

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph • Year B • December 27, 2020

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—GENESIS 15:1-6; 21:1-3

God promises Abram that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars. Abram puts his faith in the Lord. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son, Isaac.

SECOND READING—HEBREWS 11:8, 11-12, 17-19

The key choices and events in the lives of Abraham are recalled through the lens of faith. Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac were a family who put their faith in God.

GOSPEL—LUKE 2:22-40

Simeon kept faith his whole life that he would live to see the Salvation of God, the Christ of the Lord. Anna, too, spent her days worshiping God in the Temple, and gave thanks to God at the sight of the child who would be the Redeemer of Jerusalem.

Church Teaching

Today's feast highlights the family as the context into which Jesus was born. It underscores the full fact of his humanity. The infant Jesus, under the watchful eye and loving care of Mary and Joseph, "grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him" (Luke 2:39, 40).

The family, made holy by virtue of Jesus' life with Mary and Joseph, becomes a source of holiness for every Christian. The duties of children to their parents, and parents to their children, find illustration and example in the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Prepare the space by setting chairs in a circle. On a small table place a white cloth, candle, and a crèche

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2201-2231

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 377-379

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 455, 462

with figurines including the infant Jesus. When everyone has gathered, sing a Christmas carol.

Discover

1. Ask the following questions, and invite the group to reflect on them quietly before sharing their responses with one or two other people:
What did you see or hear in the Liturgy of the Word?
What word, phrase, or image from the readings stays with you?
Ask several volunteers to share their reflections with the large group.
2. Gather their observations about the environment of the church for Christmas:
What does the environment say about the importance of the Christmas season?
Did anything surprise you? What? Why?
3. Summarize their responses.

Deepen

1. Invite participants to consider these questions and take a few moments of quiet before sharing their responses with one or two other people:
The Holy Family is the term used to describe the family of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. Does it surprise you to think of Jesus as having parents, or that we honor the Holy Family and all families during the Christmas season?
Who are the members of your immediate family? Your extended family? What does it mean for you to say that you belong to this family?
What did you hear as the message for us today?
Who would be consoled with the words of today's liturgy? Why?
Who would be challenged with the words of today's liturgy? Why?
2. Gather some responses from everyone.

Pray

Invite participants, in the quiet of their hearts, to picture each member of their immediate and extended families, and to ask God to bless each one.

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Sunday Word

Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3

Psalms 105:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19

Luke 2:22-40 (or, short form, 2:22, 39-40)

Welcome

Begin by welcoming everyone who is present, including sponsors, team members, and spouses. Sing a Christmas season hymn such as “What Child Is This”.

Engage

1. Begin by rephrasing one or two questions from the Dismissal Session, then invite the group to share in small groups. Ask several volunteers to share their reflections with the large group.
2. Discuss with the group the names of the members of Jesus’ family, and elicit their ideas about what it might mean that his family is the model for all families.

Explore

1. Proclaim the First Reading—Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3. Invite participants to share what they think the Lord meant when he promised Abram that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars.
2. Proclaim the Second Reading—Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19. Point out that Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac were a family who lived by faith. Discuss ways families can live by and keep strong in their faith in God. Invite participants to share with a partner where they need to place greater faith in God in their lives right now, today. Encourage partners to pray for one another.
3. Proclaim the Gospel—Luke 2:22, 39-40. Discuss what these few verses from today’s Gospel tell us about Mary and Joseph, and their priorities as family and as parents. What are good priorities for families today?

4. Offer a presentation, including the following points:
 - ◆ The fact that God chose to be born into a family suggests his blessing and recognition of the importance of family life.
 - ◆ Families come in many sizes and types today; the traditional sense of mother, father and children remains important.
 - ◆ There is mutuality in family life; respect for each other and willingness to help each to grow in love of God is essential to Christian family life.
 - ◆ Obedience is more than following rules. It is to participate in family life and to recognize the mutuality that exists in the family unit.
 - ◆ Authority is a responsibility and a gift. Parents are the first teachers of their children. By their word and deeds, children learn to love, to forgive, to participate in the mission of Jesus and to grow in faith
 - ◆ The family is a graced unit. It is the “domestic Church.”
5. Highlight the key points from Catholic Teaching: The Duties of Family. Also highlight the Key Terms and Voices of Faith.

Apply

1. Discuss the Fourth Commandment, “Honor your father and your mother,” and how we follow it in daily life.
2. Encourage the catechumens and candidates to complete these statements:
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 . . .
3. In celebration of this Feast of the Holy Family, invite each person to write a letter to thank their parents and parents to write a letter of affirmation to each child. Encourage the group to consider how they might help and encourage a family, known or unknown to them, who is in need.

Pray

Sing a familiar Christmas season carol.