

Young Apprentices

A RESOURCE FOR THE RCIA

CATECHUMENATE SESSION

Third Sunday of Advent • Year B • December 17, 2023

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—ISAIAH 61:1-2A, 10-11

Isaiah the prophet declares that he has been anointed by the Lord to announce a year of favor to God's people.

SECOND READING—1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-24

Saint Paul reminds the Christian community to rejoice, pray, and give thanks in all circumstances. God is faithful.

GOSPEL—JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

John the Baptist offers testimony regarding the Messiah, the Christ. The people do not understand, and they question him. John points out to the people that the Messiah is already in their midst, yet they do not recognize him!

Church Teaching: Discernment

Spiritual writers through the centuries have sought to describe the process of discernment. Its "hinge" is conscience and its "fuels" are Sacred Scripture, Tradition, Church teaching, and the sacraments. Like any skill, it takes much practice. Ultimately, however, it derives from the way we are created by God and it relies on God's grace for its functioning.

The five basic elements of discernment are trust in God, whose grace helps us at every turn; trust in the Church, whose riches help form our hearts and minds; a discriminating attitude, listening to the voice of the Spirit in the events of our lives; constant practice and fine-tuning; and humility.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1694, 1729, 2690

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: Chapter 23 (Life in Christ—Part One), especially the section entitled "Doctrinal Statements," pages 319–320

Our Catholic Heritage, Levels I and II: page 124 (examination of conscience)

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set the space with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a purple cloth and an Advent wreath.

Discover

1. Light three candles (including the pink [rose] one).
2. Proclaim the First Reading, Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11.
3. Invite volunteers to name what the anointed one brings. (*glad tidings to the poor; healing to the brokenhearted; liberty to the captives; release to the prisoners; a year of favor from the Lord*) Explain any unfamiliar words or phrases.
4. Ask:
 - Who would be really happy to hear this reading?*
 - Why?*
 - What makes you rejoice in the Lord?*

Deepen

1. Proclaim again the First Reading, Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11.
2. Discuss the children's understanding of the following phrases from the reading.
 - God is the joy of my soul.
 - He has clothed me with a robe of salvation.
 - He has wrapped me in a mantle of justice.
 - The Lord God will make justice and praise spring up.
3. Invite volunteers to share ideas about how we can make a world of justice and praise spring up at home, at school, in our neighborhoods, and in our world.

Pray

Celebrate a Minor Exorcism (see RCIA 90–93) using Prayer of Exorcism #94 H.

Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Supplies

In addition to the prayer table setup, you will need copies of the participant handout, a flip chart or whiteboard, and markers.

Sunday Word

Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11

Luke 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Welcome

Welcome everyone and invite one or two children to share some of the key points from the Dismissal Session.

Invite

1. Proclaim the Gospel, John 1:6-8, 19-28.
2. Discuss the similarities between the Gospel passage proclaimed last week (Mark 1:1-8) and the Gospel passage just proclaimed. Similarities include:
 - The people come out to the desert to hear John.
 - They want to know whether John the Baptist is the one they are waiting for, and John tells them he is not the one.
 - John urges them to prepare the way for the Lord.
 - John baptizes with water and tells the people that the one coming after him will baptize with the Spirit.
 - John considers himself unworthy to even undo the sandal strap of the one coming after him (Jesus).
3. John the Baptist tells the people they do not recognize Jesus in their midst. Invite volunteers to name ways we can recognize Jesus in our midst today. (*Replies might include caring for the poor; praying; loving one another; studying the Bible; and sharing the Good News with others.*)

Teach

1. Write the word *discern* on the flip chart or whiteboard. Invite a volunteer to explain the meaning of the word, or explain its meaning in your own words.
2. Talk about our need to discern the many voices in our lives. The voices of some people lead us to a deeper faith. The voices of others may lead us away from our relationship with God and with the People of God, the Church. Ask the children for examples of each.
3. Explain that in order to discern well, we need to listen to God's voice. This takes practice, just like any other activity we do. Invite volunteers to name ways we can best practice listening to God's voice.
4. Read and discuss Key Teachings from the participant handout.
5. Review with the children this week's Faith Words: *discern* and *examination of conscience*.

Challenge

1. Create an acrostic by writing the letters of the word *discern* from top to bottom on the flip chart or whiteboard.
2. Challenge the children to name words or phrases that describe things that help us discern and contain one of the letters of the word *discern*.

Prayer

Explain to the children that today's prayer, an examination of conscience, can help us discern how well we are listening to God's voice. Lead the prayer using the following questions, or refer to page 124 of *Our Catholic Heritage* for further suggestions.

What do I give thanks to God for today?

What am I sorry that I said or did today?

To whom do I need to say I'm sorry?

Whom do I need to ask God to bless today?

Encourage the children to pray this type of prayer often at the end of the day.