

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Fifth Sunday of Lent • Year B • March 17, 2024

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—JEREMIAH 31:31-34

This passage will become the basis for some central theological insights found in the New Testament. The Pauline perspective on Christ in 2 Corinthians 3:1–5:21 and in Hebrews 8:6–9:15 explicitly mention this prophecy of the new Covenant. The “new life” theme of John’s Gospel also relates to this prophecy.

SECOND READING—HEBREWS 5:7–9

Verse 7 here has been viewed in the past as a reference to Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Mark 14:32-42), although the connection is vague and indirect.

GOSPEL—JOHN 12:20-33

This particular passage provides the key to understanding the entire chapter. Signaled by some “Greeks” who seek him out, the hour of Jesus’ glorification has arrived, for he has now drawn both Jew and Gentile to himself and his self-sacrifice upon the Cross.

Church Teaching

Prayer is absolutely necessary for the believer, whether or not it appears as if God hears. He does hear and he always responds, although not always in the way we (mistakenly) desire. If we do not constantly engage in prayer, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us, then we fall back into contrary ways, into the ways of sin. How can the Holy Spirit constitute and shape our lives if our hearts are far from him?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2740–2745

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 466–468

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 534, 540, 541, 549

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set the space with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a purple cloth, a candle, an open Bible or Lectionary, and various devotional prayer books.

Discover

Invite everyone to quietly reflect on the liturgy just celebrated and then ask them to imagine the passage in Jeremiah being spoken directly to them.

Ask:

What do the words tell you about God?

How would you respond to such a God?

Deepen

Proclaim the Gospel, John 12:20-33.

Discuss:

- ◆ A word or phrase that participants heard in the Gospel and what it means to them.
- ◆ The mood or feeling of the Gospel
- ◆ Jesus’ statement that his hour has arrived—what do participants understand the meaning of “the hour” to be?
- ◆ The grain of wheat that must die to give life
- ◆ The paradox that one who loves life loses it and one who hates life in this world will have eternal life.

Pray

Sing the Responsorial Psalm from today’s liturgy.

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Sunday Word

Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15
Hebrews 5:7-9
John 12:20-33

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. After a few minutes of quiet, invite participants to share about their prayer lives with one or two others in the group.
2. Discuss with the whole group why it is important to pray.
3. Proclaim the Second Reading, Hebrews 5:7-9. Discuss:
 - ◆ Think of this passage as a reference to Jesus' prayer and his agony in the garden.
 - ◆ Jesus was obedient to the Father's will
 - ◆ We too are called to be obedient, to follow the example of Jesus.

Explore

1. Using the following points, explain that prayer is our response to God's invitation to be in covenant relationship:
 - ◆ Prayer is not limited by words; it is our acknowledgement of God's presence with us.
 - ◆ Prayer is always possible; we have been united with Christ in Baptism; God is always present and listening to us.

- ◆ Prayer comes from the heart, our very core.
- ◆ Prayer is a gift from our loving God. He invites us into an ever deeper, more intimate relationship.
- ◆ Prayer traditionally has five forms:
 - Blessing and adoration
 - Petition
 - Intercession
 - Thanksgiving
 - Praise

2. Allow some time for discussion and questions. Then highlight key points from Church Teaching: Christian Prayer. Also highlight the Key Terms and Voices of Faith.

Apply

1. 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 . . .
2. Invite the sponsors to share with their catechumens/candidate the ways that they pray each day.

Pray

Use the prayer found on the participant page.