

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
The Ascension of the Lord • Year B • May 12, 2024

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—ACTS 1:1-11

All three years of the lectionary cycle use today's reading from Acts to introduce the notion of Christ's Ascension. Luke's description of this event parallels the beginning of his Gospel account (see Luke 1:1-4).

SECOND READING—EPHESIANS 1:17-23

The Ephesians selection presents a rich theological understanding of the Ascension. The Father seats Christ at his right hand in Heaven, and from the Lord Jesus we will inherit glory. Notice also that here the Church is called the "fullness" of Christ.

GOSPEL—MARK 16:15-20

Most Bibles include this passage in a section entitled "The Longer Ending," for it seems as if Mark originally intended his account to end at 16:8. That abrupt final verse unsettled the early Christians such that other endings were appended in various manuscripts circulating at the time. This depiction of the Ascension certainly accords with the other Evangelists' accounts.

Church Teaching

The Ascension is not about Christ's removal from the Church. Rather, it is about a new form of his presence, a presence in many ways even more powerful and significant than was his earthly existence with the disciples.

In the liturgy of the Church, for example, Christ is made present: his own Paschal Mystery is celebrated. By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, Christ entrusts to them and their successors the power to make present the work of Salvation through the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments, in which the Lord himself acts to convey grace to believers of all times and places throughout the world.

Additional Background

Links – Holy days of obligation

The Guidelines for the Celebration of Holy Days
Gifts of the Spirit

Music – "Hail the Day That Sees Him [Christ] Rise," C. Wesley, GIA, OCP, WLP
"Psalm 47: God Mounts His Throne," M. Haugen, GIA
"Go to the World!" S. Dunstan, GIA, OCP

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set the space with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a white cloth, a white candle, and an item that reflects the Easter environment of the church.

Discover

Ask the following questions:

What did you hear in our celebration of the Liturgy of the Word for the Solemnity of the Ascension?

What surprised you in our celebration?

What, if anything, was confusing about our celebration today?

Deepen

What do you know or what have you heard about this Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord?

Proclaim the First Reading, Acts 1:1-11.

With the whole group, gather some responses to these questions:

If you had been one of the disciples, how would you have responded to the words of Jesus?

Who do you think the men in white are?

How would you respond to the question, "Why do you stand looking up towards heaven?"

Discuss these points:

- *Theophilus* is a Greek word meaning *friend of God*, to whom the Acts of the Apostles is addressed.
- The beginning of this book summarizes the events in the life of Jesus from his Resurrection at Easter until his being taken up into Heaven.
- The challenge is to be patient and wait for the promise of the Father to be fulfilled.
- The Apostles were promised power when the Holy Spirit fell upon them.

In a sentence or two, summarize the discussion.

Pray

Use the Collect from today's liturgy.

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
The Ascension of the Lord • Year B • May 12, 2024

Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Sunday Word

Acts 1:1-11

Psalm 47:2-3, 6-9

Ephesians 1:17-23 or Ephesians 4:1-13 or 4:1-7, 11-13

Mark 16:15-20

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 Second Reading, Ephesians 1:17-23.

Pause before asking these questions:

What do you hear in this opening prayer of Saint Paul to the Ephesians?

What is the hope expressed? What does Paul desire for the believers?

Offer these points:

- Christ sits at the right hand of God.
- Christ is the Head of the Church; we are all part of his Body.
- We who believe will inherit eternal life.

We proclaim in the Apostles' Creed that "he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead."

Continue by encouraging everyone to think of a time in their lives when they really wanted to believe what they had been told but doubts kept creeping in. As the catechist, be ready to share such an experience in your own life. Ask catechumens/candidates to share their experiences with their sponsors.

Proclaim the Gospel, Mark 16:15-20.

Discuss:

- The message of Jesus that the disciples are to go out to the world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature is the same focus that we heard last week. It stresses the importance of continuing the mission.
- The disciples did as they were commanded; they worked many miracles (signs), and many came to believe and be baptized.

Explore

- The Ascension celebrates Jesus' bodily ascent into Heaven.
- Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will come upon the disciples, strengthen them, and remain with them until the end of time.
- This solemnity expresses our hope that some day we, too, will rise from the dead and be with Jesus in Heaven.
- Through his Paschal Mystery, Jesus unites Heaven and earth. The veil, which had separated Heaven and earth, has been "torn" away through his Death and Resurrection.
- Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ entrusts to his Church the power to continue the work of Salvation and to celebrate the sacraments.

Highlight key points from the participant handout's Catholic Doctrine: The Ascension of the Lord. Also highlight the Key Terms and Voices of Faith.

Apply

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...

Encourage the catechumens/candidates and their sponsors to discuss one way that they will offer hope to someone this week.

Pray

Use the prayer found in the participant handout.