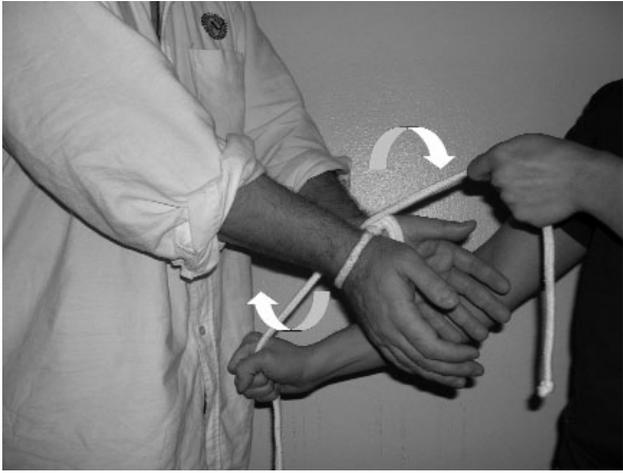
This is a very visual and even graceful escape if performed correctly. Even if the ropes are tied tightly, one barely has to struggle at all; the ropes will simply fall away from your wrists.

Patter:

"Sometimes our sins weigh us down and make it impossible to love God, others, and ourselves. Why? Sins make us self-centered. Pride is frequently the cause of our sins.

"Sins, like this rope, stop us from loving and caring. But, with God's help, with God's grace, we can escape our sins and live like children of God."





16.

LESSON THEMES:

Moral Conscience, Inspiration, The Holy Spirit

Rating:

★ (1 star)

Effect:

The catechist writes a prediction and sets it aside in plain view. He then lays out four cards face down onto the tabletop and the volunteer is given a free choice of any of the four cards. Once the volunteer chooses, she is directed to examine the laid-aside prediction. The two match exactly.

Equipment Needed:

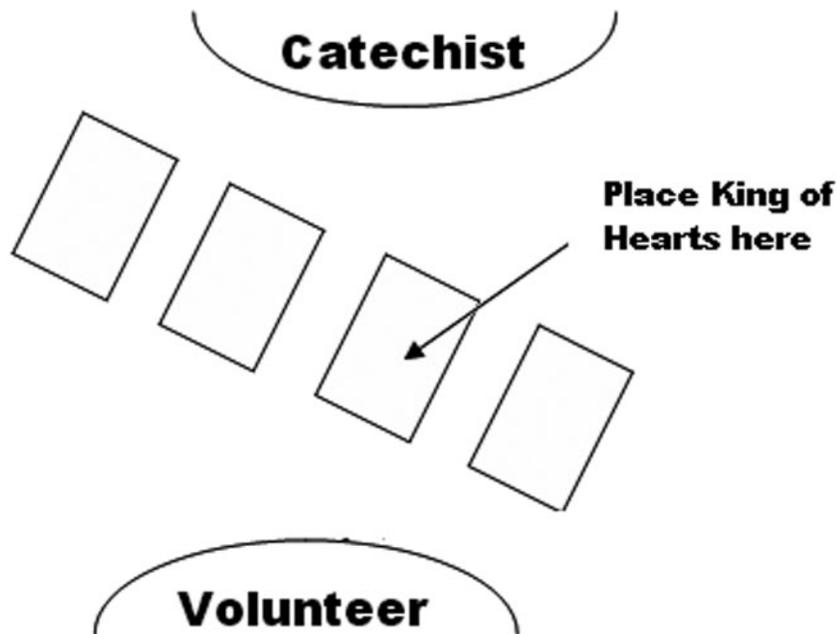
A deck of cards, a piece of paper, a pen

Method:

Write the word "King of Hearts" on a small square of paper, fold it and place it in plain view. Place four kings face down on the table between you and the volunteer. It is imperative to be on opposite sides of a table when performing this effect. Make sure the King of Hearts is the second one away from the volunteer's left.

Explanation:

This force is an excellent, seemingly completely free choice. It seems that when four identical objects are placed at a 45-degree angle away from the volunteer, most people will take the second closest object to them. Remember that this force is most effective when the objects are placed between the catechist and the volunteer and are otherwise completely identical. They should be placed equidistant from each other and aligned exactly. If the volunteer chooses a different one, apologize and ask him to choose two cards instead. Proceed with the Magician's Choice in order to direct her to the correct card.



Patter:

“How do you make a choice between good and bad? Who helps you make this decision? We get knowledge from the Church, our parents, our teachers, and the Holy Spirit, via our conscience. If we listen to these sources of information, we will not make the wrong decision

“I would like you to make a choice now. You have a free choice of any card here. Now, turn over the card and check the piece of paper that's been in plain view the entire time we've spoken. As you see, you made the right decision. And all you did was listen to the voice inside you, much as you do when you face a moral decision.”

17.

LESSON THEMES:

The Beatitudes, Moral Life, Kingdom of God

Rating:

★★ (2 stars)

Effect:

The catechist borrows a single penny from a volunteer and rubs it against his upturned elbow in the hope of making it disappear. He seemingly fails when he opens his hand to reveal a quarter.

Equipment Required:

A quarter (the penny is borrowed)

Method:

Before starting the effect, palm a quarter in your left hand. To palm a coin, lay a quarter in the center of your palm and test whether or not you can comfortably close your hand and securely retain the coin without straining your fingers. The goal is to look as if you really don't have a coin in your hand.

Borrow a penny and hold it in your right hand. Announce that you will make it disappear. Bend your left arm and hold your left shoulder with your left hand. Press the penny against your left elbow and rub it vigorously as if you are hoping that it will somehow disappear. Drop the coin to the floor "accidentally." Retrieve the penny with your left hand and palm it as you pretend to transfer it to your right hand. Instead, transition the quarter to your right hand and palm it. Replace your left hand on your neck. Drop the penny into your collar as you continue rubbing the quarter in your right hand on your left elbow. After a few seconds of rubbing, expose the quarter.

I recommend giving the quarter to the volunteer in place of the penny; it goes a long way in making you popular.

Patter:

"Jesus preached the Beatitudes as guides for moral living. He wants us to be humble, reverent, merciful, resilient, pure of heart, happy, glad, and brave peacemakers. And for our efforts, he will give us great rewards in heaven. In fact, he will give us the kingdom of God as our inheritance. He will comfort us and he will give us everything that God has promised us.

"He asks only a penny's worth of effort from us and for that he will give us something so much more worthwhile."

18.

LESSON THEMES:

Moral Decisions, Grace, Soul, Jesus Christ

Rating:

★★ (2 stars)

Effect:

An index card labeled “SOUL” is placed in the middle of the table. A small cup is placed over it and is immediately covered with a sheet of newspaper. The catechist announces that he will make the card disappear. The covered cup is then tapped and the newspaper is removed but nothing happens. He attempts a second time but without any positive results. He covers the index card once again and slaps his hand onto it, crushing the newspaper. Apparently the cup has completely vanished.

Equipment Needed:

A small hard plastic or metal cup, a sheet of newspaper, an index card, a magic marker, a table cloth, four large safety pins

Method:

This is an old standard magic effect. A servante is easy to create. Simply use the safety pins to pin the hem of the tablecloth to itself to create a pocket. If it doesn't stay open on its own, you might need to use balled-up newspaper.

On the index card, write the word “SOUL” on one side and the name “JESUS” on the other side. On the cup, tape another index card with the name “SIN” written on it. On the newspaper, write the word “GRACE” in very large letters.

Place this card on the table with the word “SOUL” face-up. Place the cup over the index card. Cover the cup with the sheet of newspaper and shape it to fit the cup's form. Next, tap it lightly and lift the cup along with the newspaper. Explain that you didn't hit it hard enough. Replace the cup and newspaper and hit it harder. Lift the cup along with the newspaper and move it away over the servante. While keeping a light hold on the newspaper cover, drop the cup into your servante. In lieu of a servante, you may drop the cup into your lap (as long as you are seated.) Replace the newspaper cover (still shaped like a cup) over the index card and hit it as hard as you comfortably can. You will, of course, crush the newspaper. completely surprising your audience in the process.

Remove the crushed newspaper sheet and show the index card which hadn't disappeared. Turn the SOUL card over to show that JESUS is the only person who can conquer sin

Patter:

“Did you know that without God in our lives, we couldn't manage to save ourselves? We couldn't even live without him.

“Let's pretend that this index card is our soul and that this cup is sin. Sin covers us and makes us weak and keeps us far from God's love. God gives us his grace through the sacraments. Let's represent his grace with this sheet of newspaper.

(Cover the cup and press the newspaper into the shape of the cup. Lightly tap your hand on the cup and then whisk away the newspaper to show the cup hasn't disappeared.)

“I guess I have to hit harder. Let me try again.

(Replace the newspaper and tap your hand on the cup and then whisk away the newspaper to show the cup hasn't disappeared. At this point, while retaining the shape of cup, lightly hold the newspaper and maneuver your arm close to your edge of the table over the servante and drop the cup into it.)

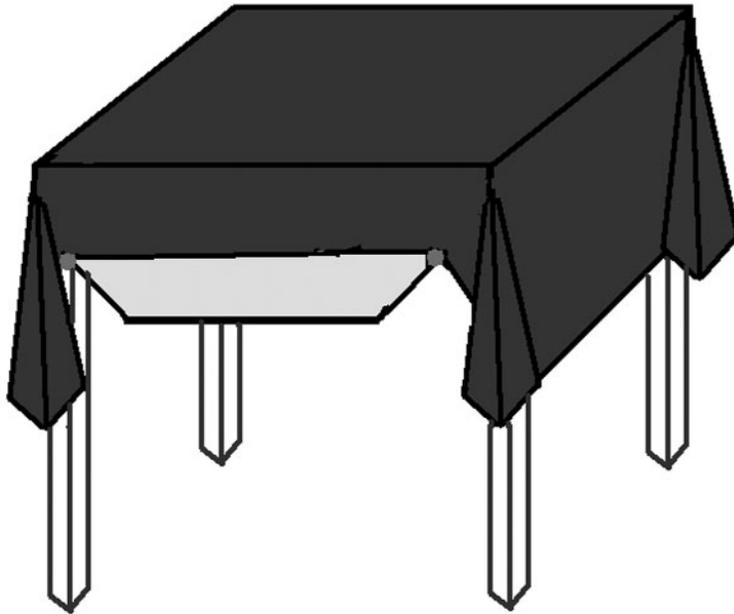
“I guess I have to hit it harder. Let me try again.

(Place the newspaper down and hit it hard and fast enough to crush its shape. Lift the newspaper to show that the cup has disappeared.)

“As you see, even though sin might have a hold on us, with God's grace, we can defeat sin and live lives full of grace. But never forget Who gives us this grace.

(Place the newspaper aside and turn over the index card.)

“Never forget that Jesus is the source of grace. The only one who can make us whole again.”



19.

LESSON THEMES:

Prayer, Faith

Rating:

★ (1 star)

Effect:

The magician chooses two cards at random from his deck and has a volunteer replace them anywhere she wishes. The magician retrieves the deck and tosses it in the air. Amidst the resulting shower of cards, he is able to immediately find the two previously lost cards.

Equipment Needed:

A deck of cards

Method:

Secretly place the King of Diamonds on the top of the deck and the Queen of Hearts at the bottom of the deck. When you are ready to perform this effect, go through the deck and openly remove the Queen of Diamonds and the King of Hearts. Take the face-down deck in hand and have the volunteer insert the Queen of Diamonds and the King of Hearts anywhere in the middle of the deck. Keep a fairly tight hold on the deck and concentrate on keeping a hold of the top and bottom cards as you toss the deck into the air. As the cards tumble about you, pretend to “pull” the two cards from the shower of cards. Be nonchalant about it, smile widely and place them back into the deck without comment. It is hoped that your audience will have forgotten the fact that these were not the exact cards shown in the beginning of the effect.

Patter:

“What is the need for prayer? Can we truly love God if we refuse to communicate with him? Is it possible to have a relationship with anyone if we don't speak with them? Communication is important for us. If we don't communicate with those around us, including God, how can we know their hearts and minds? When one can communicate, we can get a lot accomplished. Imagine what our lives would be like if none of us could ask questions or ask for things that we needed or tell others how much we love them or them tell us how much they need us. It would be a very sad life.

“Right now, I want you to communicate with me and tell me which were your two cards. Would you like to tell me quietly or aloud? Now that I know, let's see if I can find them for you.”

20.

LESSON THEMES:

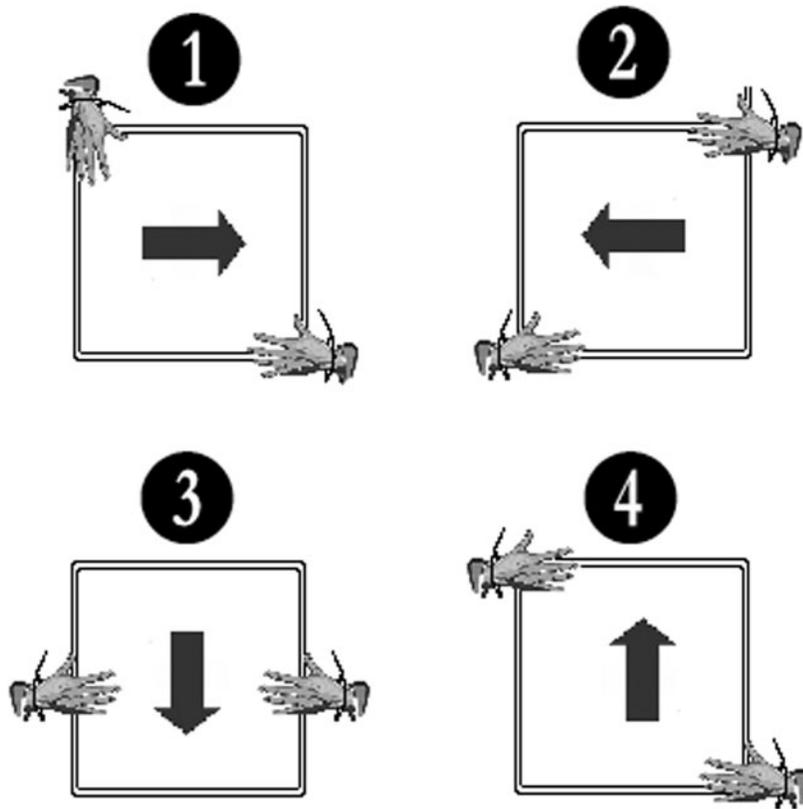
God, Church, Faith, Sin

Rating:

★★ (2 stars)

Effect:

The catechist uses a simple placard that has an arrow printed on it. Despite the sign only having two obvious sides, it seems that the arrow is animated and can point, alternatively, in four different directions.



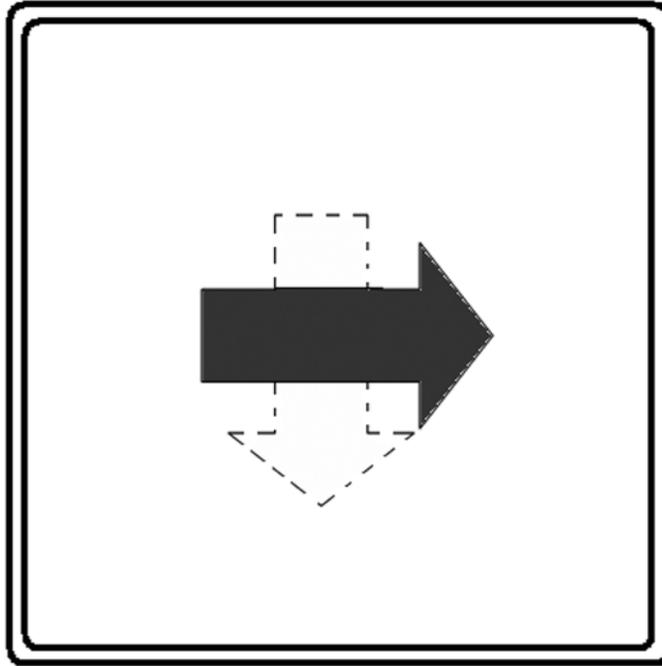
Equipment Needed:

A placard as described below

Method:

Melbourne Christopher originally created this effect. Create a one-foot-square two-sided placard shaped like the diagram below. Paint one arrow pointing in one direction on one side and another arrow at a 90-degree angle to the first arrow on the other side.

Practice this effect by standing in front of a mirror. Hold the sign as in Figure 1. You will note that the arrows points to the audience's right. Keep your hands on these corners and spin the card so that the reverse side faces the audience. The arrow will remain pointing to the audience's right.



Next, move your hands to the placard's opposite corners as described in Figure 2. Now when you flip the sign over so that the opposite side faces the audience, the arrow will face the audience's left. While in this position, move your hands to the middle of the placard as described in Figure 3. If you turn the placard over, the arrow will point downwards. Move your hands to the positions described in Figure 4 and turn the placard over and the arrow will point upwards.

It is imperative that you memorize the moves for this effect. This illusion is spoiled if you have to keep looking at the front of the placard to check your progress.

Make four signs: **GOD, SIN, COMMUNITY & FAMILY, SELF**

Place these four signs on the wall behind where you plan to stand to perform this effect. Place the **GOD** sign above your head. Place the **SIN** sign to your left. Place the **COMMUNITY & FAMILY** sign to your right and the **SELF** sign at your feet, preferably propped up on a small easel or stack of books.

Patter:

"We know that Christ came to us to point to the Father. His love for the Father is total and perfect, even obeying him unto death. We can learn to look toward each other to help each other and to learn from each other. If we decide not to help each other and learn from them, where do we find ourselves? What's the opposite of love? That's right . . . it's sin. And no matter what, we can't make ourselves good just by ourselves, no matter how hard we try. Do you know who can help us? I think you already know. That's right . . . it is God."

BONUS

LESSON THEMES:

Jesus Christ, Redemption, Kingdom of Heaven

Rating:

★★ (2 stars)

Effect:

A card is fairly and randomly selected. The card is ripped up and a single corner is placed in a small pay envelope, which is handed to the volunteer for safekeeping. The remainder of the card is burned in an ashtray. A balloon is introduced and destroyed. Inside is the restored card. The volunteer checks to see if the corner she retained is a match, and it is found to be so.

Equipment Needed:

A balloon, two identical decks of cards, lighter, ashtray, an envelope, and a pin

Method:

This effect requires a sleight, a false shuffle, a force, and a bit of misdirection. The “Cross-cut Force” is a means by which you can manipulate a volunteer to take a certain card without her knowing it.

Rip off the upper right-hand corner of a duplicate Queen of Hearts and lay it aside. Roll up the card and insert it into a latex balloon and inflate it. I prefer to use Mylar balloons, as they are opaque. Party shops will also be able to inflate the balloons with helium.

Before your performance, hide the torn corner piece between your fingers or under your watchband. Place the original Queen of Hearts on the top of the deck. False shuffle the deck using both methods described below. Have your volunteer cut the deck and place the cards she cut on the table. Immediately, take the base or remainder of the cards and place it on top of volunteer's cut off pile but at right angles to it (see diagram below.) At this point, magicians would use a thing called “time misdirection.” You need to give the volunteer some time to “forget” how she just handled the deck. The reason for this is because you will misdirect her to choose the wrong pile.

Take this time to review the events that have led up to this point. Mention the shuffling and the fact that she cut the deck anywhere she wanted and that there was no way that you could have influenced her to cut at that specific point. Take time to make sure she understands all of the steps and ask her if she agrees that it would be impossible to know which card she cut to. Once she agrees, remove the top pile from the deck and motion to the top card of the lower section. This will be the Queen of Hearts. She will think that this is the card she cut to when, in reality, her selected card is elsewhere.

Have everyone remember the card and rip it up, carefully saving a single corner. Take this corner and covertly switch it for the torn corner you have finger palmed. Place this new corner in a pay envelope and hand it to the volunteer for safekeeping.

Next, burn the remainder of the pieces of the torn-up card in an ashtray. Once they've been completely destroyed, introduce your prepared balloon and a pin. I prefer to use an ornate hatpin for theatrical effect.

Once the balloon is popped, have your volunteer retrieve the card and compare it to the torn corner in the pay envelope, which has been in her possession since the beginning of the effect.

False Shuffle #1

Riffle shuffle the cards by dovetailing them into each other. Be careful to keep the top card in place.

False Shuffle #2

Holding the deck in your left hand, remove a third of the cards from the bottom of the deck and place them squarely on the tabletop in front of you. Take the bottom half of the cards left in your hands and place them on top of the cards you just laid down. Place the remainder of the cards in your left hand on top of the pile on the table. This may seem simplistic but if done immediately after the false shuffle described above and the top part is placed down quickly, casually and absentmindedly, everyone will be convinced.

Patter:

“What happened after Jesus died for our sins? He ascended into heaven and is now with God the Father. What do you think it means to die and to resurrect and then to enter the kingdom of heaven? Let's see if we can have a demonstration.

“If I rip up this card and burn it, we can pretend that it died also. Now let's see if the card will come back to life.”