

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Third Sunday of Advent • Year B • December 13, 2020

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—ISAIAH 61:1-2A, 10-11

Although this passage originally relates to the glad tidings of release from exile, it nevertheless presents an enduring portrait of the servant of God in any age and time. All who serve God seek to raise the lowly of society.

SECOND READING—1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-24

This passage comes towards the end of Paul's letter. It presents a series of brief exhortations addressed to the community, which are meant to promote harmony among all the members of the Church community.

GOSPEL READING—JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

This section is only the first of many "testimonies" regarding Jesus given from verses 19 through 51. John explains that John the Baptist is not the Christ, not the expected Elijah of Malachi 3:23, and not the prophet referred to in Deuteronomy 18:15.

Church Teaching

Discernment is not some magical talent or incoherent process. Spiritual writers through the centuries have sought to describe the process. Its "hinge" is conscience and its "fuel" is the Word of God found in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Like any skill, discernment takes much practice for it to become truly effective in a person's life. Ultimately, however, it derives from the way we are created by God. Discernment relies on the power of God's grace, yet we must allow and accept his grace in our lives.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1694, 1729, 2690

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 319-320

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 359, 372, 596

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set the space with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a purple cloth, a candle, and an Advent wreath with the three candles lighted (if allowed), including the pink one.

Discover

1. Invite everyone to reflect on today's liturgy quietly for 1-2 minutes. Then have participants close their eyes and reflect on what Christ, the Anointed One, brings us:
 - ◆ Glad tidings to the poor
 - ◆ Healing to the brokenhearted
 - ◆ Liberty to the captives
 - ◆ Release to the prisoners
 - ◆ Comfort for those who mourn
 - ◆ A year of favor from the Lord
2. Proclaim the First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11. Then have the group respond to the following questions:
 - ◆ *Who would rejoice at the hearing of this proclamation? Why?*
 - ◆ *What is your response to this proclamation?*
 - ◆ *In what ways do you experience God as the joy of your heart?*

Deepen

Have participants discuss their experience of Advent using the following questions:

- ◆ *What is gleaming about the spirit of Advent?*
- ◆ *In what way is this Advent different than previous ones?*
- ◆ *What would you like to be able to say about these last days of Advent?*

Pray

Sing or play a recording of the Magnificat or pray the Prayer of Exorcism, RCIA 94H.

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Sunday Word

Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11
Luke 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

Welcome

Welcome everyone who is present, including sponsors, team members, and spouses who join the group. Invite one or two people to share some of the key points from the Dismissal Session.

Engage

Proclaim the Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28. Then discuss the following questions:

- ◆ *What is the mood or tone of this Gospel passage?*
- ◆ *What conclusion can be drawn from this Gospel passage?*
- ◆ *How do we look for Christ? Where do we look for Christ? When do we look for Christ?*
- ◆ *How might we be able to recognize Christ in our daily lives?*

Explore

1. Highlight key points from the Participant Handout's Church Teaching: Discernment, using these points:
 - ◆ We are called to discern the 'voices' in our lives. Some voices lead us to a deeper faith; others may lead us away from our relationship with God and the People of God, the Church. We are called to follow only the voice of God, which leads us to him.
 - ◆ In the passage today, authorities are attempting to discern who John is and what his message is. Discernment requires an openness to listen. The authorities are not necessarily open to hearing what John is telling them.

- ◆ We are called to develop a listening heart; one that is open to and hears the voice of the Spirit. Jesus promised that the Spirit would be with us until the end of time. Spiritual listening is developed with practice, and with the help of the Church.
- ◆ Each of us can use an examination of conscience as a daily discernment for most activities in life. When faced with major decisions, a trusted person or spiritual director may be necessary to help one go through a discernment process.
- ◆ Discernment is not done in isolation. One needs trusted persons who listen deeply to what he or she is facing. Often these trusted persons act as spiritual directors for believers who are going through a discernment process. The spiritual director listens to what is said and to what is not said.

2. Highlight the Key Terms and Voices of Faith sections.

Apply

1. Invite the catechumens and candidates to complete these statements, and share responses with a partner:

From the prayer, discussion, and study for this Sunday, I understand the Church's teaching to be . . .

I am challenged to live the message of this Sunday by . . .

2. Encourage participants to take a few minutes at the end of each day to do an examination of conscience, using these or similar questions:
 - ◆ *In what way did I experience God today?*
 - ◆ *For what do I give thanks to God for today?*
 - ◆ *From whom do I need to ask forgiveness?*
 - ◆ *Who do I need to forgive?*
 - ◆ *For whom do I ask God for a blessing?*

Pray

Invite everyone to a few minutes of quiet prayer.