

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Fourth Sunday of Easter • Year B • April 21, 2024

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—ACTS 4:8-12

Recall that Acts is the sequel to Luke's Gospel when reading this stirring passage detailing the preaching of Peter. He confronts the religious leaders with such conviction that they are not able to counter his arguments.

SECOND READING—1 JOHN 3:1-2

The word *see* (verse 1) in the original Greek is rendered as a call to behold something utterly remarkable, a truly revelatory phenomenon.

GOSPEL—JOHN 10:11-18

Jesus uses shepherd imagery based in the Old Testament (for example, Ezekiel 34:11-16). The parallel ends with his statement that as Good Shepherd he will lay down his life. Jesus' claim to be such a shepherd goes far beyond the ancient notion of shepherd-messiah.

Church Teaching

The identity of God has been revealed to us by Jesus Christ as Trinitarian—that is, the very God in whom we place our belief is communitarian. Is it any wonder, then, that the Church should be characterized as a community? An essential characteristic of the Church is that she is one because of her source, the Blessed Trinity. While the Church has many diverse members, her oneness comes from her indwelling soul, the Holy Spirit.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 233, 239, 242–244

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 51–53

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 44–48

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set the space with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a white cloth, a blooming plant, a candle, a picture of the Lord as the Good Shepherd, and an open Bible.

Discover

Discuss the Gospel reading by using the following questions:

Which image or picture comes to mind when you hear “the Lord is my Shepherd”?

Which image or picture comes to mind when you hear you are the sheep?

Which qualities of a sheep do you embrace or reject?

How do you recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd?

What can you expect to hear from him?

What will be your response to his call to you?

How do you feel when you hear that the Shepherd knows you by name?

Deepen

1. Proclaim the First Reading, Acts 4:8-12. Invite all present to picture themselves as one of the crowd hearing Peter proclaim that Jesus is the cornerstone, and that there is no Salvation through anyone else but Jesus.
2. Then ask:

Compare the Peter who makes this bold proclamation to the Peter who denied Jesus three times.

What has happened to Peter?

How would you respond to Peter's proclamation that it is in the name of Jesus that he is able to heal the crippled person?

Pray

Use the Collect from today's liturgy.

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Sunday Word

Acts 4:8-12

Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29

1 John 3:1-2

John 10:11-18

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

- Elaborate on the Gospel by highlighting the following points:
 - The title “pastor” comes from this story of the Good Shepherd.
 - The role of the pastor of the parish
 - The role of the bishop of the diocese
 - The role of the pope
 - Jesus proclaims: “I am the Good Shepherd.” The “I Am” statements give us insights into Christ as Lord God.
 - As followers of Christ, we are called to reform and conform our lives to Christ.
- Now invite the participants to consider in the quiet of their hearts:

In order to conform your life more to that of Christ's, what do you need to let go of?

What do you need to keep or deepen?

What will it cost you to do so?

Are you willing to pay the price?

After a few minutes, invite the catechumens and candidates to share their responses with their sponsors.

Explore

- Build upon their reflection to explore the following points:
 - One God is one in being yet Three Divine Persons.
 - The union is complete and total—a knowing that makes them one yet unique.
 - One way we speak about the love of the Holy Trinity is that the Father so loved us that he sent the Son to show us the Father's love. The Father and the Son sent the Advocate to be with us until the end of time.
 - In Christ we witness the oneness of the Father and the Son.
 - In Christ we experience the invisible made visible.
 - In Baptism the Father adopts us as his children in Christ; he is our brother.
 - The whole Christian life is a communion with each of the Divine Persons of the Trinity.
- Take some time to explore the Nicene Creed. Invite the catechumens and candidates to share with their sponsors words or phrases from the Creed and their understanding of them.
- Highlight key points from the participant handout's Church Teaching: The Oneness of God. 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 . . .

Pray

Slowly and reflectively pray aloud the Nicene Creed. (Encourage each person to pray one sentence aloud, then pause.)