

Young Apprentices

A RESOURCE FOR THE RCIA

CATECHUMENATE SESSION

Fourth Sunday of Lent • Year B • March 10, 2024

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

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

Israel ignores the precepts of the Lord. The nation is overrun and its people are sent into exile. A foreign king, moved by the Lord God, manifests the Almighty's mercy and love to his people as they are returned to their homeland.

SECOND READING—EPHESIANS 2:4-10

God, rich in mercy, brings believers to new life in Christ despite their shortcomings and sinfulness. Saint Paul reminds us that we are given a new lease on life in Christ not by our own doing but by God's sheer generosity.

GOSPEL—JOHN 3:14-21

Jesus speaks with Nicodemus, telling him that all who believe in God's Son will inherit newness of life. Everyone who entrusts themselves to this belief will not perish but will be given everlasting life.

Church Teaching: The Grace of God

All grace is a gift from God. Catholics, however, distinguish between different types of divine grace. *Sanctifying (or habitual) grace* is given to us in Baptism. It makes of us a new person, a wholly new creation, and promotes within us a stable, supernatural disposition such that we become adopted children of God. *Actual grace* is given to us throughout our lives to help us. It arrives as a specific intervention from God in the varying circumstances of life to further our holiness and stability in the divine life. *Sacramental graces* are given through the Seven Sacraments.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1987, 1996, 2005

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: Chapter 24 (Life in Christ—Part Two), especially the section entitled "Grace and Justification," pages 328–330

Our Catholic Heritage, Level I and Level II: pages 32–33

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set the space with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a purple cloth, a candle, and the Lectionary or Bible.

Discover

1. Invite volunteers to respond to the following questions:

Can you think of a time when you were really happy about a big decision that you or your family made?

What was the decision you made?

What happened because of your decision?

2. Then ask volunteers to share: *Whom do you listen to the most? Why?*

Deepen

1. Proclaim the First Reading, 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23.

2. Ask:

In the beginning of the story, what was the decision the Israelites had made?

What happened because of their decision? Was what happened good or bad? Why?

What did God do to help make things right again?

3. Ask the children:

Why would a people who have been blessed in so many ways stop listening to God, their protector and helper?

What does this Scripture story remind us to do? (Answers will vary but should include listening to God and doing what God tells us to do.)

Pray

Say or sing the Responsorial Psalm from today's liturgy, Psalm 137:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6, or pray together the prayer from the participant handout.

Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Sunday Word

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

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

Ephesians 2:4-10

John 3:14-21

Welcome

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

Invite

1. Begin by asking whether anyone remembers the meaning of the word *grace*. (*Grace is the gift of God's life and loving presence.*)
2. Share examples of times in your life when you experienced the grace of God—for example, a visit from a friend with whom you had lost contact; an unexpected bonus at work; a special gift from a family member; the sight of a really beautiful rainbow or sunset.
3. Invite everyone to try to think of a time when they experienced the grace of God in their lives and to share about that time with another person (perhaps a sponsor or family member).
4. If time allows, invite a few volunteers to share their thoughts with the whole group.

Teach

1. Proclaim the Second Reading, Ephesians 2:4-10.
2. Ask a volunteer to share what the Second Reading tells us about grace.
3. Continue the discussion on grace, highlighting the following points:
 - In Latin the word *grace* is *gratia*. It means many things, including *gift*, *favor*, *loving-kindness*, and *thanksgiving*. (Point out that the word *gratia* sounds much like the Spanish word *gracias*, which does mean “thanks” or “thank you.”)

- We believe that God's *grace*, or *gratia*, is God's free gift to us.
- In Baptism we receive the gift of God's *sanctifying grace*, the grace that frees us from sin, makes us a new creation, and makes us God's daughters and sons.
- God's free gift of grace does not depend upon what we do or say. We cannot earn God's love and grace, but we can open our hearts and lives to receive it.
- God's grace in us moves us to show our love for him and for others.

4. Review the Key Teachings and Faith Words from the participant handout.

Challenge

1. Challenge everyone to spend time at the end of each day between now and the next gathering to think of three ways in which they experienced God's grace that day.
2. Encourage the children to complete the *Jesus Is Light and Truth* page with their families.

Pray

Lead a litany of thanksgiving. Use the following prayers as a start.

For the gift of family, we pray (pause):
Thank you, God.

For the gift of creation, we pray (pause):
Thank you, God.

For the gift of grace, we pray (pause):
Thank you, God.