

Young Apprentices

A RESOURCE FOR THE RCIA

CATECHUMENATE SESSION

Fourth Sunday of Advent • Year B • December 24, 2023

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—2 SAMUEL 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A

The prophet Nathan speaks the word of the Lord to the king. Why should David build God a house when God himself has raised a lowly shepherd to be king and established his line as a royal house?

SECOND READING—ROMANS 16:25-27

Saint Paul reminds the Christian community that the plan of God has unfolded over many ages and has been brought to fulfillment in Christ. The mystery has been revealed in Jesus.

GOSPEL—LUKE 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will bear God's Son. The first words out of the angel's mouth hail the young maiden as grace-filled. God's favor rests upon Mary.

Church Teaching: The Incarnation

The Incarnation could be described as the linchpin of the faith. In the Nicene Creed, we confess our belief that for the sake of humanity, the eternal Word "came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man." In the person of Jesus Christ, God and humanity are one. Four aspects of the mystery of the Incarnation highlighted by the Church are that the Word became flesh to save us; the Word became flesh to shower us with divine love; the Word became flesh to exemplify holiness of life; and the Word became flesh to open for us a share in the divine nature.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 461, 464, 469

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: Chapter 7 (The Good News: God Has Sent His Son), especially the section entitled "True God and True Man," pages 81–83

Our Catholic Heritage, Levels I and II: Pages 40 and 41

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

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

Discover

1. Light the four candles of the Advent wreath. Invite the children to think about the liturgy just celebrated. What words or phrases do they remember hearing?
2. Ask:
 - What does it mean that all four candles are now lit?*
 - What do you now know and understand about the season of Advent?*
 - What are you doing to get ready for the celebration of Christmas (Christ's Day)?*

Deepen

1. Proclaim the Gospel, Luke 1:26-38. After doing so, invite the children to retell the story in their own words (or to dramatize the story).
2. Ask volunteers to share times they have said yes before they knew exactly what was going to happen. (*signing up for a gymnastics class; going to a new school; going to summer camp; moving, and so on*) How did they feel? Excited? Scared?
3. Invite the children to share how the volunteers' experiences were like Mary's experience. Ask: "What is similar? What is different? What did Mary learn from her experience? What did the volunteers who shared learn from their experiences?"

Pray

Sing or listen to a recording of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" or "Soon and Very Soon."

Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Supplies

In addition to the prayer table setup, you will need the participant handout for each child, a copy of the Nicene Creed for each child, and a flip chart or whiteboard and markers.

Sunday Word

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16

Psalms 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

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, Luke 1:26-38.
2. Invite the children to think about things that seem impossible to them. (*growing taller; making the sports team; getting a good grade at school; getting the lead in the school play, and so on*) List responses on the flip chart or whiteboard.
3. Ask a volunteer to share what seemed impossible in today's Gospel Reading. (*Elizabeth was going to have a child in her old age.*)
4. Invite a volunteer to share what the angel said in reply. (*"For nothing will be impossible for God."*)
5. Explain that Mary's faith and trust in God helped her believe that what seemed impossible would come true. God invites all of us to have faith and to trust in him.

Teach

1. Read and discuss Key Teachings from the participant handout.
2. Highlight these key points in today's session:
 - After Adam and Eve committed sin and were driven out of the Garden of Eden, God promised that he would send a Savior.

- Christmas celebrates the coming of that Savior.
- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior, was born as a baby in Bethlehem.
- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, becoming human is called the Incarnation.
- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became human to live among us and show God's love for us.
- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, teaches us how to live.
- Mary, the Mother of God, had great faith and trust in God.
- All things are possible with God.

Faith Words

Review with the children this week's Faith Words: *Savior* and *Incarnation*. Refer to the participant handout for definitions.

Challenge

1. Take a few minutes to recall with the children the celebration of Advent this year. Ask volunteers to share what they will remember or to share their favorite things about the celebration of Advent.
2. Ask the children what they have yet to do to be ready for the celebration of Christmas. List their responses on the flip chart or whiteboard. Circle any suggestions that have to do with spiritual preparation. If no suggestions were offered, brainstorm some possibilities. (*Pray every day; help at home; prepare cards and gifts for others; plan to attend Christmas Mass; and so on.*)
3. Give each child a copy of the Nicene Creed. Remind the children that one of their Faith Words for today is *Incarnation*. Point out to the children the words of *Incarnation*, and teach the children to bow at these words.

Pray

Pray the Nicene Creed together, bowing at the words of the *Incarnation*.