

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Fourth Sunday of Lent • Year B • March 10, 2024

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—2 CHRONICLES 36:14-16, 19-23

The purpose of both books of Chronicles is to ensure that the people learn from past mistakes. The king and the people must be faithful to the Covenant or suffer exile and punishment, for the true king of Israel is God himself.

SECOND READING—EPHESIANS 2:4-10

Verse 6 reminds the reader that Salvation and everything that flows from it in the life of the believer comes as a result of God's initiative and his free gift (Greek: *charis*, from which the English word "charism" derives). This theme is taken up again in verse 8.

GOSPEL—JOHN 3:14-21

For the parallel biblical text upon which the "raising up" imagery is based, see Numbers 21:8-9. Moses lifts up a sculpted serpent on a pole that the people might be healed. Jesus' own raising up, or exaltation, upon the Cross will heal and restore all men and women.

Church Teaching

We believe that every good thing we do rests upon God's grace. In other words, even when we are engaging in good works, this is the result of God's grace active within our hearts and minds, prompting us to work on behalf of the kingdom. Those good works do not achieve merit for us—at least, not in the sense that they further our Salvation. Salvation comes from God alone. His divine favor, or grace, stirs up within us hearts out of which we do his good works on this earth.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1987, 1996, 2005

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 328–330

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 423–424

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 open Bible.

Discover

Invite everyone to reflect quietly on the liturgy just celebrated and then ask:

What did you hear or see in the Liturgy of the Word?

What word or phrase or image from the readings stays with you?

Gather some responses from the group.

Deepen

Proclaim the First Reading, 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23. Discuss these points:

- ◆ The Israelites had taken possession of the land, established a monarchy, and built a magnificent temple that housed the Ark of the Covenant under Solomon's direction.
- ◆ Yet, time and time again, the people turned away from the Covenant. Even when prophets, messengers of God, called the people back to fidelity to God in the Covenant, they did not heed the warnings. Hence, the Chosen People were captured and taken into exile in Babylon, where they remained for seventy years.

Ask the group:

What would cause a people who have been blessed in so many ways to turn away from God, their benefactor?

Pray

Sing or say the Responsorial Psalm from today's liturgy.

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Sunday Word

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

Psalm 137:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6

Ephesians 2:4-10

John 3:14-21

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

1. Invite everyone to share a time when they experienced the “touch of God” in their lives (suggest catechumens/candidates share with their sponsors).
2. After everyone has shared, proclaim the Gospel, John 3:14-21, and then discuss:
 - ◆ God loves us and loves the whole world so much that the Second Person of God, Jesus, came to save us from our sins. Jesus did not come to condemn us but that we might know God’s great love for us.
 - ◆ Yet people—including us—at times choose to turn away from God’s love and care.
 - ◆ God never gives up on us; God always welcomes us back; God is always willing to heal the contrite sinner.
3. Proclaim the Second Reading, Ephesians 2:4-10. Ask:

When you hear the word “grace,” what thoughts or ideas come to mind?

What are some examples of grace?

Explore

1. Explain:
 - ◆ God established the Covenant with us. We are called to be faithful to this relationship.
 - ◆ God shares his love with us—we call this “grace.” It is freely given to us; it does not depend upon what we do or say. We are expected to respond to it.
 - ◆ Baptism is the doorway into this wonderful relationship with God; we are made adopted children of God because he loves us!
 - ◆ God always acts first, and we respond. Even when we think it is our idea, God has placed it within us. Grace, God’s life in us, stirs us to respond freely and to do good works.
2. Highlight key points from the participant handout’s Church Teaching: The Grace of God. Also highlight the Key Terms and Voices of Faith.

Apply

Challenge everyone to spend time at the end of each day thinking of three ways in which they experienced God’s grace that day.

Pray

Lead a litany of thanksgiving such as:

For the gift of family, we pray (pause).

All respond: *Thank you, God.*

For the gift of creation, we pray (pause).

All respond: *Thank you, God.*