

# Year 2 Confirmation Curriculum

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# Session 1 - Christ In Me Arise

Goal: For candidates to review content from Year 1. How to be Christ in the world and to see Christ in others. To review who Christ is - because you can't be like someone if you don't know who they are.

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

**Introductions (20 mins)** - Adult Catechists and candidates all go around the room and introduce themselves, sharing the following:

Name/ Grade/ School (or alma mater)

If you could meet anyone living or dead who would it be and why?

What's one place where you've seen God this summer?

Covid Experience in the last 6 months?

## Activity - Speed Facts (10 mins)

Have everyone pair up and set a [timer](#) for 2 minutes. Give each pair a pen and paper. Have each pair write down as many facts about Jesus they know in 2 minutes. Then after 2 minutes is up, the pairs will take turns going around and reading off facts about Jesus. One of the catechists will list each fact or quality about Jesus on a large sheet of paper or a whiteboard that everyone can read from. If a pair list a fact that no one else has, they get a point, if they list a fact that others have, they will cross it off. The team to have the most facts that no one else mentioned wins candy.

## Teaching/Large Group Discussion/Interactive (25 mins)

Review from Year 1

## Catechist Sharing (10 mins)

Each catechist will share for 5 minutes about who Jesus is to them personally and how Jesus affects your life daily. (It's okay to be honest if there are days you forget about him or struggle - that will probably make your testimony more relatable to the teens.) And then share about how you try to be Christ for others, and to let Christ's presence in you guide you throughout your day.

## Walk the Line Activity (10 mins) (see [handout](#))

Teens will be asked a [series of questions](#) about Jesus and will choose a side of the room (or to be somewhere in the middle) to respond to the question. Then they can share with the group why they are standing where they are.

## Assign Reflection Exercise #1 (5 mins)

Create time for an intentional prayer period of at least 15 minutes. to pray in some way before our next session and journal about the experience. Whether you pray in nature. Whether you pray by being of service. Whether you pray by simply being still and closing your eyes. However you choose to pray, reflect on how you are allowing Christ in you to arise so that you can be Christ to others or seek Christ in others. Share about this prayer experience at the next session.

**Closing Prayer (5 mins)** - Share intentions. Taking turns going around the (Virtual Square on Zoom) circle all holding hands ("pass the pulse" style). One of the catechists closes by lifting all prayers up through the intercession of Mary by saying a Hail Mary.

# Session 1 - Catechist Prep Sheet

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

Each of us was put here for a reason. This prayer by St. Anselm invites us to open our hearts to God and find that purpose and joy we are thirsting for. *“O Lord my God, teach my heart this day where and how to see you, where and how to find you. I have not yet done that for which I was made. Teach me to seek you, for I cannot seek you unless you teach me, or find you unless you show yourself to me. Let me seek you in my desire, let me desire you in my seeking. Let me find you by loving you, let me love you when I find you. Amen.”*

## Teaching/Large Group Discussion/Interactive

As good as it is to know or retain facts about Jesus or about Catholicism, what good is our knowledge if we don't apply it or know how to apply it? Today's session will help us to review material from last year, but also help us to explore why it matters and how it relates to our everyday life.

### ● Review from Year 1

#### ○ Why Confirmation?

- We explored what Confirmation is and why it matters. *Ask if anyone can provide an explanation about what Confirmation is and why it's important.*
- Then explain about how we are ultimately here because we are making a conscious decision to grow deeper in our Catholic faith, to grow deeper in our relationship with God, and to prepare to make a commitment to continue living out our faith for the rest of our lives.
- The Sacrament of Confirmation is a gift. In the Sacrament we are sealed with the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit, our Baptism is completed, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit strengthen us to live out our life of faith.
- What does this mean practically? Our Baptism and Confirmation combined remind us of our intrinsic belovedness and our identity as God's beloved children with whom God is well-pleased. From this place of knowing our belovedness, we can go forward and live like Christ: to live in the joy and peace and courage that will give us the most fulfilling life.

#### ○ The Trinity and The Imago Dei

- *Ask teens: Who are the 3 people of the Trinity? - Father, Son, Holy Spirit*
- Each person of the Trinity is distinctly one, while all 3 distinct persons, are 1 God. This is a mystery that cannot be fully understood. One helpful way of understanding is the image of God as a relationship, as love. God is the Lover, the Beloved, and the Love shared between them.
- We can reach out to each person of the Trinity uniquely and foster a relationship with each, and it is all strengthening our relationship with the One True God. If you need to lean on the love of a caregiver, God the Father is a helpful or healing image. If you need to lean on the love of a best friend, Jesus has a face and a name and is meant to be that relatable image of God for us. If you need to be filled with the life and energy and power of God, the Holy Spirit is a great person to call upon, to imagine yourself being filled with. The Spirit that dwells within you.

#### ○ Jesus: The Incarnation

- *Ask teens: What does “incarnate” mean? - To be in the flesh, or made flesh.*
- Jesus is God in a human body so that we can relate to God as we would one another.

- Jesus is also in a human body so that our humanity can be redeemed because Jesus is both fully God and fully human. In his dying and resurrection, he takes all of our brokenness, he gives of himself out of pure love, and he transforms us in his own rising to new life.
  - We can have hope in all things that Jesus is walking with us and transforming us. God being made flesh, being one with us, was the hope that the Israelites have waited for centuries to see. Jesus is that Messiah, the hope, the one who invites us to true freedom.
- Saints & Mary & What It Means To Be Holy
  - We don't pray to saints or to Mary, but we ask them to pray for us because they are in Heaven, fully united with God in eternal life, and their prayers for us are heard powerfully.
  - Mary was fully human, but was completely filled with grace which always empowered her to say "yes" to God, and allowed her to say "no" to sin in every situation. She had freedom, but she always chose grace over sin. We can ask Mary to pray for us and to share her grace with us, that we would also be "full of grace" and bear Christ in our own lives.
- Decision Making
  - AMDG - Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam: all for the greater glory of God. If we seek God first in all things, and seek to be rooted in God's love for us and let that spill into all that we do, we will choose the truest good for our lives and have the most holy and fulfilling lives, and will help to heal and transform the world. Even if we mess up or make mistakes, if we keep God as our true North, then we will always be guided in the right direction.
- The Bible
  - The Bible was compiled and written by men, but inspired by God through the Holy Spirit and the life of Jesus Christ.
  - The Old Testament is also known as the Hebrew Scriptures and consists of stories, poetry, prophecies and teachings handed down by oral tradition and then by written word through the Jewish people for thousands of years. These writings all help to illustrate the way God brought and continues to bring salvation to His chosen people.
  - The New Testament was written after Jesus walked the earth, died, resurrected, and ascended to Heaven. It consists of things Jesus said and did, testimonies from the people who met or interacted with Jesus or with Jesus' closest followers, prophecies of how God will come again, and clarifications on God's revelation to God's beloved people. Jesus was a reformer, a savior, a friend, a leader, a servant, and a model for truth, love, joy, peace, and freedom. Jesus is the Word made flesh.
  - The Catholic Bible consists of 46 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Some books of the Old Testament are not included in other Christian bibles because some of the Protestant Reformers believed that they should not be included in the Biblical canon due to being written in Greek instead of Hebrew.
  - *Why does the Bible matter today?* Because it's God's love letter to us. It is filled with reminders of God's faithfulness to His promises. Of the hope that we can have in God. Of God's capacity to never cease in bringing good even out of the darkest times or situations. God's Word is living and breathing and contains wisdom that transcends every time in history.

- *Is the Bible meant to be taken literally?* Not all of it. There are some books that are meant to be myths that have greater truths, some that are filled with symbolism or metaphor, and some that are actually meant to be treated as testimonies. But in all of the Bible, God can still speak to us. We have to take each passage in context from the time it was written and what it was trying to convey to the audience it was written for at that time. What are the greater truths being expressed?
  - Prayer
    - Prayer is how we relate to God. Prayer can be conversation with God, but it is also sometimes just about being still and being centered in God's presence. Stillness and silence are where we can begin to sense God's presence most profoundly and begin to hear God speak to us.
    - We can pray in nature or through receiving the Sacraments and going to Mass. We can pray out loud over one another and their intentions or in silence. We can pray alone or with large groups. We can pray recited or memorized prayers or we can speak to God whatever comes to mind or to heart. We can pray by meditating on Scripture. We can pray the rosary. We can light a candle. Anything we do can become a prayer if it is directed towards God.
    - Like in any relationship, the more we take time to talk with or simply *be* with God, the stronger the relationship with God is.
- **Conclusion**
  - Ultimately, Jesus Christ is our model for how to live a life that is most satisfying, fulfilling, authentic, real, joyful, peaceful, and free.
  - Jesus is not only someone to look up to, but through the Sacraments and prayer, we actually receive Jesus and his Holy Spirit into ourselves so that we are strengthened by him, to become one with him.

### **Walk The Line Activity (Adjust if it is done virtually)**

We are going to explore how we each relate to God by moving to one side of the room or the other in response to a series of questions. Once you move to a place in the room. You'll have the opportunity to share why you are standing where you are standing and to reflect on your personal relationship with God. This isn't about having the right answers or about judging yourself or anyone else's relationship with Jesus. It's just a reflection exercise.

1. **How close do you feel to God today?** Go to one side of the room if you feel very close, the other side if you feel very far, the middle if you're somewhere in between. Then if you feel moved, share why you are standing where you are today. (Catechists should move too. Be honest.)
2. **Do you think of God as more of a wish-granting genie/Santa Claus figure (on one side) or as more of a source of all creation and infinite presence that is all around and within you?** Go to one side for the "genie" God or the other side for the "ever-present" God.
3. **Do you think of God as more judgmental and lording His power over everything or as merciful and unconditionally loving?**
4. **Do you relate to God more as masculine or feminine?** Go to one side of the room if you relate to God as masculine, the other side if you relate to God as feminine, the middle if neither or if you're somewhere in between.
5. **Consider Jesus. Do you relate to him more as a historical figure/character from a story or as a real person who is a friend and actively a part of your life today?**
6. **Do you relate more to Jesus in his divinity (being fully God) or his humanity (being fully human)?**
7. **How easy or difficult is it to talk to or spend time with God?** Go to one side of the room if it is easy, the other side if it is hard, the middle if you're somewhere in between.

# Session 2 - Prayer: How, What It Is, & How It Works

*Goal: For candidates to learn how prayer works and how it doesn't work. To understand that prayer is as much about us changing as it is about influencing God. To learn how to be courageous in praying over and for one another. To have a new and deepened understanding of the power of prayer. That prayer is as much about listening to God as speaking to God.*

## **Opening Prayer (2 mins)**

Listen to "You Speak" by Audrey Assad

## **Check Ins (10 mins)**

Share highs and lows from the past month/week.

## **Share Reflection Exercise #1 with Group (15 mins)**

Share about how you spent time in prayer since the last session. What made it prayerful? Why did you choose to pray the way you did? What did it feel like? What insights did you receive? What made it easy or difficult?

## **Teaching (20 mins)**

What is prayer? What are false understandings of prayer?

## **Prayer Activity (10 mins)**

Teens will examine different examples of prayer in the Bible. They will pair up and each pair will be given a different scripture passage. After reading the pair together, they will answer the following questions about the prayer.

- Who initiated the prayer?
- Who was open to prayer?
- What does Jesus say about prayer?
- What does this passage make you feel?
- What challenges you or comforts you?
- What was the effect of the prayer?

Then they will share what they learned about prayer from their Scripture passage with the rest of the group.

## **Assign Reflection Exercise #2 (5 mins)**

Journal about your own experience of prayer as a child. How has it changed over the years? If you have not prayed in a while, what has been the reason you stopped praying?

## **Closing Prayer (5 mins) - Intercessory Prayer**

Teens will remain with the same prayer partner and share with one another about what they need prayer for and (then will place a hand on the shoulder of their partner, or hold hands if they're comfortable with that,) pray out loud to God (on Zoom) for their partner's prayer intentions.

# Session 2 - Catechist Prep Sheet

## Teaching

- **What is Prayer?**
  - **Begin by asking the teens to define prayer. Write their definitions down on a whiteboard or a large sheet of paper.**
  - Prayer is how we relate to God. Prayer can be conversation with God, but it is also sometimes just about being still and being centered in God's presence. Stillness and silence are where we can begin to sense God's presence most profoundly and begin to hear God speak to us.
  - We can pray in nature or through receiving the Sacraments and going to Mass. We can pray out loud over one another and their intentions or in silence. We can pray alone or with large groups. We can pray recited or memorized prayers or we can speak to God whatever comes to mind or to heart. We can pray by meditating on Scripture. We can pray the rosary. We can light a candle. Anything we do can become a prayer if it is directed towards God.
  - Like in any relationship, the more we take time to talk with or simply *be* with God, the stronger the relationship with God is.
- **Different Forms of Prayer**
  - **Thanksgiving** - giving God thanks for something, or expressing gratitude to God.
  - **Petition** - In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, it states: "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.' But when we pray, do we speak from the height of our pride and will, or 'out of the depths' of a humble and contrite heart?" **Petition** is asking God for something; once we recognize that God is God and we are not, we can learn to come to God and ask Him for those things we need: help to study for a test, help when trying out for a sport, for safety, for healing, for a friend, etc. An important aspect of petition or asking God for what we need is recognizing that God has a plan for our lives. We have to know that God knows what is good for us and He wants to give us what we need.
  - **Ask, Seek, Knock** - As we heard in the Scripture Proclamation from the Gospel of Luke: "And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened" (Lk 11: 9-10). This is God's way of saying, "Just ask!" Although God might answer our prayers in different ways than we would expect or want, He wants us to bring Him our petitions because he loves being in relationship with us. God is listening. Usually the first thing we think of to ask for is what we need. We may be sitting in bed and think, "God, I really need help on that test tomorrow" or many other things we need. God also wants us to ask for those things we need spiritually: "God, help me learn how to love you more."
  - **Intercessory Prayer** - **Intercession** is a prayer of petition in which you ask God's help for another person. We believe intercessory prayer has great power. When you offer prayers for others, you join your love for them with God's love for them. When you pray for someone, you strengthen your bond with him/her. God's love is there, too.
  - **Saintly Intercession** - Catholics also believe that Mary and the Saints can pray for us. Yes, we can go to Jesus and ask for what we need. However, most of us have no problem going up to a friend or family member and asking them to pray for us. "Hey sister, can you pray for my big test tomorrow?" **Mary and the Saints** are like our friends and family members who can pray and **intercede** for us as well. As we grow in our faith, we can learn about

more saints and trust that they are praying for us. Mary, Jesus' mother, has a special relationship with her Son. That is why we honor her and ask her to pray for us "now and at the hour of our death."

- The **Prayers of the Faithful** during Mass are another way that we as Catholics come together and pray for one another. Each Sunday when we attend Mass, we present the needs of the Church, the world, and our community as one. When we say, "Lord hear our prayer," we are speaking as a community for the needs of others.
- Praying for our Enemies - Lastly, we are also called to pray for those that we do not get along with or that have hurt us. One way to pray for them is to pray that God's peace surrounds that person and to pray for healing in your relationship. Or praying that God would heal the parts of that person that make them do the things they do that cause you to dislike them or that hurt you. No one was born evil. We are all made in God's image and different experiences in our lives may impact how we react and respond to the world and the types of people we become. If we pray for God's transforming love to pour out over people we hate or dislike, then we are being like Christ and we will find more freedom, rather than being imprisoned by our hatred or resentment towards another person.
- Colloquy - conversation with God, talking with God as you would a dear friend.
- Lectio Divina - reading a passage of Scripture a few times, then being quiet and noticing what words or phrases from the passage stir your heart or mind and talk to God about what that means for you.
- Meditation - prayer through quiet stillness. Allowing your mind to be clear. Noticing feelings or thoughts as they arise, and gently letting them pass, or talking to God about them as they arise.
- Contemplation/Imaginative Prayer - Find a passage from Scripture and imagine yourself in it as one of the characters or as an observer. Notice what feelings or thoughts arise. Bring these feelings or thoughts to God and have a conversation.
- Praying in tongues - In the Acts of the Apostles, the phrase "praying in tongues" is mentioned, and it's a term also often referred to in communities that have a *charismatic* spiritual expression. Sometimes the Holy Spirit pours out the gift of praying in tongues on a person, and it can come about when a person is deeply moved in prayer or filled with grace and is expressing something of God that cannot be communicated through their native language(s). Usually when a person is given the gift of praying in tongues there is another person present who is given the gift of interpreting tongues.

- **Is God like Santa, a Genie, or a Wizard?**

- **Not Santa** - we think God is like Santa and brings us good things if we are good or punishes us if we are bad. God loves us unconditionally! He knows that we sometimes mess up and do the wrong thing, but his love doesn't change. He may at times allow us to experience the natural consequences of our actions, but God always desires the greatest good for us and will always allow good things and growth to come from those experiences. Whether we receive blessings or we undergo hardships is not a reflection of God's love or lack thereof.
- **Not a Genie** - God is not a genie who is going to grant you three wishes and then disappear. God does not limit the number of times we can come to Him. God wants us to ask Him every single day for those things that we need: "Give us this day our daily bread." Jesus taught us to approach our heavenly Father each and every single day.
- **Wizard** - Lastly, God is not like a wizard. With books and movies about witches and wizards being so popular, we sometimes think of God as some almighty wizard who can

snap His fingers and make everything change. While God is almighty, He desires us to trust Him to know what is best for us. When we do something wrong and get into trouble, we want God to be like a wizard and make the bad stuff go away. However, God wants to use each moment to show us that He loves us and for us to learn to trust Him in every situation.

- **How does God answer prayer?**

- “Yes”, “No”, or “Not Now”.

- “Yes” - Sometimes we ask God for something and we receive that very answer to our prayer. This can happen when our desires and God’s Will (or God’s dream for us) are perfectly aligned.

- “No” - Sometimes what we ask for isn’t granted. This isn’t because God doesn’t love us, but to the contrary, it’s often because what we have asked for isn’t ultimately what is best for us and God either has something better prepared for us, or is still preparing us for what is in store.

- “Not now” - Sometimes we don’t see a quick answer to our prayer. It’s not a “maybe” because God is all-knowing. But sometimes we are still not ready yet for what God has for us. Sometimes God is allowing other moving pieces to fall into place in exactly the right way for things to come together for the best.

- **Does prayer really work?**

- It depends what you expect prayer to be. Ultimately, prayer isn’t just about “getting what we want”. It’s about drawing closer to God in trust and love and intimacy. And it’s also about changing us and helping us grow. We are strengthened in trust, patience, and perseverance when we pray unceasingly for what we long for. We are also humbled when our prayers are answered in ways that we didn’t expect but are so much better than what we could have hoped for and we’re reminded that God is God and we are not. Ultimately prayer is always about what can lead us closer to God. God will answer all our prayers in a way that best aids in that ultimate purpose.

# Scripture on Prayer

## **Seek me with all your heart - Jeremiah 29: 11-14**

For I know well the plans I have in mind for you—oracle of the LORD—plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope. When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me—oracle of the LORD—and I will change your lot; I will gather you together from all the nations and all the places to which I have banished you—oracle of the LORD—and bring you back to the place from which I have exiled you.

## **The Parable of the Persistent Widow - Luke 18:4-18**

Then he told them a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. He said, “There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being. And a widow in that town used to come to him and say, ‘Render a just decision for me against my adversary.’ For a long time the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought, ‘While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, because this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.’” The Lord said, “Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them?”

## **The Answer to Prayers - Matthew 7:7-11**

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asks for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him.

## **Persistence in Prayer - Luke 11:5-8**

And he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,’ and he says in reply from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.’ I tell you, if he does not get up to give him the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence.

## **Love of Enemies - Luke 6:27-31**

But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

# Session 3 - Be My Hands

*Goal: For candidates to be introduced to Catholic Social Teaching. For candidates to think about practical ways that they can be the hands and feet of Jesus - to be His love in the world to others. Reflecting on what the panelists shared at the Catholic Social Teaching Panel at Cor 2.0.*

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

## **Check Ins (10 mins)**

Share highs and lows from the past month/week.

## **Share Reflection Exercise #2 with Group (20 mins)**

Each candidate and Catechists will share about their experience at the Cor 2.0 Night on Catholic Social Teaching. What did you learn? What surprised you? What does Catholic Social Teaching mean to you? What particular aspects are you drawn to?

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

## **Activity - Two Feet of Love in Action (15 mins)**

Break teens into pairs. Have them fill out the Two Feet of Love in Action worksheet - what are ways they know of or things they have done that address either Social Justice or Spiritual Works?

## **Large Group Sharing (10 mins)**

Have each pair share their worksheet. Then bring out the second worksheet (green) have each group choose one problem that they feel passionate about and fill in the responses.

## **Assign Reflection Exercise #3 (5 mins)**

Find some way to be Christ's hands or feet in the world in the next month before our next session. Journal about the experience. How did you see Christ in others? How did you, by your actions, bring Christ to others? What was easy? What was challenging? Share about this experience at the next session.

## **Closing Prayer -Blessing Prayer Activity (10 mins)**

Get into pairs and have each person bless each other using the Blessing Prayer.

## Session 3 - Catechist Prep Sheet

**Opening Prayer** - While Jesus was on earth, he healed the sick, comforted the poor, and gave hope to those who felt hopeless. Now he needs us to do that for his people. Reflect on these words from St. Teresa of Avila: "Christ has no body but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours."

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

- **Catholic Social Teaching:** One of the best-kept secrets in the Catholic Church are the Catholic social teachings.
  - "The Church's social teaching comprises a body of doctrine, which is articulated as the Church interprets events in the course of history, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in the light of the whole of what has been revealed by Jesus Christ. This teaching can be more easily accepted by men of good will, the more the faithful let themselves be guided by it" (CCC 2422).
  - **These Catholic ideals are a response to contemporary political, economic and social issues.** There is not one unified list of specified Catholic social teachings, but rather large volumes of works and a set of teachings that are agreed upon as the basis for discussion. These teachings are not about the creation or the support of a singular governmental system, but rather the need for all Christians to work for justice for all people.
  - **Each Catholic social teaching is rooted in the Gospels.** The theme of the teaching can easily be seen in Jesus' preaching, teaching, parables and His very life. To care for the poor is universally agreed upon; however, there are sometimes disputes about various political systems and how the elements of Catholic social teachings are reflected in laws and by politicians.
  - Some of these teachings may challenge us personally. It is important to keep in mind that we are to present the truth of the Church and her teachings. The Catechism states, "The Church's social teachings propose principles for reflection; it provides criteria for judgment; it gives guidelines for action" (2423).
- **[The Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching](http://www.usccb.org) (taken from <http://www.usccb.org>)**
  1. **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.
  2. **Call to Family, Community, and Participation**

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society -- in

economics and politics, in law and policy -- directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

**3. Rights and Responsibilities**

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities--to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

**4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

**5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected--the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

**6. Solidarity**

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers and sisters keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that if you want peace, work for justice.<sup>1</sup> The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.

**7. Care for God's Creation**

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

● **Two feet of Christian Service:**

- Social Justice - removes the root causes of injustice and improves the structures.
- Charitable Works - meets the basic needs for individuals.

They are both important. You can teach a person to fish so they can catch fish the rest of their lives, but if they are about to die of starvation, you have to give them a fish so they can live and learn later.

● **Corporal Works of Mercy**

1. Feed the hungry
2. Give drink to the thirsty
3. Clothe the naked
4. Give shelter to travellers
5. Visit the sick
6. Visit the imprisoned
7. Bury the dead

● **Spiritual Works of Mercy**

1. Instruct the ignorant.
2. Counsel the doubtful.
3. Admonish the sinners.
4. Bear patiently those who wrong us.
5. Forgive offenses.
6. Comfort the afflicted.
7. Pray for the living and the dead

# Two Feet of Christian Service Worksheet

## **Two Feet of Christian Service Worksheet - p. 2**

## Blessing Prayer (by Fr. Jim Clarke)

In pairs, take turns praying the “Blessing Prayer” over one another. Have one person read the following phrases while making the Sign of the Cross with your thumb on or hovering over different parts of the body. Have the partners face each other. Whoever is receiving the prayer first should stand with their hands at their side, palms facing up in a receptive posture.

1. “Receive the **mind** of Christ.”  
(*Make the sign of the cross on or over your partner’s forehead*)  
“May you be renewed with his peace.”
2. “Receive the **vision** of Christ.”  
(*Make the sign of the cross on or over your partner’s closed eyes*)  
“May you see God’s presence in the world around you.”
3. “Receive the **Word** of Christ.”  
(*Make the sign of the cross on or over your partner’s ears*)  
“May your ears be open to the transforming word of God.”
4. “Receive the **prophetic challenge** of Christ.”  
(*Make the sign of the cross over your partner’s lips*)  
“May your lips be opened to proclaim God’s love and justice to all.”
5. “Receive the **courage** of Christ.”  
(*Make the sign of the cross over your partner’s heart/chest*)  
“May your heart be broken with compassion for God’s people.”
6. “Receive the **healing touch** of Christ.”  
(*Make the sign of the cross on your partner’s open palms*)  
“May your hands radiate God’s healing mercy to all you touch.”
7. “Receive the **passionate service** of Christ.”  
(*Make the sign of the cross on or over your partner’s forehead*)  
“May you walk humbly with the Lord in service to all humankind.”

# Session 4 - Befriending The Logos

*Goal: For candidates to get to know God in the Word, the Scripture. To review the books of the Bible and the importance of how to read different parts of the Bible differently. To connect with the Bible not just as a literary or historical text, but as a living breathing manifestation of God in our lives today.*

## **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)**

Share what way you were Christ's hands or feet in the world in the past month. How did you see Christ in others? How did you, by your actions, bring Christ to others? What was easy? What was challenging?

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

- Ask Teens: *What do you know about the Bible?* (Have someone write the answers on a large sheet of paper or whiteboard provided on Zoom - Or Have someone write and be the scribe or reporter for the Zoom group).
- Proceed with teaching content.

## **Catechist Witness (5 mins)**

What does the Bible mean to you? Share an experience where you've used it and it's helped you. Or share about how your relationship with Scripture has grown or developed since you were a teen.

## **Scripture Activity (30 minutes) (see Catechist Prep Sheet)**

## **Assign Reflection Exercise #5 (5 mins)**

Sometime in the week, read a few verses (like a paragraph) of the Bible. If you're not sure where to start, start with the gospel of Mark. Write down two things that surprise you or you find interesting or puzzling. [Extra challenge- try to read a few sentences each night.]

## **Closing Prayer (5 mins)**

A letter from God - Give each teen a paper and pen. Give them 5 minutes - if God were writing you a letter or postcard, what do you think God wants you most to know? Write a postcard/letter from God to you. Feel free to use your Bible to pick out any lines or passages that you feel God is specifically and personally speaking to you regarding what you're dealing with right now.

If any of the teens are willing to share their letter from God for a closing prayer, use that.

## Session 4 - Catechist Prep Sheet

**Opening Prayer** - The Psalms were (mostly) written by King David - they are songs, meant to be sung. When we are struggling they are a place we can find comfort and help. In this psalm, we are told to trust in God and do good even when it seems that those who do evil are winning. Wait a while and they will be no more.

### Psalm 37: 1-11

*Do not be provoked by evildoers; do not envy those who do wrong. Like grass they wither quickly; like green plants they wilt away. Trust in the LORD and do good that you may dwell in the land and live secure. Find your delight in the LORD who will give you your heart's desire.*

*Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will act And make your righteousness shine like the dawn, your justice like noonday.*

*Be still before the LORD; wait for him. Do not be provoked by the prosperous, nor by malicious schemers. Refrain from anger; abandon wrath; do not be provoked; it brings only harm. Those who do evil will be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD will inherit the earth.*

*Wait a little, and the wicked will be no more; look for them and they will not be there. But the poor will inherit the earth, and will delight in great prosperity.*

### **Teaching/Sharing/Large Group Discussion/Interactive (30 mins)**

- After teens have shared responses to “What do you know about the Bible?” present the following content.
- Albert Einstein said, “I want to know the thoughts of God, the rest are details.”
- **The Bible is A Map/Guidebook for our Lives** - The Bible is not just another book. It's the Word of God. But what does that really mean? If God knows everything and loves us and wants the best for us, then God would show us how to have the best life possible. The Commandments can also be thought of as “*invitations to the best life*”. God is not a liar or a giant rule maker. God is not in need of our faithfulness. Rather, the Bible is filled with stories of God's faithfulness to His beloved children. It's filled with wisdom and teachings that help us to live a life that is fulfilling, rich, joyful, encouraging, and to help transform the world for good.
- **The Bible can transform our lives** - Here's the mysterious thing about the Bible: it has the power to transform our lives. That's why so many people don't read it! If you want to see something incredible, start praying for transformation. Ask God to transform you and your life. Most people have never prayed a prayer of transformation, because we often don't like change. We want to leave things exactly as they are. Your truest joy depends upon discovering God's will for your life, and the Bible can help you with that. But too often we are not interested in discovering the will of God. Usually we are more interested in “*my will be done*” than “*thy will be done*.”
- **Why Should We Trust The Bible?** For one thing, words have value based on who speaks them. God has spoken these words through the prophets. These are ancient sacred texts written by men who have been inspired by God, the Holy Spirit, speaking in their hearts and in their lives. The prophets and sages and Church fathers who passed on the stories through oral tradition that eventually were penned have been collectively agreed upon by the community of Scripture scholars and the faithful teachers and rabbis for thousands of years, known as the **canon**.

- **Should I read the whole Bible literally?** No. There are some texts that are meant to be read as factual and historical. Others are myths that convey deeper or greater truths in a way that factual accounts either could not or in lieu of having the facts. There are parts of the bible that are poetry. Parts that are prophecy and therefore very symbolic, filled with imagery that is not literal. For example, we do not have to believe that the world is less than 6,000 years old and that the very first humans were literally named Adam and Eve. Christians do, however, believe that Jesus literally died and rose from the dead.

Context, context, context. We *must* read each passage taking into account the context it was written in (historically, etc.) and the purpose it was written for. Carefully interpreting and explaining Scripture in its context is called **exegesis**.

- **What is “Sola Scriptura”?** A theological belief established during the Protestant Reformation that says that the Bible alone is the sole, infallible rule for faith and practice. Catholics do not believe in Sola Scriptura because our faith is informed by Holy Scripture *and* Holy Tradition, within the context of our Church’s authority which has been passed down from generation to generation.
- **God reveals himself to us in two ways, through Scripture and through Tradition.** Scripture is the Bible. Tradition is the teachings that have been handed down from the apostles to their successors through preaching, example, and life of worship, even before the New Testament was written.
- **The first generation of Christians didn't have a written New Testament; The Church existed before it was written.** It was the early Church Fathers who compiled the books of the New Testament and decided which to include in the canon based on Holy Tradition.
- **Why is the Catholic Bible Bigger Than Other Bibles?** Catholics not only have the Hebrew Scriptures (The Torah - Jewish Bible) and the New Testament, but also include the **Deuterocanonical texts** in our Bible as well. Some of these books are Sirach, Wisdom, 1st and 2nd Maccabees, etc. These books were originally written in Greek by Hellenistic Jews under Greek rule, but are genuine canonical texts. Some Protestants, however, during the Reformation chose to remove them from their canon because they were not originally penned in Hebrew. Other historic manuscripts have since been discovered of those books in Hebrew.
- **Introduction to the Bible**
  - **The Catholic Bible is made up of 73 books** - 46 in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament, Jewish Bible), and 27 in the Christian Scriptures (New Testament.)
    - **Old Testament**
      - **Pentateuch** : Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
      - **Historical books** : Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees
      - **Wisdom books** : Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach
      - **Prophetic books** : Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

- Of these books, **Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, parts of Esther and parts of Daniel** are **deuterocanonical**, and are found in the Bibles of Eastern Christianity. These books are usually not found in the Protestant Bible, but are sometimes included in a separate inter-testamental section called the "Apocrypha".
- **New Testament**
  - The Gospels : Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
  - Acts of the Apostles
  - Pauline Epistles (those written by St. Paul) : Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews
  - General Epistles : James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude
  - Revelation
- The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek, and has been translated into more languages than any other book.
- It was written by hundreds of different authors between approximately 1500 BC and 100 AD.
- **FUN FACT: St. Bede the Venerable** (673-735) was known as the Father of English History and was the first to translate the Bible into Old English.
- **Where did the Bible come from?**
  - God did not dictate it mechanically to scribes. God chose certain people who were **inspired by the Holy Spirit** to write down what God wanted to convey to humanity.
  - The Bible came together over the course of more than **1600 years, and hundreds of authors** were involved in writing the Bible as we know it today.
  - Various Councils assembled in the Early Church to establish the canon we have today.
    - The First Council of Nicea in 325 formally established the New Testament, though Church Fathers had pretty much agreed upon the major texts much earlier than that.
    - The Council of Trent in 1546 was a formal finalization of the inclusion of the Deuterocanonical books, in response to the Protestant Reformation.
- **If I want to read the Bible, where should I start?** A great place to start is with one of the four Gospels, which are about Jesus' life on earth. **Mark** is the shortest - I'd start there.
- **How To Look Up A Bible Passage**
  - Start with the name of the Book (eg: Genesis, 1st Corinthians, etc.)
  - Then the next number is the Chapter (eg: Genesis 2)
  - The next numbers are the verses. (eg: Genesis 2: 1-5).
  - There is usually an index at the beginning or end of the Bible telling you where to find the Book.
- **How do I really get to know the Bible?** In John's Gospel, it is written that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh". We believe that Jesus is the "Logos" or "Word", who became a person and walks around like us. In Jesus, the Scriptures are brought to life and the themes and meaning are expressed in Christ. By spending time reading Scripture, letting the Word speak to us personally, we are actually spending time with Jesus who is the Word-made-flesh. Scripture is a very important way to grow deeper in our personal relationship with God.
  - "And just the word *Logos*, means so much more than 'word', as we know it. It's a plan, a meaning, a logic. Jesus is not just God's spoken word that still rings out, but Jesus is the

meaning God gives to creation. Which means the way he acts and loves and lives can tell us pretty much everything about who we are” - Fr. Tim Grumbach.

**Scripture Activity (20-30 mins.) - Bible Search:**

Make sure each teen has a Bible. A bunch of Scripture passages will be written on slips (see next sheet and cut out the Scripture passages into slips of paper. Place the strips of paper in an envelope. Have each teen draw a strip of paper from the envelope or a bowl. Tell them not to look. Then at “on your marks... get set.. go!” have the teens race to find their Scripture passage in their Bible. Once the teens find their passage, tell them to line up in the order of their passages. First do a round with the Old Testament. Then do another round with the New Testament. Then have each teen, in the order they’re lined up, read the passage they found from their Bible aloud. Ask each teen:

- Is this from the Hebrew Scriptures or the New Testament?
- Is it literal or not literal?
- What do you think God is trying to say through that passage? What does it mean to you?

# Scripture Passages

## Old Testament Bible Verses (cut out and place in an envelope):

Genesis 1: 26-31

Proverbs 29: 9-14

Exodus 32: 15-20

Song of Songs 4: 1-3

Numbers 22: 26-31

Wisdom 7: 22-26

Deuteronomy 16: 1-4

Isaiah 55: 6-11

2 Kings 2:23-24

Jeremiah 29: 10-14

Job 31: 2-6

Ezekiel 34: 11-13

Psalms 139:2-5

Hosea 6: 1-3

## New Testament Bible Verses (cut out and place in another envelope):

Matthew 1: 18-24

John 20: 11-18

Mark 1: 9-11

John 21: 24-35

Mark 7: 32-36

Acts 2: 1-4

Luke 1: 41-49

Acts 9: 1-6

Luke 6: 27-29

1 Corinthians 13: 8-13

John 6: 51-56

Philippians 4:4-7

John 19: 28-30

Revelation 20: 11-13

# Session 5 - Virtues & Vices

*Goal: For candidates to have a more relatable and contemporary understanding of the 7 Virtues and 7 Vices. To understand the main ways we are often led into temptation and to reflect on the ways to help us resist temptation and strengthen our bond with God. The teens will realize that the path to true freedom lies in virtue and the path to slavery/lack of liberty lies in vice.*

**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)**

What did you read in the Bible? What two things surprised you or you found interesting or puzzling?

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

- Three Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Love
- Cardinal Virtues
- 7 Contrary Virtues and the 7 Deadly Sins

**Discussion Questions (20 mins)**

- How do the vices lead to slavery/addiction or lack of freedom?
- How do the virtues lead to more freedom and a more fulfilling life?
- Have you ever personally experienced a sense of “unfreedom” as a result of one of the vices? Have you ever felt freer as a result of using the virtues?
- When have you made a decision that was good (in line with a virtue) that helped you to make another good decision? (Aka: growth in that virtue).
- In our culture, people often confuse vices, such as pride or greed, thinking that they are good. Why do you think that is?
- What is one virtue that you most would like to cultivate?

**Activity - (25 mins) - Virtues/Vices Collages**

Pairs of teens will collaborate on making collages that depict images or words representing virtues and vices. Teens will have 15 minutes to work on collages, and then spend 10 minutes presenting those collages.

**Assign Reflection Exercise #5 (5 mins)**

Choose one virtue that you will actively strive to practice this next week. Journal about the virtue. Share at the next session what you did differently or how striving to practice that virtue felt or affected you. Alternately, choose one vice you will avoid and share about that experience.

**Closing Prayer (2 mins)**

Pray the Awareness Examen (*see handout*).

# Session 5 - Catechist Prep Sheet

## Opening Prayer (2 mins)

Lord, teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for reward, save that of knowing that I do your will. St. Ignatius of Loyola

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

- **Catechist Note:** One of the main things that youth today want is freedom. Anything that limits that freedom is seen as wrong. In speaking about virtues and vices, it may be useful to couch it in the language of freedom versus being constrained. Letting them see how bad habits make you a slave to, e.g. alcohol (gluttony vs. temperance). In that way, the virtues might be seen as the keys to maximum freedom, instead of some arbitrary rules that someone thought up to limit your freedom.
- “Your beliefs become your thoughts. Your thoughts become your words. Your words become your actions. Your actions become your habits. Your habits become your values. Your values become your destiny.” - Mahatma Ghandi
- **What is a virtue?** A **virtue** is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions. The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God (1803). Furthermore, to be completely united with God in Heaven by having everything that would create separation purged and purified out of us.
- **The Theological Virtues:** The theological virtues help us to live in relationship with the Holy Trinity. These virtues were infused into our souls at baptism, but we must unwrap them and allow them to grow within us. These virtues will change our lives for the better, conforming us more perfectly to God’s will.
  - **Faith:** As we continue to nourish and protect our **faith**, our doubts will begin to fade away and we become ever more certain of the God who is constant, unchangeable, faithful, just, and perfectly loving. (CCC 2086)
    - The moment we were baptized we received the gift of faith. Faith helps us to believe in God and in everything that He revealed in Scripture and through the Church. (CCC 1814)
    - **Faith helps us to believe in the things of God that we cannot see.** It helps us to believe in our great God who has loved us into existence, who died for our sins, and who has made us His adopted sons and daughters. (CCC 1814) But it is not enough to just believe things.
    - **Faith calls us to action.** If we have a desire to follow Christ in our everyday lives, our faith should guide us to make good decisions and to live holy lives. (James 2:17)
    - **But what does it look like to live a holy life?** Follow the two great commandments at all times; namely to love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and to love one another. (Matthew 22:37)
- **Ask the youth to respond:** *What things in your life show those around you that you are Christian? In what ways do you share the love of Christ with those around you?*
  - If we are trying to live a life following Christ as His disciples, we must also be willing to confidently witness to our faith to all those we encounter. (CCC 1816)
- **Give the youth some concrete examples** of ways that they can share their faith in simple actions in their everyday life (ex: inviting friends to Mass and Cor, sharing something about their faith with a friend, praying specifically for someone’s intentions, etc.).

- There are **many small and simple ways that we can witness our faith** - it does not have to be extreme for you to reflect the love of God to others. **God has blessed each of you with particular gifts, talents, and skills**, which means that all of you are going to share your faith with others in a way that no one else will. **Christ is calling each of you**, in your own way, to illuminate our dark and broken world with His light, sharing this spark of faith with everyone you encounter.
  - **Hope:** By continuing to foster **hope** within our hearts, our trust in the Lord and in His promises continues to grow. He becomes a firm foundation for us, so that we will not be shaken by the storms of life.
    - The theological virtue of hope moves our hearts from desiring the things of this world, to longing for the joys of heaven. Hope sustains us in times of great trial and suffering; hope helps us to remember that Christ never abandons us and is faithful to His promises. Jesus has given us the Beatitudes as blueprints for finding genuine happiness on earth.
- **Ask the teens:** *What gives you hope? How has someone offered hope to you or how have you offered hope to someone else?*
  - **Love:** As we allow the gift of **charity** or **love** to enflame our hearts, our love for God and for others will deepen and increase. Our daily actions and choices will come from a place of love, selflessness, and humility.
- **Ask the teens:** *What does love mean to you?*
  - As we allow the gift of charity to enflame our hearts, our love for God and for others will deepen and increase. Our daily actions and choices will come from a place of love, selflessness, and humility.
  - Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, **think about these things.**"
  - "If I speak in human and angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).
- **The Lord wants us to live an abundant life. The theological virtues can transform the way we live our lives if we allow them to grow within us.** The virtues elevate our hearts and minds so that we become focused on the things of God, and not only the material world. The effects of practicing the virtues of faith, hope, and charity impact our whole lives, deepening our relationship with God, increasing our trust and hope in Him, and intensifying our love for Him and for others.
  - **The theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity** change us and make us able to take part in the divine life of God. They help us to live in relationship with the Holy Trinity. (CCC 1812)
  - **The desire for God is written on each of our hearts**, and "God never ceases to draw [us] to Himself." These theological virtues guide our hearts and minds to focus on the Lord, and help us to draw near to Him. (CCC 27)
  - At the moment of our baptisms, God sent His Holy Spirit to rest upon us and infuse us with **these theological virtues. They are a part of our very souls and already present within us.**
  - We, however, have to **make the choice** to use these gifts and let them guide and conform us more closely to the person God desires us to be.
  - **Being open to these gifts of faith, hope, and charity growing within us will change our lives;** they will transform us in ways that we cannot even begin to imagine.
- **Natural (Cardinal) virtues**

- **Prudence** – Deliberating well about what actions we should do
- **Justice** – Rendering to each and to all what is due to them
- **Temperance** – Curbing the passions that incite us to evil actions
- **Fortitude** – Courage in adversity and constancy in difficult actions
- **Supernatural (Theological) virtues**
  - **Faith** – Trustful assent of the mind and heart to God’s revealed truth
  - **Hope** – Expectant desire for attaining eternal life with God
  - **Charity/Love** – An active will to seek the good of God and others and heavenly friendship with them
- **How do we achieve the virtues?** To some extent, anyone can acquire natural virtues through the **discipline of repeated good actions and a well-ordered life**. Nevertheless, **we need the help of God’s grace**, by means of the sacraments and prayer, both to acquire the supernatural virtues and even to perfect and harmonize the natural virtues.
- **What are Vices? Vices** are evil habits or behaviors that ultimately do not point us toward God or things that create distance between us and God. Vices or sins give us a disposition to perform evil actions. We sometimes develop vices which incline us to perform evil actions. These normally involve excess or deficiency in pursuing what is good.
- **The seven “deadly” vices:** These seven vices are called ‘deadly’ because of their poisonous effects on the human soul, the difficulty that is often experienced in eradicating them, and the ease with which they lead to mortal sin. They are sometimes also called the seven deadly sins or the “capital sins”. Each of these vices has, as a remedy, a contrary virtue linked to the cardinal virtues. The vices may promise an easier life but they ensnare and enslave us. By contrast, the virtues may seem difficult, but they lead to our true freedom and happiness as human beings.
- **The 7 Deadly Sins and the 7 Contrary Virtues**
  1. **Pride and Humility**  
Pride (the problem) is a denial of the superiority of the Creator and an inflation of our ego. It leads to excessive ambition, an overestimation of our own strengths and the desire to be idolised by others. Humility (the solution) is a recognition that we are creatures and in need of God. It helps us to form a true opinion of ourselves, to disregard shallow popularity and to free us from self-obsession.
  2. **Envy and Kindness/Brotherly Love**  
Envy (the problem) is an anger or sadness that other people have gifts and possessions that we want for ourselves. Kindness (the solution) is gratitude for the gifts and talents of others and a desire that each and every person reaches their potential.
  3. **Anger and Patience/Meekness**  
Anger (the problem) is a disordered state in which we take revenge on others, or an unfair opposition to a person or thing. Patience (the solution) is self-control, not a weakness, which allows us to master our emotions when attacked or wronged.
  4. **Sloth and Diligence**  
Sloth (the problem) is a laziness that prevents us from doing what we can achieve and should do. Diligence (the solution) is a readiness to always do what is needed. It makes even difficult tasks achievable.
  5. **Avarice (Greed) and Liberality (Generosity)**  
Avarice (the problem) is an immoderate desire for possessions and gifts. Leads to injustice, stealing and indifference to the poor. When we put our worth in what we have, we will always feel less than - we will never be satisfied with what we have. Liberality (the solution) is a generosity towards others in sharing God’s gifts. It brings personal contentment with what we

possess. We trust that God's love for us, our truest identity, is not dependent on what we have or lack.

**6. Gluttony and Temperance**

Gluttony (the problem) is a disordered love for food and drink. It leads us to eat and drink excessively and exclusively for pleasure. Pleasure isn't a bad thing, but when we seek to use substances or food to distract or to numb ourselves, self-medicating, we aren't free to fully experience God's love for us or to bear that love to others. Temperance (the solution) is a right use of food and drink for nourishment and pleasure. It leads to self-control in many other areas. Ask ourselves, am I drinking or eating to avoid or numb? Do I need that extra donut or drink? Taking contrary action can sometimes be a good way to grow in the virtue of temperance.

**7. Lust and Chastity**

Lust (the problem) is a disordered craving for selfish and sensual pleasure (generally sexual). It leads to abuses of the body and the family and many addictions. It is when we objectify a person or even ourselves for our own selfish use, rather than fully seeing a whole person, sacred and loveable as they are. Our sexuality is a gift from God and pleasure is a gift from God, but they are meant to be experienced within the full context of embracing the human person: fully, faithfully, fruitfully, and freely (aka marriage). Chastity (the solution), as antiquated as the word may sound, is a proper use of our sexuality. It leads us to guard our heart and mind from evil influences, gives us freedom and allows us to love purely. It helps us to see one another more fully, not just in parts, but as whole persons worthy of authentic love and belonging. It also allows us to temper our passions, so that our sexual expressions are a complete gift of self to another in a context where there is no fear, nothing held back, and nothing unfaithful.

*\*Resource - "The Little Prince" (animated film) - covers topics of avarice, pride, gluttony.*

# 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.

# Session 6 - Sin, Mercy, & Reconciliation

*Goal: Teens will be encouraged to go to reconciliation. They will be reminded of the awesomeness of God's mercy. They will realize what sin is and who it hurts.*

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

## **Check Ins (10 mins)**

Share highs and lows from the past month/week.

## **Share Reflection Exercise #5 with Group (15 mins)**

Which of the virtues did you practice since we last met? Why did you choose that virtue? What did it feel like? What insights did you receive? What made it easy or difficult?

## **Fill-in-the-Chart Activity - Who does this sin hurt? - (10 mins) (See Catechist Prep Sheet)**

## **Teaching (20 mins)**

What is sin? Is it just breaking some arbitrary rules that people made up? How does sin hurt others? How does it hurt ourselves? How does sin steal our freedom?

## **Catechist Sharing (5 mins)**

Each catechist will share about an experience of going to reconciliation. Feel free to be vulnerable but appropriate in what you share about your confession experience.

## **Discussion Questions (15 mins) (See Catechist Prep Sheet)**

## **Assign Reflection Exercise #6 (5 mins) -Give the teens a card with the [examen prayer](#) on it.**

If you haven't been to Confession in a while, try to go before the next session. Share about the experience at the next session (without revealing your sins, no need to rehash them). Was it scary or relieving? Did you feel lighter afterwards? What did the Sacrament reveal to you about God's love and mercy for you?

or

Pray the Awareness Examen (that we did at the last session) at least once between now and our next session. Try to do it as often as you can. Take five minutes, maybe before bed, to calm your mind and open your heart up to God.

Prayer challenge: Some people pray this three times a day, when they wake, at noon, and when they go to bed. Try praying it at least 5 times a week this next month to make it a habit.

## **Closing Prayer (5 mins) - Letting go of Sins**

Have teens write down their sins on pieces of paper that they're carrying, however small or large in their eyes. Write down the names of people they are struggling to forgive. Write down burdens or addictions they want to be free from. Then have them place their strips of paper either in a bowl at the foot of a cross or over a candle. Flash paper is a fun tool to use because it disappears instantly as soon as it makes contact with a flame. Otherwise, you'll need to do a small bonfire in a fire-proof bowl.

# Session 6 - Catechist Prep Sheet

## Opening Prayer:

*Merciful Father, You have given us your Son as your loving presence in this world. Create in our hearts the room for your love to grow. Forgive our shortcomings and prepare our hearts for your coming. With school and other activities, give us the strength to find joy amidst the stress of tests and busyness and the wisdom to find truth in our studies. We ask this in the name Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, one God, forever and ever, Amen.*

## Activity - Fill in the Chart - Who does this sin hurt?

### Who Do These Actions Hurt?

ACTION	SELF	FAMILY	FRIENDS	COMMUNITY	WORLD	GOD
Cheating on a test						
Making a racist or sexist comment.						
Lying to parents about going to a party.						
Drinking and driving.						
Making a mean comment about someone's appearance in a text, chat, or post.						

Have teens talk through each action and make an "X" in each box that applies.

On a whiteboard or newsprint make a grid. Put sins on the left side and the following across the top: Self, Family, Friends, Community, World, God

In the large group, Ask these questions and ask the teens to respond who do these sins hurt (add or change the sins to make them relatable – they should be things that they might do or see others doing)

**Note:** At times we all tell ourselves that this little thing (sin) we are going to do doesn't hurt anyone. Going through this exercise, you will see that most sins, even small ones, hurt more people than you might think. Going through this exercise can help teens to realize that sin really does exist (some from their generation think it does not.)

## Teaching

### Sin

- **What is sin?** Anything that comes between us and our relationship with God. Anything that prevents us from growing closer to God.
- **What is Original Sin?** The sin of the first man that has become a hereditary inheritance throughout the generations.
  - Another way of thinking of it, in light of the theory of evolution, is that at some point in our human development, humans became knowledgeable (ate from the tree of knowledge) of right and wrong and knowingly chose wrong. This condition of being inclined to choose wrong (of being a sinner), even when we know it's not as good as what is right, is like an addiction. We all fall prey to it.
- **So we're all "sinners"?** Yes, but sin is a condition. Who we are, our truest identity, is made-in-God's-image, our truest identity is Beloved. So we are Beloved sinners. Sin distracts us from our true identity and God's love, mercy and grace reminds us of our Belovedness when we are reconciled with God.
- **What is mortal vs. venial sin?**
  - **Mortal Sin:** A serious, grave or **mortal sin is the knowing and willful violation of God's law in a serious matter**, for example, idolatry, adultery, murder, slander. These are all things gravely contrary to the love we owe God and, because of Him, our neighbor. As Jesus taught, when condemning even looking at a woman lustfully, sin can be both interior (choices of the will alone) or exterior (choices of the will carried into action). A man who willfully desires to fornicate, steal, murder or some other grave sin, has already seriously offended God by choosing interiorly what God has prohibited.
    - **Mortal sin is called mortal because it is the "spiritual" death of the soul (separation from God).** If we are in the state of grace it loses this supernatural life for us. If we die without repenting we will lose Him for eternity, because **we are actively choosing to reject God's Divine Love and Mercy** which he eagerly waits to offer us. However, by turning our hearts back to Him and receiving the Sacrament of Penance we are restored to His friendship. Catholics are not allowed to receive Communion if they have unconfessed mortal sins.
  - **Venial Sin: Venial sins are slight sins. They do not break our friendship with God, although they injure it.** They involve disobedience of the law of God in slight (venial) matters. If we gossip and destroy a person's reputation it would be a mortal sin. However, normally gossip is about trivial matters and only venially sinful. Additionally, something that is otherwise a mortal sin (e.g. slander) may be in a particular case only a venial sin. The person may have acted without reflection or under force of habit. Thus, not fully intending the action of their guilt before God is reduced.
  - It is always good to remember, especially those who are trying to be faithful but sometimes fall, that for mortal sin it must not only be 1) serious matter, but 2) the person must know it is serious and then 3) freely commit it.
- **Effects of sin**
  - Hurts our relationship with God
  - Hurts our relationship with others
  - Hurts ourselves; God knows what is best for us.
    - (Anecdote: Roseto? Sin has farther reach than we realize)  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/30/books/chapters/chapter-outliers.html>

## Mercy

- **God always wants to forgive us, his mercy is FREE**
- **The Cross:** This is the center of our faith - that Jesus loved us so much he willingly poured himself out completely as an offering of Love, a sacrifice, so that we would not be enslaved by our sins, but be able to know God's forgiveness and mercy, His hands outstretched, unconditionally. All we have to do is seek His mercy.
- **St. Faustina** (1905-1938) was a Polish nun who experienced visions of Jesus Christ and wrote a diary detailing many revelations about **Jesus' Divine Mercy**. Jesus spoke to her and asked her to commission a painting depicting him the way she saw him. The image was of red and white light shining forth from Jesus' heart, representing the powerful blood and water which poured forth as a fountain of mercy for all people. At the bottom of the painting the words "Jesus, I trust in you" are written.
- **Divine Mercy Chaplet and Novena** - St. Faustina also developed a prayer chaplet that can be prayed on a rosary with a series of prayers for souls of the living and the deceased, invoking the "unfathomable divine mercy" of Jesus for all souls. Some people choose to pray this chaplet at 3pm each day, because it was at 3pm that Jesus died. There is also a Novena of this Chaplet (9 days of prayer) with prayers each day for a different group of souls.
- **Parables of Mercy**
  - Good Shepherd & The Lost Sheep - Luke 15: 1-7
  - Lost Coin - Luke 15: 8 - 10
  - Prodigal Son - Luke 15: 11- 32

VIDEO: Busted Halo <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wz5-vu6A58E>

## Healing Sacraments: Reconciliation & Anointing of the Sick

- In the Church, we have **two Sacraments of Healing: Reconciliation** and the **Anointing of the Sick**. These Sacraments work in different ways to bring about healing on both the physical and spiritual level.
- Through the **Sacrament of Reconciliation**, we can be cleansed of our sins and we embrace God's mercy. .
  - **Reconciliation** comes from the Latin *cilia* which means eyelash. The term "reconciliation" means "eyelash to eyelash", to come that close, to be in that state of closeness and intimacy. So when we are *reconciled* with God, it means there is nothing between us.
  - Psalm 103: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our sins from us."
- Jesus' greatest work was that of forgiveness, and often after people were freed from their sins physical healing also occurred. As the YouCat says, "Jesus himself forgave the sins of many individuals; it was more important to him than working miracles. He regarded this as a great sign of the dawning of the kingdom of God, in which all wounds are healed and all tears wiped away" (227). Just like Jesus healed and forgave the people He met in the Gospels, He also desires to heal and forgive each of us.

## Why Do I Need To Go To A Priest for Reconciliation?

- The **Sacrament** of Reconciliation is a gift from Jesus given to his Church.
- **Scriptural basis:** "After His resurrection Christ appeared to His apostles; He handed His power on to them by breathing the Holy Spirit on them and telling them "whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (John 20:23).
- **The Sacrament of Holy Orders:** This power, which Christ gave His apostles through the Holy Spirit, has been passed down through the priesthood throughout the ages, and priests in our

parishes have this same power through Christ to forgive us of our sins. This power and authority is also a gift given in the Sacrament of Holy Orders (this is what priests receive during their ordination, and deacons receive some of the Holy Orders as well).

- **In Persona Christi:** The priests stand **in persona Christi**, which means they are actually standing in the place of Christ and acting as Christ for us. Through the priest, we are able to experience Christ's physical presence through the priest. Much in the same way that when we look at the Eucharist, we see bread, but it's truly Jesus, when we look at Msgr. Antonio or Msgr. Albert in the Confessional, we are not only seeing him, but also we are in the physical presence of Jesus Christ through the priest.
- Because Christ gives himself most intimately to us through the priest we are obliged to receive the abundant grace available to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation by going to Confession with the priest. It's not that we aren't forgiven if we don't go, but we miss out on a great deal of the graces God wants to give us through the Sacrament.
- **Graces of The Sacrament of Reconciliation:** Confession offers us graces we don't receive in the same way if we don't receive the Sacrament and just confess our sins to God in our own mind.
  - **Grace to avoid future sin:** In this Sacrament not only are you wiped clean from your sins, but you also receive grace to not sin again and to help you when temptations arise.
  - **Grace of healing:** Christ forgave people of their sins and healed them in Scripture; He wants to heal your hearts in the same way. He wants you to bring your sins and wounds to Him to be forgiven so that you can be made new again.
  - **Grace of a totally clean slate:** Every time you go to Reconciliation and confess all the sins you have committed you are wiped clean of them; they are forgiven and forgotten and your relationship with Christ is restored. But you must begin with making the decision to go to Reconciliation. Do not be afraid; Reconciliation "is the first step to interior healing" (YouCat 233).

## Terminology

- **"Contrition" and "Repentance"**
  - **Contrition**, being aware of our sins and being truly sorry for them.
  - "Change of direction" in our hearts toward God (aka **Repentance**)
- **"Penance"**
  - An act or effort to rectify the broken relationships (with God and with others)
  - If we are truly sorry, then we are moved to act, not just "say it"
  - A priest will assign you a penance once you have confessed your sins.
- **"Reconciliation"**
  - Accepting God's forgiveness and returning our souls to right relationship with God
  - Wipes the slate clean - God forgives all sins.
- **Anointing of the Sick**
  - Involves confession with a priest
  - Not only for deathbed: if you're going in for surgery, you can ask a priest for anointing
  - Offers additional spiritual and potentially physical healing as well.

## Questions for Discussion

Reconciling with a friend? How does it go? (Same as reconciling with Jesus)

- Have you ever had an argument or break in a friend relationship?
- What were the effects of that break on your and your friend's life?
- Were you able to reconcile with that friend?
- What did that reconciliation look like?
- What did you do to repair the relationship?
- Is the sacrament of Reconciliation an important part of your Catholic life? Why or Why not?
- Are you worried or nervous about receiving the Sacrament? If so, what makes you worried or nervous? If not, how did you become comfortable seeking reconciliation?
- Do you agree that forgiveness and reconciliation are important life skills not necessarily connected to our Catholic faith? Why or why not?
- Is there anything you would consider unforgivable?
- Do you believe there is anything God would consider unforgivable?
- Are there any situations you have faced or can you imagine a situation where reconciliation was not possible? How does/did that make you feel?
- Does thinking about forgiveness and reconciliation as a regular part of your life change the way you think about people who have wronged you or people you have wronged? Does it impact the way you see the sacrament?

## Steps To Confess Your Sins

Here is a basic step-by-step model for those of you who haven't gone to confession in a while. Feel free to come up with your own expressions of remorse or feeling sorry for your sins. You can even say your own Act of Contrition.

1. Go into the confessional; close the door. If you are going to confess fact-to-face, sit down on the chair. If you are going to confess with the screen, kneel down.
2. Father will say: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." You make the sign of the cross while he says this.
3. Then you begin by saying: "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned."
4. Next, you say: "It has been \_\_\_\_ since my last confession."
5. You continue: "These are my sins:" Then you tell Father your sins--those that you remember because of the Examination of Conscience that you made earlier.
6. After telling Father your sins, you say: "I am truly sorry for these and for all of my sins."
7. The priest may then say a few words to you. Listen carefully and prayerfully to him, as he speaks through the power of the Holy Spirit.
8. Father will next give you a **penance** (usually a prayer and perhaps some restorative activity). (E.g.: Say a "Hail Mary"; Read Psalm 139; Say 15 times "God is delighted with me"; Look at yourself in the mirror for 2 minutes and smile; etc.)
9. Father will then ask you to say the **Act of Contrition** (or you can come up with your own):
  - a. *My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Saviour Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.*
10. Then Father will give you the Lord's forgiveness. Father says: "God the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of His son, has reconciled the world to Himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."
11. Lastly Father dismisses you, usually saying something like "Go in peace."
12. You may respond by saying: "Thank you, Father."
13. You then stand up and leave the confessional.
14. Finally, you do the penance that the priest assigned you.
15. Also, thank God for His mercy and strength that you have received in the Sacrament of Penance and say a prayer for the priest who administered the Sacrament to you.

# An Examination Of Conscience For Teens

## MY RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS GOD

### How do I pray?

- Out of fear
- Out of need
- Out of desire for personal gain
- Out of my personal relationship and respect for God
- I don't pray

### How do I attend Mass?

- Out of habit
- Bitterly because I feel I have to
- Out of fear
- Open to the experience, when it fits my schedule
- Regularly, with respect for the Eucharist
- As a part of the community
- I don't attend Mass

### How do I use God's name?

- To swear
- To express anger
- Out of respect and love

### How do I treat all of God's creation?

- I respect other people equally regardless of race, religion, or economic status
- I see all life as sacred even the unborn
- I am wasteful with the earth's resources
- My relationship with God is separate from everything else and has no impact on how I see or treat the world around me

## MY RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS OTHER

### PEOPLE

#### How do I treat my family?

- Help when they are in need, even when it is not convenient for me
- Tease and push around my siblings
- Tell my parents where I am going and whom I am hanging out with
- Believe that family comes first
- Fight with or ignore members of my family and make no effort to try to make peace with them
- Forgive them when I feel they've hurt me

#### How do I treat my teachers?

- I am rude
- I don't do my homework

- I am disruptive in class
- I do all my work and show respect
- I am bored and don't pay attention

#### How do I treat people that I don't know?

- Cheat, lie, or steal to get what I need
- Honor and follow through on all the promises and commitments I have made
- Be kind and courteous
- I don't care b/c I'll never see them again
- Share what I have with others

#### How do I treat my friends?

- With love and respect
- Use them to gain popularity or gifts
- Make fun of them behind their backs
- Accept and understand their differences
- Forgive them when they hurt me
- Compliment and encourage them

## MY RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS MYSELF

#### How do I see myself?

- Created in the image and likeness of God
- I focus only on what I don't like about myself. How do I treat myself?
- Misuse drugs, tobacco or alcohol
- Disrespect my sexuality
- Cause physical damage to my body
- I take care of my physical, emotional and spiritual well-being

#### How seriously do I take my education?

- Blow off my studies
- Complete my assignments
- Participate in class and school activities

#### How do I make choices?

- Because everyone is doing it
- It's the easiest way out of the situation
- I want to be popular
- My relationship with God tells me it's the right thing to do

Now that you have reflected on your relationship toward God, toward other people, and toward yourself take some time to reflect on these questions:

- For what do I seek forgiveness?
- How do I want God to transform me?
- What will I confess and ask God's forgiveness and grace to change.

# Session 7 - The Dark Night, Suffering, & The Road to Emmaus

*Goal: For teens to be introduced to the concept of The Dark Night of the Soul. To explore the theme of Spiritual Aridity, of seeking God, even when God doesn't seem to be felt or present. To explore how God can be all knowing, all powerful, and all good if there is evil and suffering in the world. To understand the need for Eucharist (breaking of the Bread) as shown in the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-25) as a means to see Jesus in the midst of suffering and his apparent absence.*

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

## **Check Ins (10 mins)**

Share highs and lows from the past month/week.

## **Share Reflection Exercise #6 with Group (15 mins)**

Each candidate and Catechists will share their experience with the Awareness Examen form of prayer or with their Confession experience since the last meeting. What was your experience like? Did you feel that it brought you more into awareness of God's presence with and love of you? Did it help you to see more clearly?

## **Teaching/Sharing/Large Group Discussion/Interactive (25 mins) (see Catechist Prep Sheet)**

## **Catechist Sharing (10 mins)**

Share an experience of God's presence to you in your suffering. Share an experience of feeling like God's presence had gone away, of wrestling or struggling with your faith, but how you ultimately found it again.

**Activity - Emmaus Walk (20 mins)** - Place teens into groups of 2 (or 3) for a walk around campus discussing the following questions:

- Have you ever experienced a sense that God had gone away? What did that feel like? Did you feel like he came back? Or, like Mother Teresa, are you still struggling to feel God at all?
- What does mystery or mysticism mean to you?
- What is something you are struggling with right now? Take turns praying for each other.

## **Assign Reflection Exercise #7 (5 mins)**

Be there for someone else in their suffering or darkness. Can be a friend or service to someone who is homeless. Even if it's just praying for someone from afar whom you don't know and really leaning into what that person is going through. Share about that experience of compassion and empathy at the next session.

## **Closing Prayer (5 mins) - Suscipe Prayer 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.*

# Session 7 - Catechist Prep Sheet

## Opening Prayer

My Lord God,  
I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me.  
I cannot know for certain where it will end.  
nor do I really know myself,  
and the fact that I think I am following your will  
does not mean that I am actually doing so.  
But I believe that the desire to please you  
does in fact please you.  
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.  
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.  
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,  
though I may know nothing about it.  
Therefore will I trust you always though  
I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.  
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,  
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.  
- Thomas Merton

## Teaching/Sharing/Large Group Discussion/Interactive

- **Catechist Note:**
  - **This content is very lofty, but worth communicating to the teens in accessible language. The main takeaway is that, as we grow spiritually, we may find that we have experiences of God seeming to be far from us - even if we're "doing all the right things". God allows this because we shouldn't just be trying to be holy so we can "feel good". God is beyond all knowing and all feeling. So sometimes we may feel abandoned by God or feel no pleasure or fuzzy, warm feelings in the spiritual life, and that may actually be a time when we are being drawn even closer to God.**
- **The Dark Night of The Soul**
  - The title of a poem by 16th Century Spanish mystic and poet, **St. John of the Cross**. The poem of [St. John of the Cross](#), in 8 stanzas of 5 lines each, narrates the journey of the soul to mystical union with God.
  - The journey is called "The Dark Night" in part because darkness represents the fact that the destination, God, is unknowable. During this Dark Night, the senses are purged of pleasure and good feelings - one is coming into direct contact with The Cross.
  - God allows this not to torture or torment us, but to purge us of our attachment to the gifts, so that we can fix our eyes more clearly on the Giver, in Whom is true freedom and wholeness.
- **St. John of The Cross**
  - St. John of the Cross was a Carmelite priest in the 1500s in Spain during the Counter Reformation (the Catholic Church's response to the Protestant Reformation). St. John was also a **mystic** (a person who seeks to express hidden or unknowable truths through means that help reveal those truths, such as art, visions, poetry, song, etc.) He was imprisoned by his own order due to disputes within his religious community. And wrote

about his experience through poetry. John of the Cross is a canonized Saint as well as a Doctor of the Church.

- **What is mysticism?** In general, mysticism is the belief that union with the divine may be attained through contemplation, prayer and self-surrender. While in other religions the term 'deity' may be replaced with other words like 'the absolute', there is an almost universal belief that the spiritual side of the world is perceivable. This is to say that through certain spiritual exercises we can gain a deep understanding of, and relationship with, the divine.

**Ask Teens: What is something they can think of that is a mystery to them or mystifies them? That draws them and evokes wonder and awe?**

- **Other Catholic Mystics**

- St. Teresa of Avila
- St. Julian of Norwich
- St. Catherine of Siena
- St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa)
- Thomas Merton
- Mother Angelica of the Annunciation
- Modern Day (aka still alive): Fr. Richard Rohr, Jim Finley, Fr. Ronald Rolheiser.

- **3 Spiritual Stages of Mystical Union with God**

1. **The Purgative Stage** – (*Being purged and purified of all that is not God - most of us are in this stage for the majority of our lives, this is also what happens to souls in Purgatory before they are united with God in Heaven.*) In this stage the soul our desires and affections must be purged of attractions to sin. The disorder caused by sin must be set right by the Lord, for a disordered soul cannot perceive or appreciate well the glory and beauty of God. The distractions of the world must be diminished and wrongful passions, attachments, and evil inclinations must be subjugated so that we can more easily overcome temptations, and preserve and exercise charity. There is a focus, in this stage of uprooting the remnants and habits of former sins, perhaps through mortifications (things that humble us, that remind us that we need God), the practice of austerity and simplicity, and the submitting of our will to be in conformity to the will of God. We seek **to diminish and purge the attraction of wrongful or excessive pleasures**. We also seek to diminish our natural shrinking from pain and to develop a repugnance to whatever is contrary to the will of God. The main virtue of this state to be cultivated is humility, which helps us be aware of our own weakness and or our dependence on the grace of God.
2. **The Illuminative Stage** – (*This is a stage in which we have deeper awareness, intuition, and a clearer sense of God's voice and presence with us and guiding us.*) Those in this stage have made progress and have their passions better under control, so that they easily keep themselves from mortal sin, but still do not easily avoid venial sins since they still take pleasure in earthly things and are distracted by various imaginations and desires, not all of which are necessary unlawful but may get in the way of deeper union with God. The mind becomes more and more enlightened (illuminated) to spiritual things and the practice of virtue. Love is stronger and the soul seeks progress in the spiritual life and in all the virtues. But **purgation is still somewhat incomplete**, and the purification of the senses is not yet finished. There are also aridities, difficulties, and trials, sometimes more severe than in the past and the need to endure suffering from temptations.
3. **The Unitive Stage** – (*This is the final stage during which our soul is fully united with God, the veil is lifted, and we can experience glimpses of this Heavenly state here on Earth.*) This

is the way of those who have their minds detached from temporal things such that they enjoy great peace, and are not agitated by various desires nor moved to any great extent by sinful passion. Having been largely purged of these things, they have their minds fixed chiefly on God. It is called “unitive” since at this stage, there is a union with God by love and the actual experience and exercise of that love.

(Taken from:

<http://blog.adw.org/2013/11/on-the-purgative-illuminative-and-unitive-stages-of-spiritual-life-as-seen-in-a-cartoon/>)

- **Mother Teresa of Calcutta**

- **St. Teresa of Calcutta** (Mother Teresa) suffered through a very long Dark Night of the Soul - an inability to sense or feel God - for over 50 years, but kept her faith. Teresa felt a call to love Jesus Christ in the very poor and suffering. She began a religious order called The Missionaries of Charity.
- **The Missionaries of Charity:** In addition to a life of prayer and vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, their ministry is to those who are sick and poor and even dying on the streets. In Calcutta, Teresa and her sisters would find people on the streets and bring them to the House for the Dying in which they would be cared for and loved and not to die alone, but with warmth and care around them.
- **“I Thirst”:** In every chapel of her religious order, the Missionaries of Charity, there is a crucifix with the words **“I thirst”** painted beside it. These were some of Jesus’ very last words from the Cross before he died (in John’s Gospel). Mother Teresa received in prayer a message from God that her ministry was to quench Jesus’ thirsting from the Cross - his thirsting for our hearts, our love. She lived her life, sharing in that thirsting and seeking to love as a way to satisfy Jesus’ own thirsting.
- **Mother Teresa’s Spiritual Director:** Teresa’s Spiritual Director was Rev. Joseph Neuner. During her Dark Night, Neuner consoled her by telling her 3 things:
  - that there was no human remedy for it (that is, she should not feel responsible for affecting it);
  - that **feeling Jesus is not the only proof of his being there, and her very craving for God was a "sure sign" of his "hidden presence" in her life;**
  - and that the absence was in fact part of the "spiritual side" of her work for Jesus.
  - **Spiritual Director:** a person who has experience and wisdom in the spiritual life and training in helping a person to better listen to God’s voice speaking their life. A spiritual director helps to keep a person accountable to their prayer life, and points out areas to grow more deeply in prayer.
- **Other Mother Teresa Resources:**
  - Bishop Robert Barron - How Mother Teresa, like Jesus, lived the cross: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-I15pSP9YE> (12 min.)
  - Article on Mother Teresa’s dark night: <http://blog.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit/mother-teresa-a-saint-who-conquered-darkness>
  - <http://time.com/4126238/mother-teresas-crisis-of-faith/> 7/18/18

**Ask Teens: What is something you thirst, hunger, or deeply long for? Perhaps give them time to reflect silently, with or without sharing aloud.**

- **Shared & Redemptive Suffering**

- **Psalm 34:19** promises: “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed.”
- God loves us so much that He was willing to take on our humanness, experience suffering and pain, to even die for us. He was willing to give the greatest sacrifice of His very life to save us – all of us. There is not a single person who has lived or ever will live for whom Christ did not suffer and die. (CCC 605)
- Jesus was obedient to the will of the Father to the point of being killed. His obedience saves us from our sins. His obedience makes up for all of humanity’s disobedience. (CCC 612)
- God shares in our suffering. Likewise, we can also share in Jesus’s suffering on the Cross. When we suffer, we can lift up our suffering as a form of prayer, and offer it as **redemptive suffering**, meaning that it has power to help redeem or uplift other people.
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- **If God is all good, all knowing, and all loving, why does He allow suffering?**
  - [Good God In A Suffering World](#) (video, apologetics) - about 5 mins.
  - God loves us so he gives us free will, we get to choose to love Him back or choose to sin.
  - God knows everything, but chooses not to violate our free will.
  - God is all powerful, but again chooses not to violate our free will out of love.
  - [Bishop Barron on God, Tsunamis, and The Problem of Evil](#) (video, apologetics) - about 10 mins. (Better for catechists than teens.)
  - By allowing suffering, and not just preventing anything bad from ever happening, we are able to know joy. By allowing darkness, we are enabled to know light.
  - It’s a mystery!
  - Job Chapters 38-40 - Job is stricken with much suffering and loss and wants to know why and God responds: “*Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm and said: Who is this who darkens counsel with words of ignorance? ... Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.*” His ways are above our ways
  - Yet, God is not insensitive to our pain. Indeed in John 11, Jesus weeps over the death of his dear friend Lazarus. But he goes on to say: “*This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.*”
  - God cannot be stopped in bringing good things even out of the worse suffering.

**Ask Teens: Do you struggle with this? What questions still linger in your mind? What obstacles do you have to believing that God exists or is all-good, all-knowing, and all loving? Share about your own struggles with this too.**

- **The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-25)**
  - 2 of Jesus’ disciples were traveling to a village outside Jerusalem called Emmaus, looking for refuge from the place where they just saw Jesus brutally tortured and crucified. They are downtrodden, suffering, feeling that all their hope is gone. They had believed that Jesus was the true Messiah and savior, and they just watched him die a horrible death.
  - The resurrected Christ appears to them on the road, but they do not recognize him.
  - He opens and interprets the Scriptures for them: “Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures” (Lk 24:27).
  - But it is only in the *breaking of the bread* that they are able to recognize him. They say “*were not our hearts burning within us?*” as they could see with the eyes of their hearts before their actual eyes could recognize him.
  - Likewise, God meets us where we’re at. God walks alongside us.

# Session 8 - Preparing to Receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

*Goal: Teens will consider what it personally means to be Confirmed. To review the 7 Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the 12 Fruits of the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be ready to receive? Do you want to receive?*

**Opening Prayer - Pentecost Simulation/Meditation (10 mins) (see Catechist Prep Sheet)**

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

**Catechist Sharing (5 mins)**

Share about what you remember about your own experience of Confirmation. It's okay if it's not very much. What gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit have you seen unfolding in your life since then?

**Large Group Discussion Questions (15 mins)**

1. Do you believe that God has good plans for you? Do you have expectations for yourself? What are they?
2. What different ways have you tried to pray over the last couple of years? Is there one way that works well for you? Why?
3. Do you see conflict between secular and Christian values? Do you use Christian moral values to guide you?
4. Do you have friends who keep you morally grounded? Do you challenge each other and keep each other accountable to Christian values? If not, would you want your friends to do this for you?
5. Do you think all Sacraments are equal? Are there some that you don't really value? Why?
6. How has God been a part of your life during your time as a confirmand? Do your actions and values reflect those of Jesus?
7. What gift of the spirit do you have to offer your family and friends?
8. How do you see yourself as a member of the Body of Christ? What are the challenges of membership as well as the joys?
9. Do you want to participate in a ministry of our parish? If so, which one? If not, why?

**Share Confirmation Faith Journeys (20 mins)**

Each candidate will go around and share what this Confirmation journey has meant to them. What one thing you've learned, what was the highlight of your experience? What was one of the most powerful takeaways from the 2-year journey?

**Affirmations (20 mins)**

Each person will be a focal person, and the rest of the group will go around and share something kind or affirming about that person in their group. This will be done for each member of the group.

**Closing Prayer (2 mins)**

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

# Session 8 - Catechist Prep Sheet

## Opening Prayer - Pentecost Simulation/Meditation (10 mins)

Give each teen a small votive candle and light it as they enter the room. Have the room already prepared when they enter. Have all of the lights off in the room, to make the room as dark as possible. Have the sound effect of wind playing.

Once all the teens have arrived, have one of the catechists read aloud from Acts 2: 1-4.

*When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together  
And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.*

Read the passage slowly 3 times. Each time, inviting the Confirmandi to reflect on a word or phrase that jumps out at them or stirs their heart.

Say: *As you listen to these words of Scripture, what feelings, images or thoughts do they evoke? Notice the stirring of the Holy Spirit within you. (pause) I will read the passage twice more. Each time pay attention to what comes up for you.*

When you're done reading the prompt 3 times say: *As you sit here in this place, take a moment to close your eyes and take three deep breaths - each time breathing in the Holy Spirit and breathing out any tension or burdens you're holding on to. (pause for the 3 breaths) And when you're ready, go ahead and blow out your candle.*

## Teaching/Sharing (15 mins)

- **Confirmation Is Personal Pentecost**
  - Just as the Apostles experienced what was read in Acts 2: 1-4, you will experience your own personal Pentecost during the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- **The Effects of Confirmation** "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." - Mt 3: 17
  - The graces we received in Baptism are increased and deepened .
  - We are more firmly united to Christ
  - Our identity as Beloved children of God is intensified
  - Confirmation increases the 7 Gifts of the Holy Spirit in us:
    - **Wisdom** - illumines the mind and instills an attraction to the divine
    - **Understanding** - provides insight into the very heart of things, especially those higher truths of our faith
    - **Right Judgement** - the ability to see the best way to follow God's plan whenever a choice is placed before us
    - **Knowledge** - the ability to think about and explore God's revelation, and also to recognize there are mysteries of faith beyond us
    - **Courage** - a strength of the heart, the ability to confront fear in the face of pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation.
    - **Reverence** - the ability to recognize one's total reliance on God and to come before God with humility, trust, and love
    - **Wonder & Awe** - the profound sense of amazement before God in all things, and whose friendship we do not want to lose

- **More on the 7 Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

- **Wisdom**

- The gift of wisdom is one that should be sought eagerly, however it is not easy to attain. Wisdom is a light that helps guide us through the darkness of this world. When we use wisdom we learn to make choices based on God's perspective and the needs of other people, rather than our own wants and desires. Wisdom helps us to think and act in ways that allow us to live a life that is pleasing to the one who created us.

- **Understanding**

- As Catholics, using the gift of understanding challenges us to see things with the eyes of our hearts, rather than with our intellect or rationale. When we use the gift of understanding, we can see the hand of God at work everywhere in our world, even in those places it can be hard to see.

- **Right Judgment (Counsel)**

- Through a healthy, balanced faith life that is rooted in prayerful solitude we can begin to place all things in the context of God's divine love. **The gift of counsel allows us to think clearly and simply when we need to figure out where the spirit is leading us.**

- **Knowledge**

- Knowledge gives us the ability to admit the overwhelming greatness of God, which sometimes means accepting that there are divine truths that are not able to be completely grasped. It admits that there is a far greater reality than we will ever be able to explain. However, through this gift of the Holy Spirit, we can come to know of God's truth and through his creations, come to understand him more. Truth in words, the rational expression of the knowledge of created and uncreated reality, is necessary to man, who is endowed with intellect. But truth can also find other complementary forms of human expression, above all when it is a matter of evoking what is beyond words: the depths of the human heart, the exaltations of the soul, the mystery of God.

- **Courage (Fortitude)**

- Courage is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. "The Lord is my strength and my song." "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (1808). Receiving the gift of fortitude does not mean that we will never experience fear. However, it does mean that we will have the strength to remain firm in hope against all pressures, even death.

- **Reverence (Piety)**

- The gift of piety helps to bring us into a deeper intimacy with God. When we spend time in solitude, in devotion to God, it will begin to promote a child-like trust in God through the emotions and sentiments, and we find ourselves more able to help others. We must remember that our faith is made up of both Scripture and Tradition. In order to grow in our faith and deepen our relationship in both of these areas, we must spend time in community, but also alone in the quiet of our hearts. As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, "does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths

from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence” (82 CCC).

○ **Wonder and Awe (Fear of the Lord)**

- Fear is a word that we typically interpret as referring to a state of emotional distress in the face of some danger to our personal safety. The term “fear of the Lord” appears over 100 times in the Old Testament. For example: And now, Israel, what does the Lord, your God ask of you but to fear the Lord, your God, and follow his ways exactly, to love and serve the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul (Deuteronomy 10:12). However, in the New Testament, the term is only mentioned two times.
- When we learn to “fear the Lord”, we begin to gain a deeper intimacy with Him. True worship has profound respect and awe. We should come to a point in our faith where we have a fear that is reluctant to act in ways that are contrary to the spirit of God’s will out of love, rather than out of fear. When we truly respect and are astonished by our Lord, we can love Him even more. Through a healthy, balanced faith life that is rooted in prayerful solitude we can begin to place all things in the context of God’s divine love. The gift of counsel allows us to think clearly and simply when we need to figure out where the spirit is leading us.

● **The Fruits of the Holy Spirit**

- Confirmation allows those who respond to those Gifts to manifest the presence of the Holy Spirit through the twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit (many of which are virtues):
  - Charity (love) - to will the good of the other, to demonstrate care and affection
  - Joy - a deep abiding satisfaction even when things are hard, deeper and more persistent than fleeting happiness. Joy is wanting what you get whereas happiness is getting what you want.
  - Peace - a sense of trust and contentment and harmony
  - Patience - the stamina to endure trials or challenges over time that comes from a place of trust in God.
  - Kindness (benignity) - doing unto others as you’d have them do unto you
  - Goodness - intuiting what is truly good, discerning between goods, seeking the good in all things
  - Generosity - being unattached and unenslaved to material things or time and being willing to offer them to others for their benefit
  - Gentleness - be light with your words and attitude towards others, rather than harsh or heavy or anxious.
  - Fidelity (faithfulness) - Persisting in what is holy, good, and true, even when it is hard
  - Modesty - Goes with humility, to not be boastful or arrogant, to draw attention to God in you rather than parts of you
  - Self-mastery - To be in control of yourself rather than letting yourself be controlled by your feelings in the moment or your passions.
  - Chastity (purity of heart) - Being able to look at other and see them as holy and sacred and respecting the whole person - body and soul; looking holistically at people, not just in parts; authentic chastity requires love, it’s about truly willing the good of the other through what you do and choose not to do with your body.

- **The Sacrament of Confirmation**

- God puts a seal on your soul at Confirmation. Like a Signet Ring - that's where signature comes from - God puts his seal/signature on you. You are receiving fully, your identity as belonging to God. You consent to God claiming you fully as His own. His yoke is easy and His burden is light.
- **The sacraments are visible signs of invisible realities.**

- **The Elements of the Confirmation Rite**

- All of the **elements of the Sacrament of Confirmation** represent something spiritual that is happening on the spiritual realm. The **Chrism oil** that is used signifies the Holy Spirit and has rich symbolism throughout Scripture representing things such as abundance, joy, cleansing, healing, radiance, beauty, and health. When the recipient is sealed with the chrism it represents "total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service forever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial." (CCC 1293-1296)
- **Renewal of Baptismal Vows - Confirmation completes our Baptism.** Confirmation is usually celebrated by the bishop and the ceremony begins with a renewal of Baptismal Promises to show that Confirmation is a completion of baptismal graces.
- **Laying on of Hands** - The bishop then extends his hands over all the recipients to signify and call for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and one by one he lays hands on the recipients and anoints them with chrism, sealing them with the Holy Spirit. The Rite of Confirmation ends with the sign of peace to show the new, full communion that the person has with the bishop and the whole Church. (CCC 1296-1314)

- **Preparing to Receive**

- Any baptized person can receive the Sacrament of Confirmation - usually between 7 & 16 years. There is no age requirement for the sacrament and the age at which people are confirmed can vary greatly from place to place.
- In preparation for Confirmation, **one should receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and prepare with more intense prayer to be open to receive the Holy Spirit.**
- Just like Baptism, **one can only receive the Sacrament of Confirmation once in a lifetime because it imposes an indelible mark.** (CCC 1304, 1308-1310)

- **Personal Pentecost**

- The Sacrament of Confirmation gives the special graces from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit like that given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost: there is a deepening and an increase of the graces received in Baptism and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, one is rooted more deeply as a child of God and united more closely to Christ, and the Holy Spirit gives the strength necessary to go forth and share the Good News as a bold witness of Christ to share and defend the faith never being ashamed of the cross or Christ.
- Jesus Himself proclaims that "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). (CCC 1302-1303)

- **Videos Resources on Confirmation**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1v-FL07bcTE> (Catholic Central)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6fD7D8coI0> (Chosen)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qt32SyDWuW8> (Busted Halo)

## **Extra Information - Grace, Sacraments, Morality, and Decision Making**

### **Grace and the Sacraments**

Our life and being come from the grace of God. According to the Catechism: Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life. Grace is a participation in the life of God. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an 'adopted son' he can henceforth call God 'Father,' in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church. (1996-1997) One way that we receive God's grace and participate in the life of God is through the Sacraments:

Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies. (1127) The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation. 'Sacramental grace' is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature by uniting

### **Morality and Decision Making**

All Christians are called to live a life "worthy of the Gospel" and to be "imitators of God as beloved children and to walk in love" (CCC 1691-1694). But this is not just some nice idea or a really good line in a song. It is a reality and to live a life worthy of the Gospels means aligning every single decision we make with the truth that Christ revealed. There are two paths that are laid out before us and we have the choice. We can choose to follow Christ on the path of life or we can choose the path of death. It may sound dramatic, but it is true: we are either with Christ or against Him, we are either journeying towards heaven or towards hell (Matthew 12:13). All of us are created in the divine image of God, we all have a certain desire for happiness, but we all also have a certain tendency towards sin called concupiscence. While it may seem unfair that God would destine us for heaven and then make sin an option, it is really a revelation of great love. For in it we see the freedom of man. We have the freedom to make choices. These choices are either good or bad depending on what we choose to do, our intention for doing it, and the circumstances involved in the situation. (CCC 1749-1754) In order for us to make a morally sound and good decision, all three of these things – the object, the intention, and the circumstance – must all be good. The object is the thing that you are choosing or the matter of your actions. For example, stealing and gossiping would be objects that are bad. While forgiving your spouse and volunteering your time at the parish would be morally good objects. The intention is the "why" behind your choice or action. You can figure out the intention by asking yourself what is motivating you to make the decision and what is your desired outcome. The circumstance is the details that help paint the picture of the scenario. It tells us who was involved, where it takes place, and any other factors that might help us understand why a certain choice might be made. (CCC 1751-1754) For an act to be moral all three parts of our decision making must be good. There is never a time that a good object can justify evil intentions or circumstances. For example giving money to the poor is a good object but the act itself is not good if you do so by stealing the money from other people. In the same regard good intentions and circumstances cannot justify an evil object. For example the good intention and circumstance of wanting a young girl to go to finish college does not justify the act of aborting her child. Both the outcome and the means by which you get to the outcome must be morally sound for the decision to be morally correct. (CCC 1756) The emotions or passions that lead us to act are in and of themselves not good or bad. You cannot have a good or evil feeling. It is what you allow these feelings to lead you to do that makes them good or bad. (CCC 1763-1770) At the end of the day, our human freedom makes the choices ours. We have complete and full control over the path and course of our lives. While our conscience might be cloudy from the concupiscence of sin, we cannot rest at that and let it be an excuse for making wrong decisions. As adults it is up to us to form our conscience, to get right information, and to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in our lives and decision making.