

Year 1 Confirmation Curriculum

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Session 1 - Intro to Confirmation

Goal: For candidates to be introduced to what the Sacrament is about - to know the heart of what it really means to be a Catholic Christian. To see their life journey as a faith journey, as a story unfolding.

Opening Prayer (2 mins) (see *Catechist Prep Sheet*)

Introductions (20 mins)

Adult Catechists and candidates all go around the room (virtual or live) and introduce themselves, sharing the following:

Grade/School (or alma mater)

One fun or positive experience from the summer

Favorite hobbies

One thing most people don't know about you

Teaching/Sharing/Large Group Discussion/Interactive (20 mins)
(see *Catechist Prep Sheet*)

- What is Confirmation?
- What is being a Catholic Christian?
- What is the story of our Church (overview of history of Jewish people to the time of Jesus to today)?

Activity - Your Story (10 mins)

-Time for the Confirmation

Candidates to process their Faith Journey up to the present moment.

Have each person share their Faith Journey Timeline:

Noting:

Key moments

Experiences of being close to or feeling far from God

Faith

Sharing Your Story (25 mins)

Have each person share their story with the rest of the group.

Review Confirmation Requirements (5 mins)

- Attend each month's session.
- Attend Cor 2.0 twice per year (6:30 - 7:30 pm Virtual as of 2020)
- Attend one-day retreat
- Choose a sponsor
- Make a saint project (due in spring).

Assign Reflection Exercise #1 (2 mins)

Write down 3 experiences of God that you have between now and the next meeting.

Closing Prayer (3 mins)

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Share intentions by taking turns and calling each candidate. Adult lead closes with:
"We lift these intentions up to God in the name of the Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Amen"

Session 1 - Catechist Prep Sheet

Opening Prayer (*feel free to read this one or create your own prayer*)

God, You who are all good, all knowing, and all loving, You who are with us always, thank you for giving us this day. Thank you for allowing us all to be here together. Each one of us is a sacred gift. Help us to see each other's sacredness. Help us to see you in one another, in all things. Open our hearts to know you more deeply and open our minds to understand your wisdom and truth. Let us be filled with Your Love, that we might carry it from here to everyone we meet. We ask all of these things, in the name of The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit.

Teaching/Large Group Discussion/Interactive What is Confirmation? To begin, ask the teens what "Confirmation" means to them. Let them know that this is a safe space to speak their minds, to ask questions, to not have all the answers. After some ideas are put forth, feel free to present some of the following information.

- Confirmation is one of the **Sacraments of Initiation** in the Catholic Church. (The other 2 are Baptism and First Communion). The Sacrament of Confirmation seals your Baptism and fills you with the 7 Gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- In the early Church, Christians were persecuted and often had to worship in hiding. If a person wanted to become a Christian, to follow the Way of Jesus, to be in the Christian community, they had to have someone from inside vouch for them (aka: a sponsor).
- In the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 8, Verses 14-17, there are some Christians who have been Baptized, but hadn't yet fully received the Holy Spirit.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

● As much as this information is important, **we hear these words** "Holy Spirit", "Sacrament", "Apostles", etc. so often, that **we might forget what they all mean**. This program is designed to **go deeper into the meaning** of our Catholic Christian faith, **beyond going through the motions**, to the heart of our faith. **What is being a Catholic Christian?** Again, ask the teens what it means to them. If you have a white board/chalk board, maybe even write their definitions on the board for them to see.

- Living our faith is a choice we make each day. One day at a time, waking up in the morning and putting on Christ.
- The word "**Catholic**" comes from the Greek meaning "**universal**". The word "**Church**" (Latin *ecclesia*, from the Greek *ek-ka-lein*, to "call out of") is the assembly of the people, the community coming together. The Catholic Church is meant to be a **community** of all

people, from **all over the world**.

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- The word “**Christian**” derives from the Greek “Christos” and means **followers of Christ**. To be a Christian is to follow the way of life that Jesus Christ preached about.
- The mission of the Church is for people **to know Jesus Christ personally**, to **follow him whole-heartedly**, and to **bring Christ’s message** of joy, love, peace, healing, and freedom (aka The Gospel or Good News) **to all the nations**.
- A **disciple** is someone who follows a teacher. We are all invited to be disciples of Jesus. An **apostle** is someone who has been sent out. We are also each given an “apostolic” call to take what we have learned from Jesus and bring it to the world. We do this in our words, our actions, our thoughts - by our lives. **A Brief Church History**

Here unpack briefly for the group what our Church’s context is in the history of the Jewish people. **Salvation history in a nutshell**. Too much detail will become distracting, for now we want them to take away big picture stuff. However, if the teens ask specific questions, feel free to respond as best as you can.

- In **Genesis**, the first book of the Bible, God created the universe, the earth, all that is in it, and mankind became thinking beings, we gained an awareness of God, and we gained an understanding of right and wrong. **(Be sure to mention that being Catholic does not mean we interpret Genesis and all of the Bible literally, but rather that we understand the text in its context and we understand the truth in it.)**
- The “Fall” happened when we (Adam and Eve) chose wrong even though we knew (after eating from the tree of knowledge) better. In our wrongdoing, we felt shame, and we sought to hide ourselves from God.
- **Our human condition** is one of **learning right from wrong**, and **yet being nevertheless “addicted” to sin**, to choosing wrong at times, to placing distance between ourselves and God (just as Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden), even though it is **God alone that can satisfy our restless hearts**.
- **God is unconditionally loving**, and doesn’t want us to live in shame or away from his loving gaze. God has consistently pursued us to give us healing and freedom from our sin and our compulsion to do that which we know isn’t good for us.
- **God revealed Himself, His Love, His Might, and His Wisdom to prophets** like Abraham, Noah, Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Elijah, Jeremiah, and more throughout the centuries, and the Jewish people knew themselves as God’s “chosen people”.
- **God made covenants**, promises, to his people again and again, but each time God kept up his end, we were unable to keep up ours.
- So that we might be saved once and for all from this tendency, and that we might know the unconditional love of God in a personal way, **God became incarnate** - took on flesh - **in the form of Jesus Christ**.

- **Jesus Christ showed us:**

- how to live: a human path that will lead to the fulfillment of joy, freedom, love, peace, hope, and truth
- the extent to which God loves us, even unto death
- that the “chosen people” is ALL people of every nation
- that because Jesus was both God and man, he could keep up both ends of the covenant, though we had failed to keep our own, so his sacrifice, his gift of love on the Cross, was a final and definitive act to effectively free us from the power of sin and death (the “new and eternal covenant”)

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- that holiness is not something that we can *will* to happen all on our own, but that we must ask for the grace to live a holy life, we *need* God, we need to rely on God to empower us and strengthen us.

- **Christ founded the Church** so that we would be empowered by His Holy Spirit and by community and Communion with one another to bring the Good News of unconditional love, freedom, and hope to the entire world.

- The **teachings and wisdom** of our faith are the roadmap, and the **Sacraments** are important and sacred signs of grace that empower us to live our faith out.

Session 2 - Getting to Know God

Goal: For candidates to be introduced to God, and to God's voice which can only be heard in stillness and silence. "Be still and know that I am God" - Psalm 46. To be introduced to Lectio Divina. Getting to know God in the word, learning how to begin to listen to God speaking in the silence of the heart.

Opening Prayer (2 mins) (see Catechist Prep Sheet)

Check Ins (5 mins)

Share highs and lows from the past month/week.

Share Reflection Exercise #1 with Group (10 mins)

Each candidate and Catechists will share 3 places they saw God since the last meeting.

Large Group Activity and Discussion (20 mins)

Who is God? -What are some words and/or images that come to mind when we say the word "God" and the "Imago Dei."

After finishing the collage, take time for each person to explain what they contributed and why.

Teaching/Sharing (20 mins) (see Catechist Prep Sheet)

Leave time for Q&A.

**Activity - [Lectio Divina \(15 mins\)](#)
(Click Above)**

Read "Psalm 139: 1-18,
23-24.

Assign Reflection Exercise #2 (10 mins)

Try Lectio Divina 1 or 2 more times before the next meeting. Select from a few scripture passages you will give them. Write down the words or phrases that stand out to you and how you hear God speaking to you through that passage or how it made you feel as you read it.

Closing Prayer (5 mins) - Listen to ["You Speak" by Audrey Assad](#)

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Session 2 - Catechist Prep Sheet

Opening Prayer (*feel free to read this one or create your own prayer*)

Let nothing trouble you / Let nothing frighten you/ Everything passes / God never changes / Patience / Obtains all / Whoever has God / Wants for nothing / God alone is enough. - St Teresa of Avila

Teaching/Sharing/Large Group Discussion/Interactive (20 mins)

● **Who is God to you?** (5 min) Catechist(s), share briefly about who God is to you. When do you first remember coming to believe in God or was God just always there? How close were you to God as a teen? How close are you now? What are some small ways that God makes Godself known to you?

● **Some things God is NOT:** Not a policeman to catch us when we are bad Not Santa Claus, the tooth fairy, or a genie to give us gifts or grant wishes Not a referee

● **Who is God?** Love. God the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit. The Lover, the Beloved, and the Love shared between them.

● **YHWH - The name of God** - Exodus 3: 11-15 *"But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" God answered: I will be with you; and this will be your sign that I have sent you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will serve God at this mountain. "But," said Moses to God, "if I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what do I tell them?"* **God replied to Moses: I am who I am. [In**

Hebrew YHWH] Then he added: This is what you will tell the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you. God spoke further to Moses: This is what you will say to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever; this is my title for all generations.”

- **How do we know God exists?** God is “being” itself. The source of our very own being. The source of all creation. Matter and creation exists. Therefore it had to come from somewhere.

- **Imago Dei - The image of God** - Genesis 1: 26-27 “Then God said: Let us make human beings in our **image**, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth. God created mankind in his image; **in the image of God he created them**; male and female he created them.”

- **God is the breath/author of life** - Genesis 2: 7 “then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils **the breath of life** [**“ruach” in Hebrew, the same word used when Jesus breathes upon the Apostles**], and the man became a living being.”

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- **Attributes of God** (CCC 268), Psalm 139,

- **Omnipotent** (CCC 268) - all powerful
- **Universal** - God’s power extends to the entire universe and beyond
- **Eternal/Transcendent/Immeasurable** - transcends time, space, matter, etc. (Wisdom 7: 22 - 8: 1)
- **Impassible and unchangeable** - cannot be defeated, destroyed, altered, or triumphed over (James 1:17)
- **Omnibenevolent** - God is all-good, He wills good towards his beloved children
- **Omniscient** - God is all-knowing, His ways and his knowledge are higher than ours. (Isaiah 55: 8-9)
- **God is love, the source of all**
- **Perfect/Divine/Glorious**
- **Infinitely merciful & Infinitely just**

- **God wants a relationship with us** and created us out of the Love that He is, that we might know that we are loved and that we are love, and that we might be able to give and receive love.

- **Intro to Lectio Divina**

- **God communicates with us:** The Lord spoke to Elijah and said: “Then the LORD said: Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will pass by. There was a strong

*and violent wind rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the LORD—but the LORD was not in the wind; after the wind, an earthquake—but the LORD was not in the earthquake; after the earthquake, fire—but the LORD was not in the fire; after the fire, a **light silent sound.***” - 1 Kings 19: 11-12 Our Church has given us Holy Scripture, the God-breathed living word to guide us, to inspire us, to lead us, to remind us who and whose we are. One way to help deepen our relationship with God is to spend time with God in His Word.

The practice of Lectio Divina “Latin for *divine reading*” is a Benedictine practice of scripture reading, meditation, and prayer.

The Ignatian practice for Lectio Divina known as Ignatian Meditation goes like this:

- 1. Become aware of God’s presence:** Reflect that God is everywhere. Or recognize that God is especially present in the hearts and minds of believers. You may also picture Christ in the imagination, or think of Him listening to His children at prayer. If praying in a place where the Eucharist is reserved, be aware of the Real Presence of Christ.
- 2. Ask for the grace you wish to receive:** peace, patience, a sense of God’s presence, hope, courage, etc.
- 3. Slowly read the passage you are meditating upon 3 times. Each time, take a moment to notice what words or phrases stand out to you, what thoughts or feelings arise** (whether positive or negative, joyful, sorrowful, resistant to or drawn to). With each reading, spend time with the thoughts or feelings as long as necessary. Why is it so important to notice your feelings? They

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represent the inclinations of the will resulting from a new or deeper understanding of some truth about God.

- 4. Speak to God in your heart (Colloquy):** Speak to God as you would a friend.

Ask God about the thoughts and feelings that come up. Imagine what God might say in return. Let your imagination be a vehicle through which God speaks. Consider whether God might be guiding you towards some kind of resolution or action through your thoughts and feelings. Ask God about it.

- 5. Thank God for the time spent in meditation.** Thank God for the feelings and thoughts that came up and ask God to be with you throughout the rest of the day or night.

Psalm 139 LORD, you have searched me, you know me: you know when I sit and stand; you understand my thoughts from afar. You sift through my travels and my rest; with all my ways you are familiar. Even before a word is

on my tongue, LORD, you know it all. Behind and before you encircle me and rest your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, far too lofty for me to reach. Where can I go from your spirit? From your presence, where can I flee? If I ascend to the heavens, you are there; if I lie down in Sheol, there you are. If I take the wings of dawn and dwell beyond the sea, Even there your hand guides me, your right hand holds me fast. If I say, "Surely darkness shall hide me, and night shall be my light" Darkness is not dark for you, and night shines as the day. Darkness and light are but one. You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I praise you, because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works! My very self you know. My bones are not hidden from you, When I was being made in secret,

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fashioned in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw me unformed; in your book all are written down; my days were shaped, before one came to be. How precious to me are your designs, O God; how vast the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the sands; when I complete them, still you are with me.

Search me, God, know my heart; try me, know my thoughts. See if there is a wicked path in me; lead me along an ancient path.

Session 3 - Getting to Know Jesus

Goal: Teens will examine their understandings or preconceived notions of who Jesus is. Candidates will be introduced to Jesus, as a real person, not just a concept or distant historical figure. To get to know Jesus in Scripture. To begin to develop a personal relationship with him.

Opening Prayer (2 mins)

Check Ins (10 mins)

Share highs and lows from the past month/week.

Share Reflection Exercise #2 with Group (15 mins)

Each candidate and Catechists will share about their experiences with Lectio Divina prayer since the last time they met.

Teaching/Sharing/Large Group Discussion/Interactive (10 mins)

Who is Jesus? (Have teens share ideas, write them down - what does society say about Jesus? What are some words or qualities that describe him? What are positive and negative associations with the name of Jesus?)

Activity - Jesus in the Gospels (30 mins) (see *Catechist Prep Sheet*)

Break teens into pairs and give each pair a passage from one of the Gospels illustrating something different about who Jesus is (eg: flipping tables, healing a blind man, speaking with a Samaritan woman, calling out Pharisees, etc.). Have the teens *read the passage and explore the following questions:*

- What does Jesus do?
- How is he perceived?

- How would you describe him in this passage?

- How does this passage make you feel? Then *each pair must prepare a brief skit to act out the passage with no words* they were given and the rest of the group must try to guess which story they are depicting. After 15 minutes or so, *have the pairs each present to the rest of the group*, and once they have guessed, have each pair summarize what happened in their passage, and share what they observed about Jesus, and how it made them feel.

Assign Reflection Exercise #3 (5 mins)

Select 1 story of Jesus from any of the 4 Gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke or John) and write a paragraph about what he did, what it shows about who he is, and how you relate to it.

Closing Prayer (15 mins) - [Guided Meditation \(5:45 mins\)](#)

Jesus sitting beside you, have a conversation.

Session 3 - Catechist Prep Sheet

Opening Prayer (*feel free to read this one or create your own prayer*)

Jesus, you are God-made-flesh among us, the visible faces of an Invisible God, you are the hope that the world cried out for and still cries out for. Help us to see you Jesus. Help us to see you in ourselves, in one another, and to know you not only as our Savior, but as our dearest friend. Help us to be filled with your love, that we might pour that love out to all those around us. In your name we pray, Amen.

Activity - Jesus in the Gospels Feel free to use the [Bible](#) so everyone can learn how to open them up and look up the passages.

Teaching Points After each passage, mention the following about each passage, if the teens don't observe these things themselves.

- **John 2: 1-11 - Wedding at Cana** Jesus is someone who goes to parties and enjoys festivity and celebration. Jesus is close with his mother. His mother brings the needs of others to Jesus. Jesus knows he has a big calling, even before his 3 years of active ministry begin. Though he knows what he is called to, he is also apprehensive, or reluctant to begin his journey. The wine he creates from the water is the best wine the guests have had all night - in other words, what Jesus gives is better than anything else the world can offer. It also prefigures the wine that becomes his blood, that we receive in the Eucharist.

- **John 8: 2-11 - A Woman Caught In Adultery** Jesus is not reactionary. He thoughtfully responds to situations. He isn't judgmental.

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He is merciful. Honest and truthful, but gentle and not pretentious or controlling. Jesus is a good mirror - he helps us recognize our need to look at ourselves before we focus on pointing fingers at others. Jesus does not condemn. Jesus invites us to live a life in relationship with him (without sin coming between us and God).

- **John 2:13-22 - Cleansing of the Temple** Jesus gets righteously angry. Have you ever gotten angry about something that just isn't right? Whether it affects you personally or affects others? Jesus is well versed in the Hebrew scriptures and the words of the prophets. Jesus knows that he will die and be resurrected and speaks in metaphor when he refers to the temple.

- **John 11: 32-44 - The Raising of Lazarus** Jesus has the power to raise the dead, yet he still feels sadness at the loss of life. He cries. Jesus feels deeply when he sees the anguish his dear friends Mary and Martha feel. Jesus is empathetic. Jesus is close to those he cares about in their pain. When Jesus does perform miracles, it is always to point to God's power in him, to give glory to God. Even in the most awful circumstances, Jesus' ability to bring glory to God, to bring triumph out of apparent defeat, cannot be outdone.

- **Luke 22:39-46 - The Agony in the Garden** Jesus feels fear, worry, anxiety, and stress. [Hematidrosis](#) is a real condition in which capillary blood vessels that feed the sweat glands rupture, causing them to exude blood, occurring under conditions of extreme physical or emotional stress. So Jesus was feeling that the night before he was to die. Jesus, who is God, understands the human experiences of intense anxiety and stress and fear. Yet, even in spite of that, he says "your will be done". Jesus is truly free in his capacity to entrust all things to God the Father. To put all things in God's hands. This is true freedom. But Jesus is able to do that because he *knows* the Father so well. He spends time with him in silent prayer. He *trusts* the Father completely. This unwavering trust in God is the foundation of true human freedom.

- **Luke 4: 1-13 - The Temptation in the Desert** Jesus is just as affected by human temptation as we are. The devil is real. And he's not a little red guy with a pitchfork, but a force, a false spirit, that tries to create distance between ourselves and God. That voice that discourages us, confuses us, tries to plant doubt in ourselves and God's love for us. Jesus holds tightly to the word of God in order to resist temptation, thereby showing us the key to resisting it.

- **Other Key Points to hit on in debriefing about Jesus in the Gospels**

- We believe and hold firm that **Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man** (YouCat 39). We proclaim this belief every Sunday in the Nicene Creed. Along with this belief, we also proclaim that Jesus was “begotten” of the Father and

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“consubstantial” with Him, meaning He truly is of one substance or essence with the Father (CCC 242, 663).

- **Jesus was radical** - The culture wants to reduce Jesus to a nice guy. Galilean carpenter who became an itinerant preacher, turned water into wine, made the lame walk and the blind see, walked on water, multiplied a handful of loaves and fishes to feed thousands, got under the skin of secular and religious leaders of the day, was executed on a cross, was buried in a borrowed tomb, and three days later rose from the dead. He taught “You have heard that it was said ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy...’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matthew 5:43-44) - this was radical 2000 years ago & is radical today - it gets rid of revenge in one sentence.
- **Why did Jesus come to earth to be one of us?** The Catechism lists 4 reasons:
 - 1) to remove sin and reconcile us to God,
 - (2) to show us just how much God loves us,
 - (3) to show us how to live,
 - (4) to fill us with his divine life. CS Lewis, creator of the Narnia series, says we only have three choices when it comes to Jesus: he is either a liar, a lunatic, or the Messiah he claims to be. Other major world religions acknowledge Jesus as a great teacher or a great prophet, but he never claimed to be those, he claimed to be the Messiah. Secular historians of his time wrote about him & Jewish writers agree that Jesus walked the earth at the same place and time that the Gospels establish. Other world religions all acknowledge Jesus.

Scripture Passages

John 2: 1-11 - Wedding at Cana On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”[And] Jesus said to her, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said

to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

John 8: 2-11 - A Woman Caught In Adultery

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Early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin anymore."

John 2:13-22 - Cleansing of the Temple Since the Passover* of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as the money-changers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, "Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace." His disciples recalled the words of scripture, "Zeal for your house will consume me." At this the Jews answered and said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the scripture and the word Jesus had spoken.

John 11: 32-44 - The Raising of Lazarus When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him,

she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see." And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him. But some of them said, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?" So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me."

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And when he had said this, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go."

Luke 22:39-46 - The Agony in the Garden Then going out he went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. When he arrived at the place he said to them, "Pray that you may not undergo the test." After withdrawing about a stone's throw from them and kneeling, he prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done." And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him. He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground. When he rose from prayer and returned to his disciples, he found them sleeping from grief. He said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not undergo the test."

Luke 4: 1-13 - The Temptation in the Desert Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan River and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and their glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me." Jesus said to him in reply, "It is written: 'You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.'" Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' and: 'With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'" When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a

time.

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Session 4 - Jesus in the Eucharist

Goal: Teens will gain a deeper understanding of the Eucharist and how we receive - and become what we receive - in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We will examine the Scriptural origin of our Church's teaching about Jesus's real presence in the Eucharist.

Opening Prayer (2 mins) (See Catechist Prep Sheet)

Check Ins (10 mins)

Share highs and lows from the past month/week.

Share Reflection Exercise #3 with Group (15 mins)

Each candidate and Catechists will share about the Gospel passage they chose that illustrates something they related to about Jesus.

Large Group Discussion/Interactive (10 mins)

Have your group discuss the following questions.

- What do you remember about your 1st Communion?
- What are some facts you already know about the Eucharist?

Teaching/Catechist Sharing (25 mins)

- For **Teaching Points**, see the ***Catechist Prep Sheet***
- Optional teaching tool: Feel free to show the [Catholic Central video on “Real Presence”](#)
- Leave time for **discussion questions** (See ***Catechist Prep Sheet***)

Assign Reflection Exercise #4 (2 mins)

In the time between now and the next meeting, pay attention to what you’re doing, being very present in the moment, when you receive the Eucharist at Mass. Write a paragraph about what you notice, or how your attitude has changed or hasn’t changed when you receive at Mass. And/or: Spend time in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel between now and the next meeting, talk to Jesus in the Eucharist. Write down a paragraph about your experience with that (what you notice, feel, challenges, etc.) that you can share at the next meeting.

Closing Prayer (15 mins) - Catechist Witness Talk + Eucharistic Adoration (15 mins) Go to the virtual [Blessed Sacrament Chapel](#). Be sure to explain that as you enter the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, it is good to acknowledge Jesus’ presence in the Tabernacle by genuflecting. Before opening the little window door of the tabernacle, have one catechist give a 5 minute witness talk about their experience of the Eucharist. (*Have you ever felt a strong experience of Christ, mystically or otherwise, in the Eucharist? What struggles do you have or have you overcome with regards to believing in [the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist?](#)*) Spend 10 minutes before the Blessed Sacrament. Suggested invitation: *Spend*

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time just letting God look at you, as you adore God, let God adore you. Or pour out your troubles or doubts to God. Have a conversation. Whatever you want to bring. Just give yourself permission to simply be in Jesus’ real presence. Even if you struggle to believe, allow yourself to imagine: What if it’s really him? What if it’s true? How would it affect you?

Session 4 - Catechist Prep Sheet

Opening Prayer (*feel free to read this one or create your own prayer*) Jesus, you who are the word made flesh, you not only gave us your words of everlasting life, but you give us yourself,

in the Eucharist. Help us to more deeply appreciate what it means to receive YOU. Help us not to go through the motions when we go to Mass, and receive communion. Help us to truly enter into the sacred mystery that it is, to receive you. Your entire presence, concentrated in what appears to be the smallest fragment of bread or drop of wine, yet truly, it's you. Help us to see you with the eyes of our hearts, even when our eyes cannot perceive you and our minds cannot understand. Help us to be transformed as we receive your Holy Presence within us, that we would truly become Your Body, One Body in you, here on earth. We ask this in your name, Jesus. Amen.

Teaching Points

- What does Incarnation mean?: A central theological mystery and doctrine of Christianity that refers to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Son of God, becoming a human being in Jesus of Nazareth, a Galilean Jew, while also remaining God. John's Gospel refers to the Incarnation as "*the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us*" (see Jn 1:15). This doctrine underlies the Catholic Church's identity and mission, which is to preach the Word of God and thus transform individuals, societies, and cultures in the image of Christ himself.
- What is the Eucharist?: Recalling the words of Jesus, the Catholic Church professes that, in the celebration of the Eucharist, bread and wine become the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the priest.
- The Eucharist in Scripture: Jesus said: "*Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.*"

"The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us [his] flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This

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is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever." These things he said while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Then many of his disciples who were listening said, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, “*Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.*” Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him. And he said, “*For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father.*” As a result of this, many [of] his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.”(Jn 6:47-66).

- **Isn't Jesus Speaking Metaphorically? No:** Jesus could have clarified that he was speaking metaphorically or symbolically, but he didn't, even though he did that for other parables for his disciples. In this case, he doubled down - “***Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.***” The word “eats” here is actually more accurately translated as “***gnaws***”, so he's speaking even more literally.

- **So Isn't that Cannibalism?:** No. Though Christ is substantially present—body, blood, soul and divinity—in the Eucharist, the accidents of bread and wine remain. Here it is important to define terms. When the Church teaches the bread and wine at Mass are transubstantiated into the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ, we have to understand what this means. The word, **transubstantiation, literally means “transformation of the substance.”** “Substance” refers to that which makes a thing essentially what it is. Thus, “substance” and “essence” are synonyms. For example, man is essentially composed of body, soul, intellect, and will. If you remove any one of these, he is no longer a human person. The accidents or accidentals would be things like hair color, eye color, size, weight, etc. One can change any of these and there would be no change in the essence or substance of the person. In the Eucharist, after the priest consecrates the bread and wine and they are, in fact, transubstantiated into the body, blood, soul and divinity of our Lord, our Lord is then entirely present. Neither bread nor wine remains. However, the accidents of bread and wine (size, weight, taste, texture) do remain. Hence, the essential reason why Catholics are not guilty of cannibalism is the fact that we do not receive our Lord in a *cannibalistic form*. We receive him *in the form of bread and wine*. The two are qualitatively different.

- **Ultimately, it's still a mystery:** Even the greatest theologians and saints cannot fully fathom the mystery of the Eucharist. That's why we say “the mystery of faith” at Mass. The presence of the risen Christ in the Eucharist is an inexhaustible mystery that the Church can never fully explain in words.

- **Discussion Questions**

- What do you wrestle with in thinking about Jesus as a regular guy?
- What is the Incarnation? What does it tell us about God's love for us?
- Jesus is fully human and fully God – how do you wrestle with that?
- What is your experience with the Eucharist?
- What makes it easy or difficult to believe the Eucharist is really Jesus' body and blood?

Session 5 - Getting to Know the Holy Spirit

Goal: For candidates to be introduced to the 3rd person of the Trinity - The Holy Spirit. To understand who the Holy Spirit is and what the Spirit does and why the Spirit is important. To learn about the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit and the 9 fruits of the Holy Spirit. Demonstrate the practical power of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Prayer (2 mins) (See *Catechist Prep Sheet*)

Check Ins (10 mins)

Share highs and lows from the past month/week.

Share Reflection Exercise 4 with Group (15 mins)

Everyone shares about an experience with the Eucharist either during Mass or in spending time before the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle.

Teaching (13 mins)

[Gifts of the Spirit \(5 Minutes\)](#)

[Fruits of the Spirit \(8 mins\)](#)

Have candidates watch the video on the Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Click above.

Discuss.

Activity - Partner up and discuss one of the gifts and fruits of the Spirit.

1. What does this gift or fruit of the Spirit mean to you?
2. How do you see working or unfolding in your life?
3. What could you do to help see it more?

Assign Reflection Exercise #5 (5 mins)

Pick a gift of the Holy Spirit you feel most drawn to and write a paragraph explaining why you're drawn to it and write about the way you notice yourself using that gift in your life, and ways that you could grow in that gift. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you grow in it.

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Closing Prayer (5 mins) - Listen to ["Holy Spirit" by Bryan & Katie Torwalt](#)

Session 5 - Catechist Prep Sheet

Opening Prayer (feel free to read this one or create your own prayer)

Holy Spirit, you are the breath of life. You are the love overflowing between God the Father and God the Son. You are infinite. You guide us. Help us to breathe you in and breathe you out. Help us to recognize your still, small voice, in the silence of our hearts and to be drawn by your promptings. Help us to learn how to hear you. Fill us with your gifts, and allow us to know you by the fruits you bear in our lives. We ask this in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Teaching Points

- The Holy Spirit as the Breath of Life

*“...then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and **blew into his nostrils the breath of life** [ruach], and the man became a living being.” (Genesis 2: 7)*

*“Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. [Jesus] said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he **breathed on them** [ruach] and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit.” (John 20: 19-22)*

- The Holy Spirit as the Advocate/Comforter: Before Jesus died, He promised His disciples that He would send them another **Comforter**, or **Advocate**. He said to them

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever.” (John 14: 15-16).

- The Holy Spirit in Baptism

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan River to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?” Jesus said to him in reply, “Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and

he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3: 13-17)

Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to be with us, and through the Church has instituted tangible ways that we can receive the Holy Spirit. In Baptism, we share in Jesus'

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baptism as God the Father's beloved children. By **deepening our identity as God's beloved children**, baptism allows us to go forth from first knowing that God loves us and is pleased with us. Our actions flow from there.

- The Holy Spirit in Confirmation: We receive the Holy Spirit along with many gifts and graces through the Sacrament of Confirmation as well. Confirmation seals our Baptism.

"Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the holy Spirit." (Acts 8: 14-17)

Confirmation seals and completes your Baptism, ensuring the full reception of the Holy Spirit. The anointing with oil and the laying on of hands come out of ancient Jewish rites performed in the early Church.

- What's so important about the Holy Spirit though? The Holy Spirit aids us in multiple ways throughout our daily life if we are open to His guidance. In particular, He makes us more receptive to God, teaches us how to pray, and helps us to be there for others. The more open we are to the Holy Spirit, the more that God dwells in us. The more we let God fill us, the easier it is for us to follow Him and live radically wonderful lives.

God also sends us the Holy Spirit to give us strength and wisdom so that we can overcome sin in our lives. Christ wants to set us free from the pain and slavery of sin.

- The 7 Gifts of the Holy Spirit
 - **Wisdom**
 - **Understanding**
 - **Right Judgment**
 - **Knowledge**
 - **Courage**
 - **Reverence**
 - **Wonder & Awe**

● The 12 Fruits of the Holy Spirit The **fruits of the Holy Spirit are characteristics that we live out in imitation of Christ**. They show the world what it looks like to be a son or daughter of God. When we live our lives filled with the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, fruits will naturally follow. The more we invite the Holy Spirit into our lives, the more the fruits will grow. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are:

- **charity**
 - **joy**
 - **peace**
 - **patience**
 - **kindness**
 - **goodness**
 - **generosity**
 - **gentleness**
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- **faithfulness**
 - **modesty**
 - **self control**
 - **chastity**

Jesus Christ is our greatest example of living a fruitful life and perfectly exemplifies all of these fruits. But we are also created in the image and likeness of God and have the ability to live out these qualities with the help of the Holy Spirit. We have already received the Holy Spirit in our Baptism and Confirmation, and as we continue to allow Him to work in our life, these fruits will be more present in our daily lives.

Session 6 - Discernment of Spirits

Goal: For candidates to be introduced to St. Ignatius of Loyola, and his rules for Discernment of Spirits. Teach candidates to allow the Holy Spirit to guide them in their decisions.

Opening Prayer (2 mins) - (See Catechist Prep Sheet)

Check Ins (10 mins)

Share highs and lows from the past month/week.

Share Reflection Exercise #4 with Group (15 mins)

Each candidate and Catechists will share about the gift of the Holy Spirit they're most drawn to and why. How they use it well and how they could grow in it.

Teaching (20 mins) (See *Catechist Prep Sheet*)

First ask if anyone knows who St. Ignatius is and can tell the group anything about him. Usually students at Loyola High School know a bit. Then go through the teaching on St. Ignatius and The Spiritual Exercises and notice patterns of consolation and desolation.

Catechist Witness (10 mins, 5 mins each)

Have each adult catechist share about an experience of feeling led/guided by the Holy Spirit through **consolation** in a decision and an example of giving into the false spirit and making a choice in **desolation**.

Activity: Share examples of consolation/desolation (10 mins)

Have teens pair up and share: -When was a time you felt “consolation” or close to God? How did it lead you to act? -When was a time you felt “desolation” or far from God? How did it lead you to act?

Assign Reflection Exercise #6 (5 mins)

1. Journal as often as you can this month noticing patterns of consolation and desolation in your day to day life. Be prepared to share at the next session about at

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least 1 time when you noticed yourself experiencing consolation or desolation and how you chose to respond.

2. **Selecting Your Sponsor:** Interview a faithful Catholic person you know who you feel has a strong faith and a close relationship with God. Ask this person how they came to have strong faith, and how they’ve grown closer to God. Ask them about a time when they had to make a big decision and how God helped them to decide.. Write 2- 3 paragraphs about this person, their faith, and their decision making process. Bring that interview report and sponsor form to the next meeting.

3. Sponsor Requirements:

- a. Must be a Confirmed, practicing Catholic. b. Must be at least 16 yrs old. c. If married, must have been married in the Catholic Church. d. Cannot be a parent. **Closing Prayer (5 mins)**

Go to the Chapel and pray using the [Awareness Examen](#) (Click on the left)

Session 6 - Catechist Prep Sheet

Opening Prayer (*feel free to read this one or create your own prayer*)

“*Suscipe*” by St. Ignatius of Loyola: Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me. **Teaching**

- **Life of St. Ignatius (by Joe Paprocki, D.Min)** St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) recognized the need for exercise in order to maintain our spiritual health as well. In fact, around the years 1522-1524, St. Ignatius composed a retreat handbook titled *Spiritual Exercises*. Ignatius was a Spanish soldier wounded in battle in 1521. During his long and painful recovery, he reflected deeply on his ultimate desires, learning to discern between desires that were grounded in vanity and those that were grounded in holiness. After coming face to face with his own sinfulness and God’s grace and mercy, he left behind his life as a soldier and dedicated his life to God. He concluded that this personal experience of God could be experienced by all people through the practice of the spiritual exercises he himself had engaged in. The result, of course, is the *Spiritual Exercises*, designed to help people to experience a deepening experience of God in their daily lives.

- **The Foundation (by David Flemming, SJ): AMDG = Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam (For the greater glory of God)** The goal of our life is to live with God forever. God, who loves us, gave us life. Our own response of love allows God’s life to flow into us without limit. All the things in this world are gifts of God, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily. As a result, we appreciate and use all these gifts of God insofar as they help us develop as loving persons. But if any of these gifts become the center of our lives, they displace God and so hinder our growth toward our goal. In everyday life, then, we

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must hold ourselves in balance before all of these created gifts insofar as we have a choice and are not bound by some obligation. We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or a short one. For everything has the potential of calling forth in us a deeper response to our life in God. Our only desire and our one choice should be this: ***I want and I choose what better leads to God’s deepening his life in me.***

- **The Disposition (from Timothy Gallagher, OMV)** - being totally open to whatever God wills, this is true freedom.

- **The Means (from Timothy Gallagher, OMV) The Eucharist** - receiving the Eucharist often; spending time with the Eucharist, in Adoration or with the Tabernacle.

Prayer/Silence - taking time to talk to God, to simply *be* with God, creating time to be silent and still. **Scripture** - letting God speak to you through the Word, meditating on Scripture, using Scripture to inspire your imagination and letting God speak through your thoughts and feelings and imaginings. **Spiritual Direction** - if you want to kick up your spiritual life to the next notch, you might seek out a Spiritual Director, a trained person (either religious or lay person) who can help be a guide to grow in your prayer life and help you to discern where God is leading you.

The Spiritual Exercises: The Rules for Discernment When it comes to our spiritual journey, there will be great joy and fullness, but also at times, great sorrow, loneliness, or emptiness. The life of a Christian, means a life of following Jesus Christ, including the profound encounters with joy and mercy and grace, as well as the Cross. Jesus invites to share in his entire life, death, AND resurrection. When we struggle, wrestle, feel bogged down by life, this may be part of our sharing of Christ's Cross with Him. As hard or painful as it can be, it may be a sign of God drawing you even more closely to Himself. If we invite God into our struggles, we will be able to overcome them and will feel less alone in them. But it is still hard and oftentimes when we are in this place, we may find it difficult to hear God's voice, to know how to act or what to do.

St. Ignatius developed the Spiritual Exercises to help all people seeking to grow closer to Christ to be armed with guidelines for battling with the False Spirit, and to help make decisions that will draw you closer to God. Remember: when it comes to discernment, it's never about deciding between good and evil, but about discerning with God between goods, and choosing whatever will ultimately lead you closer to God.

Spiritual Warfare & The False Spirit

When it comes to thinking of the Devil, you may think that's a myth or picture a fictitious little red guy with horns and a pitchfork. Or maybe you think of the movie *The Exorcist* and the idea terrifies you so you don't think of the Devil at all.

(Ask the teens to raise their hand if they believe that Satan exists, then ask if they struggle to believe that Satan exists. Then ask them to raise their hands if they believe evil exists or if they see evil in the world around them.)

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It's easy to see that evil is a reality in the world - cruel world leaders, brutal violence and oppression, etc - but hard to "see" Satan. The reality is that Satan is real, but most often works in much more subtle ways than blatant demonic possession or making appearances with a pitchfork. Satan, or as St. Ignatius often calls him, the False Spirit, is that voice that discourages you from your goals or dreams. The voice that makes you doubt yourself. That part of you that tempts you to be mean or disrespectful to others, to gossip or to reject others. That voice that causes despair or hopelessness or feelings of unworthiness or shame. The voice that confuses you and makes it hard to distinguish right from wrong. You may hear that voice

through social media, sometimes through mean people at school, sometimes even through your own parents or those closest to you. Sometimes it creeps into your thoughts about yourself.

Oftentimes, when you're seeking to grow in faith, the Enemy or False Spirit does not want this and will work against you, waging a kind of spiritual war inside you. St. Ignatius experienced this personally throughout his life and came up with a set of observations and guidelines to work against the False Spirit, so you can continue to grow and discern freely.

Consolation & Desolation

Consolation: felt increase of Faith, Hope, and Love (attaching onto the things of God). In someone who is actively trying to pursue God, to grow closer to God.

-The Holy Spirit/Good Spirit: Encourages you -The False/Evil Spirit: Discourages you. How to act when you're in Consolation: -take strength to prepare for desolation in the future. (soak it up like a sponge) -When you're in Consolation, be humble! God is giving you a gift. It's not about being better or more worthy than anyone else. Remember how little you can do on your own in Desolation without God's grace and strength.

Desolation: felt distance/ absence from God (Loss of hope). In someone who is living in sin, moving away from God, not toward God:

-The Holy Spirit/Good Spirit: stings conscience -The False/Evil Spirit: Encourages delights in the sin. How to act when you're in Desolation: -Seek prayer, meditation, examination -Go to Confession for sins that you're holding against yourself, make amends to those you've wronged.

-Consider a few reasons why God might allow us to experience Desolation sometimes:

-We have been spiritually lazy (God calling us to conversion) -We must grow in our ability to love or mature -We have forgotten that we need God, to humble us -Try to be patient, and remember, consolation is coming. -Never make a spiritual change or an important decision or go back on a decision you made in Consolation while in Desolation. The false spirit tries to get us to break our

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promises and commitments or our way of life during Desolation, to distract us from where God is leading.

The tactics of the False Spirit

1. To start by gently tempting you at first, and before you know it, temptation has snowballed
2. The false spirit will also try to act like a "secret lover" who wants you to hide your

weaknesses, sins, and struggles, keep them in the dark, to think you're the *only* one struggling with your issues. But it's important to go to Confession or to share with someone you trust, such as a Spiritual Director and bring your struggles to the light. 3. The enemy will attack us where we are most vulnerable and our weakest area (Be aware of it, strengthen it preemptively). Self knowledge is key.

Awareness

Examen

(adapted from Fuller Youth Institute & Pray As You Go)

1. Relax

Take a few deep breaths and let yourself relax and settle into the moment and space that you're in. Relax your body and become aware of God's presence in and surrounding you. The first step of the Examen reminds us of a foundational truth: God has never left us; we just forget God is there. Acknowledge the Holy Spirit within you.

2. Recall

What was the best thing that happened today? Picture it, play it over in your mind, and let the light and joy and gratitude of that experience spread to the whole of your day.

3. Review your day

Approach this step like you are watching a movie of your day. Start from the moment you woke up until the present moment. Scene by scene, hour by hour reflect on the truth and reality of your day. Remember the sights, sounds, smells, conversations, internal thoughts, and intimate feelings of the moments from your day. The Examen offers questions to discern your actions and awareness of God throughout your day. What were the highs—what was most life-giving? What were the lows—what was most life-depleting? When did I fail? When did I love? Do I observe any habits or life patterns? When did I see evidence of God's presence? Remember to review your day by listening to the whispers of truth and love from the Spirit.

4. Reflect

Now reflect on the highs and lows of your day with God. Talk to God as you would a good friend. Where you feel grateful, give thanks to God, and where you feel you could have done better, say sorry to God.

5. Receive - Ask for help from the Holy Spirit

Ask the Holy Spirit for the grace you need to help you tomorrow. While this step may only take a minute, it is critical for us to intentionally invite the Holy Spirit to guide this time. Too often our own voices and vices guide our thoughts and decisions. This vital step orients our spirit toward the Spirit of light and truth. It acknowledges our dependence on God to instruct, guide, correct, and speak to us.

6. Resolve.

If you feel the Spirit is guiding you to a particular step for the next day or even the rest of the present day, follow it. Resolve to live and love even better tomorrow, with God's grace. Thank God for this time to reflect. Close with a "Glory Be" or "Our Father" or some other prayer to conclude your time in prayer.

**Note - these are supplemental exercises/Information -
use if it helps you**

Session 6: Discernment of Spirits

Opening Prayer

Lenten Prayer for
Transformation

Loving
Father,

I invite you into my life today
and make myself available to
you.

Help me to become
the-best-version-of-myself

by seeking your will and becoming a living example
of your love in the
world.

Open my heart to the areas of my life that need to
change

in order for me to carry out the mission
and experience the joy you have imagined for my life.

Inspire me to live the Catholic faith
in ways that are dynamic and engaging.

Show me how to best get involved in the life of my
parish.

Make our community hungry for best

practices

and continuous
learning.

Give me courage when I am
afraid,

hope when I am discouraged,

and clarity in times of decision.

Teach me to enjoy uncertainty and lead your Church

to become all you imagined it would be

for the people of our
times.

Amen

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Lent ● On Wednesday, we began the season of

Lent.

- **What is Lent? Let the kids explain what Lent is.**
- We begin with Ash Wednesday and six weeks later, we arrive at Easter and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.
- Some people see Lent as a very stressful time of giving stuff up and feeling miserable.

Let's watch a couple of examples of a miserable lent:

- [Kai's Mental Meltdown \(Catholic Central\)](#)
- [Abrasive Abner's Lent \(Life Teen\)](#)

- Lent can be joyful when we think about doing all things with love. If we can detach from the world's expectations, we can freely follow Jesus' loving path.

[Busted Halo - Fr. Jack](#)

- There are three main components to Lent:
 - Prayer
 - Sacrifice/Fast
- Alms
- Here's what Lent means to me:
 - I see Lent as my spiritual cleaning and purging to make more room for God in my life. We have an opportunity to transform ourselves during Lent and draw closer to God.
 - A chance to make a change in my life that is meaningful
 - Six weeks is long enough for the change to hopefully stick
 - I am able to sacrifice and offer it up to God
 - I am able to feel connected to Jesus and show gratitude for his greater sacrifice for all.
 - I feel like I grow closer to God when I am intentional about Lenten promises
 - Fasting from tv at night and making more room to do the second, pray and reflect. Fasting from eating out unnecessarily do to the third, giving alms. We will donate funds to Catholic Charities. I also like to find a volunteer opportunity we can do as a family. One year we took milk and oj to a shelter each Sunday.

Lent ● To help you think about what to do for Lent, **Lifeteen** has a simple challenge:

[Lifeteen 1:1:1 Challenge - Still Applies Today! =>](#)

What do you want to do for Lent? To help you with some more ideas, there are lots of prompts taped to the wall. If you like one or two, take them down and bring them home.

Let's spend 5 minutes doing this.

Here's one last list to ponder: The Weird List...

1. Don't eat the last bite of your food
2. Park at the very back of the parking lot
3. Put a popcorn kernel in your shoe every day
4. Don't use your apps
5. Get to know your neighbors
6. Pray the "Hail Mary" and do an ab crunch for every single word
7. Stop complaining and/or being negative
8. Give up texting and call whomever you need to talk to
9. Don't use utensils
10. Give away 10 shirts, 2 pairs of pants, and a pair of shoes
11. When you wake up, jump out of bed, kiss the floor, and learn humility
12. Wear the same 4 outfits for all of lent
13. Everyday do 20 (or 100) pushups and offer it up for someone who's sick
14. Leave a post-it with a positive message on it wherever you go
15. Cut out all screen-time (phone, TV, computer) after dinner

16. Use your weekends to babysit for free

17. Send a different person from your contacts an affirmation email every day of Lent

18. Don't straighten or curl your hair

19. Sit and stand up straight – don't slouch!

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20. Every day take a picture of something or someone you're grateful for and hang the pictures in your room

BATHROOM

BREAK

Would you Rather Game to introduce the topic of Discernment of Spirits

- Would you rather not use your computer for a month or not eat junk food for a month?
- Would you rather live in Narnia or go to school at Hogwarts?
- Would you rather have only two close friends or many acquaintances?
- Would you rather be known as the best student in your school or be the captain of one of the sport teams?
- Would you rather always have to sing instead of speaking or dance everywhere you went?
- Would you rather be the star basketball player on your school's losing team or sit on the bench all season with your school's winning team?
- Would you rather save your country from an invasion or from a terrible disease?
- Would you rather have bad breath and body odor the entire day or be completely naked?
- Would you rather all of the members of the opposite sex liked you or have the prettiest (but dumb) girl in school as a girlfriend?

- Would you rather be very short or extremely tall?
- Would you rather have overly large hands or very small feet?
- Would you rather eat a small can of dog food or six overripe bananas?
- Would you rather have to eat a bowl full of worms or a live frog?
- Would you rather live without your phone for two weeks or your computer for a month?
- Would you rather be the teacher at your school or the janitor?
- Would you rather be invisible or be able to fly?
- Would you rather lose your ability to speak or have to say everything you are thinking?
- Would you rather live on a plant or beneath the sea?
- Would you rather have to listen to music all of the time or not be able to listen to music at all?
- Would you rather have lived one hundred years in the future or one hundred years in the past?
- Would you rather be the best player on a losing team or the worst player on a winning team?
- Would you rather have extremely small freakishly eyes or an extremely large nose?

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- Would you rather have friends that are smarter than you or friends that are much better looking than you?
- Would you rather give a speech to the whole school, including teachers, for 30 minutes or work in the school cafeteria for a semester?

This game forces you to make quick decisions that have nominal consequences...pick a side and see what your friends chose. In real life our decisions don't usually play out so quickly and easily and we usually have more than a few seconds to make decisions. One thing we can all do before we make decisions is to practice something called "discernment". Before we get into that, I want to review a little to help tie this to our past meeting.

Last month, we talked about the Holy Spirit and his connection in our lives. We learned

about the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (the gifts we received at Baptism and will be strengthened at Confirmation) and Fruits of the Holy Spirit (those “fruits” that come when we follow Jesus). We can use the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit to help us make good decisions. Discernment is defined as “nothing more than the ability to decide between truth and error, right and wrong.” In the Catholic tradition, discernment is a decision-making process that honors the place of God’s will in our lives.

St. Ignatius Loyola taught a specific method of discernment, which we get into in a moment. First I think it’s helpful to understand the person behind all this: St. Ignatius Loyola.

[Videos Of St. Ignatius of Loyola](#)

The Choices We Make or Discernment

Sometimes it’s very easy to make decisions, but other times it feels impossible. What are some reasons we cannot make good decisions?

- **Not enough information:** Information is limited or skewed...maybe we need to look at two sides before deciding
- **Not enough detachment:** We are emotional and let the emotions drive decisions. We need to recognize we are emotional about something so we can bring some objectivity to the decision process
- **Not enough confidence in my own ability to hear the Holy Spirit:** I wait for an amazing sign from God (remember the helicopter, boat and car story of the stranded guy) instead of listening to the still voice of the Holy Spirit, that sense of intuition. This needs quiet time and reflection (get rid of distractions)
- **Not enough good counsel:** Maybe we need some advice from a wise friend or family member, or we need to talk through our process to see if it makes sense

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and sort out feelings and information. Sometimes answers come when we pray with others.

A tip to remember: God doesn't just want us to make amazing decisions. He wants us to grow in the process too. Sometimes, the process is more important than the outcome...for example, if you spend a lot of time in prayer as you make an important decision, your relationship with Jesus is growing stronger. And that is just as important as the decision you make :)

So what makes for good decision-making?

- Talk to someone you respect
 - Find quiet time
 - Lay out facts of what you know before you dive into the unknown
 - Tell God what you want and what you are afraid might happen
 - Let God speak to you (what stirrings do you feel?)
 - Know and trust that God has a plan for you
 - Pray to do God's Will (thy will be done...)
-
- Wait and pay attention to your feelings (as long as you are not over-emotional...then see above)
 - Commit when it's time to decide, knowing you have included God in your decision-making
 - Prayerfully evaluate how your decision worked out...good fruit or bad fruit?

Discernments of Spirits...

You saw in the short bio of Loyola that he had a sort of revelation while he was recovering from broken legs. He reflected on how to discern between desires that are grounded in vanity and those that are grounded in holiness. He wanted to share this personal revelation with everyone, so we now have what is referred to as the Spiritual Exercises. These exercises are helpful to find God in everyday life. These exercises help us choose what will lead us to God being the center of our lives.

Sometimes, when we struggle and get stuck in life, this may be an opportunity for you to get closer to God by leaning on Him for help. The Spiritual Exercises help us with some guidelines for battling with the False Spirit (Satan) and making choices that draw us closer to God.

Spiritual Warfare

Do you think Satan exists? How does Satan exist for you? Do you think evil exists? How does evil exist for you? Evil is all around us in the world: cruel leaders, brutal violence, oppression...

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Satan is harder to “see” around us: False Spirit is a voice that discourages you from doing what is right and good. Creates doubt, tempts disrespect, gossip, rejection. Causes despair or hopelessness, unworthiness and shame. Causes confusion. The voice can be thoughts in your head, in social media, through other people.

Satan doesn't want you to grow closer to God; that would make it harder for him. So he will always try to work against you, creating a spiritual war inside you. St. Ignatius created some guidelines to help battle spiritual warfare when making decisions.

Consolation/Desolation (From Margaret Silf's *The Inner Compass*)

What are consolation and desolation? Think of them as our orientation, or direction our life is taking us...toward God (consolation) or away from God (desolation)

- Consolation: creates feelings of faith, hope and love; turning toward God
 - Directs our focus outward, beyond ourselves
 - Lifts our hearts so we can see the joys and sorrows of others
 - Bonds us more closely to our community
 - Generates new inspiration and ideas
 - Restores balance and refreshes our inner vision
 - Shows us where God is active in our lives and where He is leading us
 - Releases new energy in us

- Desolation: feeling distant and absent from God; turning away from God
 - Turns us inward

- Drives us down in deeper negative feelings
- Cuts us off from community
- Makes us want to give up on things that used to be important
- Takes over and crowds out fresh ideas and vision
- Drains us of energy

- When in desolation, what can we do?!
 - Tell God how we feel and ask for help
 - Seek out companionship
 - Don't change decisions you made in consolation
 - Stand still and reach for God's inner compass
 - Recall a time of consolation and use your imagination to return to that time
 - Look for someone who needs help and turn your attention outwardly by helping them

- When in consolation, what should we do?
 - Tell God how we feel and thank Him!
 - Store the moment in our memory to return to when things get tough and we are in desolation

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- Store this as part of your life journey
- Use the energy you feel to further your dreams
- Let the extra energy fuel things you don't like doing and go do them

Share personal examples.

Practicing Ignatian Meditation

Finished with *Sacred Space for Lent 2019* by the Irish Jesuits and did the guided meditation for Friday the 8th.

Closing
Prayer

One of the confirmandi said a prayer to close the class.

"Go forth and set the world on fire." - St. Ignatius of Loyola

1. Don't eat the last bite of your food

2. Park at the very back of the parking lot

3. Put a popcorn kernel in your shoe every day

4. Don't use your apps

5. Get to know your neighbors

6. Pray the "Hail Mary" and do an ab crunch for every single word

7. Stop complaining and/or being negative

8. Give up texting and call whomever you need to talk to

9. Don't use utensils

10. Give away 10 shirts, 2 pairs of pants, and a pair of shoes

11. When you wake up, jump out of bed, kiss the floor, and learn humility

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12. Wear the same 4 outfits for all of lent

13. Everyday do 20 (or 100) pushups and offer it up for someone who's sick

14. Leave a post-it with a positive message on it wherever you go

15. Cut out all screen-time (phone, TV, computer) after dinner

16. Use your weekends to babysit for free

17. Send a different person from your contacts an affirmation email every day of Lent

18. Don't straighten or curl your hair

19. Every day take a picture of something or someone you're grateful for and hang the pictures in your room

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Session 7 - In Communion, One Body

Goal: For candidates to develop a deepened sense of the Universal Body of Christ in the Church. To explore the meaning of community, of solidarity. To get to know the Communion of Saints, and our calling to become Saints.

Opening Prayer (5 mins) - [“Christ In Me Arise” by Trevor Thomson](#)

Check Ins (10 mins)

Share highs and lows from the past month/week.

Share Reflection Exercise #6 with Group (15 mins)

Share about experiences of consolation/desolation you've noticed over the past month. Share about the sponsor interview with the group, why you chose your sponsor, about their relationship with God and how they make decisions.

Teaching (30 mins) (See *Catechist Prep Sheet*)

Catechist Witness (10 mins; 5 mins each): Share about your Confirmation Saint, or your favorite saints and how you've seen them interceding in your life.

Activity: Make a Saint Card (15 mins)

Using a polaroid camera and a halo backdrop, we'll take a picture of each teen, and they will make a Holy Card of themselves, listing what they are the patron saint, and writing an original prayer on the back of the card.

Assign Reflection Exercise #7 (5 mins)

Selecting Your Saint: Saint Project (write report, paint picture, powerpoint, write song, do a skit or write a play or poem, etc.) Must include a paragraph about the Saint's life and why you chose them. You can choose a canonized Saint, someone who is a Blessed, a Venerable, or a Servant of God. Reminder to invite Sponsors to the last meeting.

Closing Prayer (10 mins) - [The Rosary](#) - Pray 1 decade together.

The Rosary as it's known was established by St. Dominic in the 1200s after he received a vision of Mary (known as a **Marian apparition**; examples: Our Lady of the Rosary, Our Lady of Lourdes, La Virgen de Guadalupe, Our Lady of Fatima, etc.), though prayer ropes with knots for beads date back to the early Desert Fathers (early Church hermits and monks) in the 3rd and 4th Centuries. Mary has been known to encourage prayer for the Rosary in many of her apparitions. The Rosary consists of a series of prayers that are said while meditating on the life of Christ and of Mary in relationship with Christ. The order of the prayers is: Sign of the Cross, Apostles Creed, 1 Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's, 1

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Glory Be, and then each of the 5 decades consists of 1 Our Father, 10 Hail Mary's, and 1 Glory Be. Then the Rosary ends with the "Hail Holy Queen" prayer. Traditionally the **Joyful Mysteries** are prayed on Mondays & Saturdays, the **Sorrowful** on Tuesdays/Fridays, the **Glorious** on Wednesdays/Sundays and St. Pope John Paul II added the **Luminous Mysteries** to be prayed on Thursdays.

Session 7 - Catechist Prep Sheet

Opening Prayer *(feel free to read this one or create your own prayer)* Dear God, thank you for the example of the Saints. I desire to join in their company, worshipping you forever in Heaven. Please help me follow their footsteps, and yours, Jesus Christ. Please help me to conform myself to Your image, seeking Your will in all things, as the Saints did. Please help me to devote myself, and all that I do, to Your glory, and to the service of my neighbors. Amen.

Teaching/Sharing/Large Group Discussion/Interactive (20 mins)

- **Body of Christ** Ask Teens: What does it mean to be “one in the Body of Christ”?

In Session 4 we talked about the Eucharist and how it's truly the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ. But often we talk about how the Church is also the Body of Christ. How is this? When Jesus died on the Cross, he gave up his body for us. In the Eucharist, we are mystically transported to Calvary, to Jesus' very real moment of laying down his life for us, and when the priest says “This is my Body/Blood, given up for you” it is Jesus saying the words, through the priest, and it is Jesus making the bread become his Body and the wine become his Blood.

When we receive the Eucharist, we receive **Communion**. The word “Communion” means “in union together” or a sharing of an experience. When we receive the Body of Christ, we not only receive Christ into ourselves, but we also share in all that Christ has and is. This is what it means to be “in Communion”. We become what we receive. (“You are what you eat” as they say!) St. Augustine was known for having said that when he would offer Communion to the faithful at Mass:

“You are the body of Christ,” he said. “In you and through you the work of the incarnation must go forward. You are to be taken; you are to be blessed, broken, and given; that you may be the means of grace and the vehicles of Eternal love. Behold what you are. Become what you receive.” (Sermon 57) When we receive Communion, we also receive the **Mystical Body of Christ**, the whole Church, we receive and become one with all others on earth who receive, and all those who have died who are in Heaven with God (Saints, angels, and loved ones who have gone before us). We receive and are uniquely close with all of them each time we receive Communion.

- **The Church is The Mystical Body** “The Church came into being when Christ died on the Cross, and formally inaugurated on Pentecost, when He sent the Holy Spirit as He had promised. St.

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Paul speaks of all Christians as members of Christ, so that with Him, they form one Mystical Body (Cf. 1 Cor 12:12-31; Col 1:18; 2:18-20; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19; 4:13).

The Church, the Mystical Body, exists on this earth, and is called the **Church militant**, because its members struggle [and battle] against the world, the flesh and the Devil. The **Church suffering** means the souls in Purgatory [those whose souls are still undergoing purification so to be fully prepared to be fully united with God in Heaven for all eternity.] The **Church triumphant** is the Church in heaven. The unity and cooperation of the members of the Church on earth, in Purgatory, in Heaven is also called the Communion of Saints.” (*Taken from The Basic Catholic Catechism; PART FIVE: The Apostles' Creed IX-XII; Ninth Article: "The Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints"*)

● **Communion of Saints** *Ask Teens: Name some Saints you know of and/or what they're patrons.*

“The word "Saint" in the modern sense means someone who has been canonized by the Church in recent times, or was accepted as such by the Church in earlier times. If a person is shown to have practiced heroic virtue -beyond what people in general do - in all virtues, the title "Venerable" is given; with two miracles by that one's intercession, the title is "Blessed"; two more miracles can lead to canonization and the title of Saint.” (*Taken from The Basic Catholic Catechism; PART FIVE: The Apostles' Creed IX-XII; Ninth Article: "The Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints"*) (For more on the canonization process see: Busted Halo’s “[How Does the Catholic Church Declare Official Saints?](#)”

But beyond this, the word “saint” simply means, “holy”, and any person who is in Heaven is a saint. *Ask the teens: What does the word “holy” mean to you?*

We are ALL called to be saints because there is no one God creates that he does not want to have with Him in Heaven for all eternity. All of us are created for eternal divine union with God. And the Church honors and remembers the lives of those who are ultimately named Saints to remind the rest of us that it is possible with God’s grace to live a holy, rich, and fulfilling life, just as each of them did.

To live a “holy” life doesn’t mean to live a perfect life, without ever sinning, but it’s about the intention of your heart, and the willingness to keep trying even when you fall, the willingness to keep improving, while all the while knowing you’re unconditionally loved by God. Only Jesus and Mary lived lives completely without sin, and one of them was God, the other was set aside by God to be the Mother of God (in Greek: “Theotokos”). The rest of the Saints are completely human beloved sinners, normal people who struggled and wrestled and doubted and felt deeply and lived fully. They questioned, some even left the Church for a while before they came back to have stronger faith than ever. But we can look to their lives as examples for our own and for wisdom in how to live life to the fullest.

- **Intercession & Novenas** A question Catholics are often asked by other Christians is: *“Why do you pray to Saints when you could just go straight to Jesus?” Ask teens: Why do you think we do this?*

A simple answer is that we don't “pray” to them (even though we often phrase it that way), because that would be idolatry, but we ask them to pray for us, to intercede, just as we ask our friends and family here on earth to pray for us. We believe that Saints are people who are assuredly in Heaven, with God, and we believe that if they're praying for us, their prayers are even closer to God's ears than prayers from people on earth. We believe that Saints also have a unique vantage point from heaven and can determine who and where our prayers are needed the most, distributing the grace from those prayers accordingly.

There are many unique **devotions** to Saints - ways of growing closer to those Saints and meditating on their lives for our own spiritual growth and benefit. Some people will light a candle with the image of a particular Saint depicted on it. The **Rosary** is another popular devotion. Others will read the diaries and writings of Saints and meditate on their reflections, struggles, observations, and insights. Another kind of devotion is called a **Novena**. A novena is 9 days of prayer, a tradition that traces back to the early Church and may have come from Greek and Roman mourning prayer rituals for people who had died. Oftentimes there are reports of miracles occurring or particular signs being given in response to prayers that were offered.

- **Some Popular Novenas**

- The St. Therese of Lisieux Novena is known to yield roses to those who pray it, consistent with Therese's quote before death “When I die, I will send down a shower of roses from the heavens, I will spend my heaven by doing good on earth.”
- The Divine Mercy Novena is 9 days of praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet. This prayer was developed by St. Faustina who had many visions of Jesus and was asked by him to have a painting made that depicted him with red and white light shining forth from his heart, with the words “Jesus, I trust in you” at the bottom, to encourage the whole world to trust in God's merciful love.
- St. Joseph Novena - great for contemplating the life of Jesus' earthly father (attributed to success for workers, or for finding a holy spouse)
- St. Peregrine Novena - After having been cured of cancer and having lived a holy life as a Servite priest, and been given a vision of Jesus, he is known to be a patron saint of cancer patients. *Ask teens: Do you have any other novenas or prayers or devotions that you know of or that you or your family prays?*

- **A Few Notes on Novenas and Other Forms of Intercessory Prayer**

- Novenas are NOT superstitions or magic spells.
- Novenas do not magically make your prayers come true.

- God, nor the Saints, will ignore your petitions if you don't pray a specific prayer or if you accidentally skip a day of a novena.
- The purpose is always to grow in virtue by reflecting on the virtuous life of a Saint during their time on earth, and to grow in trust with God, ultimately allowing whatever intentions you're holding to be released into God's hands. Often, asking another person (especially one who is already in Heaven) to do that for you, or to help you do that, is a relief and a blessing.

● **Mary's Unique Intercession** One unique Saint who has a special place in the Church and who played and continues to play a special role in all of our lives is the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Another question Catholics are often asked by other Christians is:

"Why do you worship Mary?" Again, just like with Saints, we don't worship Mary. She is not God, though her relationship with God is unique. We honor and revere Mary because she chose with total freedom to become the Mother of God Incarnate. She was the only human being to ever give a complete and full "yes" or "*fiat*" to God in all things she did. And Jesus, himself, gave her to all of us, to be *our* Mother, before he died on the Cross: "*When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son.'* Then he said to the disciple, '*Behold, your mother.*' And from that hour the disciple took her into his home." (John 19: 26-27) Mary's role for us is to intercede as Queen of Heaven (Latin: *Regina Coeli*). In Scripture we see how Jesus listened to his mother during the Wedding at Cana and performed his first miracle. He became the man he was after being raised by Mary. So we can have faith that he hears her on our behalf. And because she is also our Mother, since we share in Jesus' Beloved Sonship through our Baptism, and since Jesus said it from the Cross, she loves us and wants the best for us, like any good loving mother does for her children.

Some uniquely Catholic teachings about Mary, known as the **Four Marian Dogmas** are: 1. **Mary's Immaculate Conception:** The Church teaches that Mary was Immaculately

Conceived, meaning that from the moment she was conceived by her own human earthly parents, she was preserved from **original sin**, because God was going to set her apart to be the Mother of His Son, to bear the Incarnate Word, God-Made-Man, "Immanuel", God-with-us. 2. **Mary's Perpetual Virginity:** That she was a virgin when Jesus was conceived by the

Holy Spirit in her womb, and that she remained a virgin throughout the rest of her life.
What about Jesus' siblings and Mary's children mentioned in Scripture?

Many Christians do not believe in Mary's ever-virginity, referencing Scripture passages

that refer to Mary's children and to Jesus' brothers and sisters. The Catholic interpretation is that the Greek word for brothers/sisters "*adelphoi*" is

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also synonymous with cousins, or even close friends, who are like family. In fact, the same word is used in other places in Scripture to reference other people in Jesus' life who we know are not his biological siblings. Another suggestion is that it's also possible that Joseph had children from a previous marriage before he took Mary as his wife, since he was older and maternal fatality was more common in those days. *So, we're supposed to believe Joseph and Mary were married but never had sex?*

This is what the Church teaches. Not because sex is unholy or sinful, especially not in the context of marriage. It's beautiful and holy and a gift from God. But we believe that Mary was set aside for a unique vocation as the spouse of the Holy Spirit and Mother of Jesus Christ, even known in Marian theology as the "Ark of the New Covenant". In the Book of Exodus, the Ark of the Covenant contained the manna (bread from Heaven) and the 10 Commandments (God's Word & Law), and was known to be so sacred that no one could touch it. Likewise, Mary contained within her womb the True Bread from Heaven, and the Word-made-flesh. **3. Mary's Divine Maternity:** That by the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary became

pregnant with, gave birth to, and raised Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, therefore making her the Mother of God (Theotokos). **4. Mary's Glorious Assumption:** That at the end of Mary's life, she was taken up into Heaven, Body and Soul, just as all holy ones will be resurrected on the last day, where our souls and our bodies will be reunited, to be more fully conformed to her Son. "In your Dormition you did not leave the world, O Mother of God, but were joined to the source of Life. You conceived the living God and, by your prayers, will deliver our souls from death," (CCC 966).

Session 8 - The Saint That Is Just Me (with Sponsors)

Goal: For candidates to connect with their Sponsors and deepen a sense of the gifts and talents that God has given them and how they can use them to help build God's kingdom.

Opening Prayer (5 mins) (See Catechist Prep Sheet)

Dinner + Check Ins (20 mins)

Share highs and lows from the past month/week.

Share Reflection Exercise #7 with Group (20 mins)

Share saint projects: which saints you chose, a bit about their lives, and why you chose them.

Teaching (15 mins) (See *Catechist Prep Sheet*)

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Discussion about our call to be Saints, how God gives us our gifts, talents, struggles, and opportunities to grow in holiness according to his unique calling for each of us.

Listen to Danielle Rose's ["The Saint That Is Just Me"](#):

Sponsor Discussion Time (20 mins)

- Fill out the **Gifts & Talents Inventory** sheet. (Candidates and Sponsors)
- Discuss with your Sponsor the results of your Gifts/Talents inventory.
- What does it mean to you to be "holy"?
- How might you share your gifts and talents, as well as your struggles and wounds with others to help draw others closer to God?
- Come up with a prayer, activity, or service project to do together with your sponsor (ex: go to Adoration together, give food to the hungry together, go hiking together and reflect on God's beauty in nature)

Share project ideas with group (5 mins)

Each sponsor/candidate pair shares what they will do together to grow in faith/service that summer.

Assign Reflection Exercise #7 (5 mins)

Go out and do service or prayer activity with your sponsor.

Closing Prayer (5 mins)

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Session 8 - Catechist Prep Sheet

Opening Prayer (*feel free to read this one or create your own prayer*) Take some time to reflect on either of the following Scripture passages and use the questions for discussion or personal reflection before the session.

-Psalm 139: 1-18,

23-24 or -Jeremiah 29:

11-13

Teaching

- **Review of Saints** So, as we discussed last month, to be a Saint, besides going through the formal canonization process, is to live a Holy life, doing the best we can to be our authentic selves and to follow God's call. Using prayer, Sacraments, and things like St.

Ignatius' rules for discernment, we can understand how God is calling us and learn to listen to His voice, so that each of us can become the Saint we are called to be.

- **Made In God's Image** God has made each and every one of us in His image. He has given different gifts, talents and personalities particular only to us. Our **vocation** or "calling" (from the Latin *vocare*) are called to share these gifts with others and to bless those around us with who we are and who God has created us to be. Many times we focus more on what we wish we had, or what we lack rather than focusing on the many positive things about us and the blessings in our lives. It is important for us to never forget that God made us unique. There is no one else in the whole world who will ever be like us. Becoming our truest selves is our vocation.

- **Vocation** Things like discerning between marriage, single life for service, or religious life are known as Primary Vocations. These are 3 major ways that the Church outlines as life vocations and are committed ways of serving God and the Church. But vocation isn't just a step that you arrive at, vocation is living your truest self (aka "living your best life") in each moment. Again, like St. Ignatius' motto, *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*: In all things give God the glory... seek God, and we will find the most fulfillment in life, and help others to do the same, thus bringing God's kingdom to come and His will to be done here on earth just as it is in Heaven, like we say in the "Our Father".

- *"Vocation is the place where our deep gladness meets the world's deep need."*
(Frederick Buechner)

- *"Then, overcome by joy, I cried, 'Jesus, my love. At last I have found my vocation. My vocation is love. In the heart of the Church, my mother, I will be loved, and then I will be all things."* (St. Thérèse de Lisieux)

- "Discovering **vocation** does not mean scrambling toward some prize just beyond my reach but accepting the treasure of true self I already possess... **Vocation** at its deepest level is, 'This is something I can't not do, for reasons I'm unable to explain to anyone else and don't fully understand myself but

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that are nonetheless compelling' ... Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you. Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody, what values you represent." (Parker Palmer) God not only gives us particular qualities, characteristics, personalities, gifts, talents, and blessings with which to live out our vocations, but He also allows us to become our truest selves - the self God created each of us to be, from which the voice of vocation calls to us - through our struggles, wounds, and weaknesses too. God allows us at times to undergo various trials, to share in Jesus's Cross in our own lives, but never in vain. God will always bring good even out of our worst suffering, if we allow Him to. Oftentimes when we undergo painful or uncomfortable experiences or seasons in our lives, it's a form of purification that God is allowing us to go through. When you pour hydrogen peroxide or rubbing alcohol on a wound to clean it, it hurts, but it's helping the toxic or unhealthy bacteria to be purged

out of that wound. Likewise, when we are attached more to things of this world, gifts from God, more than we are to the Giver - God Himself - then we may experience pain or discomfort when we have to detach from them (eg: feeling depressed when we don't get a role in a play because we put our identity more in what it means to be an actor than in God's unconditional love for us). In all things, God always has our greatest good at heart, but God is also with us in our suffering, pain, frustrations, disappointments, and seeks to console us with His very self, who is the source of perfect Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Joy, and Love.

Ultimately, we find that we live out our vocations when we join every part of ourselves and our experiences to God and use all of it in service of the world. This is where our deep gladness (wholeness) meets the world's deep need.

- **The Parable of the Talents** Read Matthew 25:14-30 (the Parable of the Talents). Ask *Teens: Have you ever heard this passage before? If they have, ask what it means to them.*

It reminds us that God has given each of us certain gifts and talents. Every one of you sitting here has many gifts and talents. Sometimes we do not think of them as something good or special, but they are. When thinking about our gifts and talents, we think about those big things – playing a sport, excelling in a certain class, being funny, etc. However, we all have other gifts/ talents – maybe you are a good listener, you can cook some great stuff in the kitchen, or you have a good memory. There are tons of gifts and talents we could list for each of you sitting here in the room. God desires that we use our gifts and talents to give Him glory and to share our gifts with others. If you play a sport, share your talent by doing your very best, be a good sport on and off the field, and give thanks to God for being athletic. Others will see how hard you work and may even ask, “How do you do it?” That is when you have the opportunity to share how important God is in your life. The same is true no matter what your gift is. One last thing, God has given us gifts and talents to give Him glory, and we should share our gifts, as we heard in the Gospel. However, our

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gifts and talents are not what make us special. Your gifts make you unique, but what makes you special is that you are made in the image and likeness of God. Never forget that! Tonight, you will have a chance to explore some of your gifts and talents and to share them with others. As you go through the night, take time to see how others are sharing their gifts as well. Have fun, enjoy, and keep in mind just how much God loves you. *Then play the song “The Saint That Is Just Me” by Danielle Rose, pause for a moment of silent reflection, and then have the teens and Sponsors fill out the **Gifts & Talents Inventory**.*

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Gifts and Talents Inventory

