

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year B • June 16, 2024

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—EZEKIEL 17:22-24

The previous chapter and this one both conclude with a word of promise and hope from the prophet. In this instance, he uses the imagery of high and low trees to express how the future of the people is entirely in God's hands.

SECOND READING—2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-10

Previous to this passage, Saint Paul talks about suffering. The many difficulties he endures are a sort of credential of his apostleship. Now he goes on to speak of being courageous, awaiting the life on high that is promised to us in God through the Spirit.

GOSPEL—MARK 4:26-34

The mustard seed is the smallest of seeds. While the early Christian community was small, this parable assures Mark's readers that their efforts will be fruitful in growing toward the Kingdom of God.

Church Teaching

We say the Church is "catholic" in that she relates to all peoples everywhere. All those who are baptized, even non-Catholics, are in some way bound up with the Church. The Church also relates to her forebears in faith, for the Jewish people remain dear to God. They were the first to hear his word, and the ones with whom a covenant still exists. The Church also relates to Muslims, for they adore the one, merciful God and anticipate his judgment on the last day. The Church, finally, also relates to Hindus and Buddhists, esteeming their teachings and practices as a ray of light that can be enlightening.

Additional Background

Links: Parables

Cedars of Lebanon
The Prophet Ezekiel

Music: "We Walk By Faith," M. Haugen (GIA, OCP, WLP)
"The Kingdom of God," B. Reese and A. Scott (GIA)
"Unless a Grain of Wheat," B. Farrell (GIA, OCP)

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set the space with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a candle, a green cloth, and an open Bible or Lectionary. If possible, have a dish with a variety of seeds, including mustard seeds.

Discover

1. Invite everyone to reflect quietly for one to two minutes on the Liturgy of the Word just celebrated.

Ask:

*What image, feeling, word, or mood stays with you?
Why?*

2. Invite them to close their eyes and imagine the sight described in the First Reading:

"I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of a cedar; . . . I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain . . . in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit, . . . under it every kind of bird will live; . . ."

Ask:

What kind of a God provides such a majestic tree?

What do you think when you hear the words "I the LORD have spoken; I will accomplish it"?

Deepen

1. Proclaim the First Reading, Ezekiel 17:22-24.
2. Discuss:
 - Israel is in exile in Babylon at the time of the prophet Ezekiel.
 - These words would provide hope for a people oppressed.
 - God provides for his people; he does not abandon them in their need.
3. Ask:

Who would be consoled by the reading? In what way?

When in your life would this reading have given you hope? In what way?

4. Invite participants to share with another person.

Pray

Use the prayer found on the participant handout.

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Sunday Word

Ezekiel 17:22-24

Psalms 92:2-3, 13-16

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

Mark 4:26-34

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. Play a recording of the song “We Walk by Faith” by Marty Haugen.
2. Proclaim the Second Reading, 2 Corinthians 5:6-10. Share a personal experience of a time when you “walked by faith.”
3. Invite participants to remember a time when they were challenged to walk by faith. After a few minutes, invite them to share their experiences with someone.
4. Discuss the importance of faith—to trust in God’s promise spoken in the First Reading.
5. Proclaim the Gospel, Mark 4:26-34.
6. Ask:

What do you think is the message of the Gospel?

*What does the Gospel teach about faith?
The Kingdom of God?*

What is the role of parables that Jesus uses?

Explore

1. Highlight the following discussion points:
 - God is faithful; God does not renege on any promise.
 - Faith is not quantitative; faith is our response to God’s invitation to be in relationship with him.

- Jesus proclaims that the Kingdom of God is at hand; it is in the here and now but it is not yet fully realized. That will come to be when Jesus comes at the end of time.
 - Our hope in the coming of Christ is what sustains us. That seed of hope is found in the Church.
 - The Church is the Body of Christ, who is the Head, in whom all the members are united with each other.
 - The Church is meant for everyone because the Head of the Church, Jesus, is the sole mediator between God and all people. He alone is the way to Salvation.
 - The Church affirms that all who seek God with sincere hearts and, prompted by grace, strive in their actions to do God’s will through the dictates of their consciences, may attain Salvation.
 - The Church is catholic—universal—in that she relates to all peoples everywhere.
2. Highlight key points from the participant handout’s Catholic Teaching: The Church and the Kingdom of God. 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 everyone to take a seed from the dish on the table. Encourage them to plant the seeds and watch them grow. Invite them to reflect on the way that their faith has also grown even without their being aware of the growth.

Pray

Use the Collect from today’s liturgy.