

"*The Catholic Way* achieves the perfect balance between formation and information. Each session opens with matters of the heart: prayer, faith sharing, and reflection. And each also includes matters of the mind: our rich Catholic history, tradition, and beliefs. It is shaped by the liturgical calendar of the Church. I'd like to put this resource into the hands of every director of faith formation in the Church—for confirmation, adult enrichment, and RCIA. Wonderful!"

Bill Huebsch, author of Our Catholic Life

"Today—fortunately—many people are seeking to learn more about their Catholic faith or are interested for the first time. Today—unfortunately—parish (and diocesan) leaders are not frequently responding because they're not sure what to do and how to do it. *The Catholic Way* answers all those questions... and much more. We find here sessions which cover the basics of our faith, rooted in prayer experiences, conversations, and follow-up materials. And we find numerous suggestions and guidelines for planning, organizing, designing, scheduling and leading with gentleness and conviction. Invaluable and priceless for every parish leader today!"

Janet Schaeffler, OP

"*The Catholic Way* hits a home run! Impressively comprehensive, accessible to any level of learner or teacher, and thoroughly adaptable for use in nearly any faith formation situation, this welcome resource is a one-stop shop for any parish or even home-based small group. I particularly liked the pairing of traditional Catholic prayer experiences with down-to-earth, practical discussion topics that people will be able to apply to their everyday life. Bravo, Ann Naffziger and the Pastoral Center for giving the Church something truly useful for passing on the faith."

Fr. Dave Dwyer, CSP, Executive Director of BustedHalo.com

"In a rural mission diocese, one of our major struggles is related to securing educated parish catechetical leaders. This resource, *The Catholic Way*, is a rare gift. Not only is the table of contents solidly anchored in our Catholic Tradition, but the actual presentation of fully developed lessons coupled with prayer experiences, is a gold mine! I am grateful to Ann Naffziger and The Pastoral Center for their ability to translate expertise and knowledge into practical everyday solutions for challenging catechetical realities such as ours."

Monique Jacobs MA, Director of Faith Formation, Diocese of Reno

"In a busy parish it is a relief to find such a complete and user-friendly resource as *The Catholic Way*. The unique format is ideal, with the online feature allowing catechists and staff to share access easily and instantly, in addition to the convenience of printing handouts, posting on our website, or sharing via email. Between the topical and the liturgical indices, it's an immediate winner for RCIA, parent meetings and general adult formation. Thank you Ann Naffziger and the Pastoral Center for making my life simpler."

Anne Marie Fourné, Director of Faith Formation, St. Joseph Basilica, Alameda, CA

THE CATHOLIC WAY

BELIEVE + PRAY + LIVE

Ann Naffziger



The Pastoral Center

To my husband, Paul,
who helps me to be a better minister
and to our amazing girls, Madeleine and Rachel,
who continue to teach me about God.

Nihil Obstat: Reverend Robert J. McCann, JCL
Censor

Imprimatur: Most Reverend Michael C. Barber, SJ
Bishop of Oakland
December 21, 2018

The *Nihil Obstat* and *Imprimatur* ("Permission to Publish") is a declaration that a book or pamphlet is considered to be free of doctrinal or moral error. It is not implied that those who have granted the *Nihil Obstat* and the *Imprimatur* agree with the contents, opinions or statements expressed.

ISBN 978-1-949628-00-5

Printed in the United States of America.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 22 21 20 19 18

Edited by Paul Canavese and Richard Canavese.

Published by The Pastoral Center, <http://pastoral.center>.

Copyright © 2018 Ann Naffziger.

All rights reserved. Purchase of this book includes a license to reproduce this resource for use in a single parish, school, or other similar organization. You are allowed to share and make unlimited copies only for use within the organization that licensed it. If you serve more than one organization, each should purchase its own license. You may not post this document to any web site without explicit permission to do so. Outside of these conditions, no part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or via any retrieval system, without the written permission of The Pastoral Center, 1212 Versailles Ave., Alameda, CA 94501. Thank you for cooperating with our honor system regarding our licenses.

For questions or to order additional copies or licenses, please call 1-844-727-8672 or visit <http://pastoral.center>.

The Scripture passages contained herein are from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition*, copyright © 1989, 1993, by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Contents

LEADER OVERVIEW

Introduction.....	9
We're Here to Help.....	15
Session Preparation.....	17
Anatomy of a Session.....	21
Digging Deeper.....	25
Ground Rules for Group Sharing.....	27
Three-Year Faith Formation Plan.....	29
RCIA.....	37
Confirmation.....	49

GENERAL SESSIONS

1 Introductory Session (RCIA).....	65
------------------------------------	----

PRAYER EXPERIENCES

2 Advent Wreath.....	71
3 The Angelus.....	75
4 Contemporary Music.....	79
5 Daily Readings.....	83
6 Easter Reflection (Jesus Is Alive!).....	87
7 Eucharistic Adoration.....	91
8 The Examen.....	95
9 Five Forms of Prayer.....	99
10 Footwashing (John 13:1-15).....	103
11 Gregorian Chant.....	107
12 Ignatian Contemplation (Blind Bartimaeus).....	109
13 Ignatian Contemplation (Walking on Water).....	113
14 Lectio Divina (Psalm 27).....	115
15 Litany of the Saints.....	117
16 Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office).....	119
17 Praying in Nature (St. Francis' Canticle of Creation).....	121
18 Praying with Memories (Deuteronomy 8).....	125
19 Praying with Scripture (Isaiah 55).....	129
20 Praying with the Holy Spirit (John 14).....	131
21 Praying with the Psalms (The Lord Is My Shepherd).....	135
22 Repentance (Book of Jonah).....	139
23 The Rosary.....	143
24 Stations of the Cross.....	147
25 Taizé Prayer.....	151
26 Traditional Prayers.....	155

CREED & BELIEFS

27	Trinity.....	161
28	Jesus.....	167
29	Mary, Mother of God.....	177
30	The Communion of Saints.....	183

SCRIPTURE

31	Introduction to the Bible.....	191
32	The Old Testament.....	201
33	The New Testament.....	207

SACRAMENTS

34	Introduction to Sacraments.....	215
35	Sacrament of Baptism.....	221
36	Sacrament of Eucharist.....	229
37	Sacrament of Confirmation.....	235
38	Sacrament of Reconciliation.....	241
39	Sacrament of Marriage.....	247
40	Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.....	253
41	Sacrament of Holy Orders.....	259

MORALITY & CHRISTIAN LIVING

42	Care for Creation.....	267
43	Catholic Social Teaching.....	273
44	Discernment.....	281
45	Discipleship.....	287
46	Divorce, Annulment, and Remarriage.....	293
47	Evangelization.....	299
48	Life after Death.....	305
49	Life Issues.....	313
50	Sabbath.....	319
51	Sexuality.....	325
52	Stewardship.....	335
53	The Ten Commandments & the Golden Rule.....	341
54	Virtues, Morality, & Conscience.....	349

LITURGY & CHURCH YEAR

55	Tour of the Church.....	359
56	The Mass (Part I).....	363
57	The Mass (Part II).....	369
58	The Liturgical Year.....	375
59	Advent & Christmas.....	381
60	Lent.....	389
61	The Triduum & Easter.....	397

CHURCH HISTORY & STRUCTURE

62	Church Structure.....	405
63	Church History.....	411
64	The Second Vatican Council.....	417

ABOUT THE AUTHOR	423
-------------------------------	-----

LITURGICAL INDEX	425
-------------------------------	-----

TOPICAL INDEX	439
----------------------------	-----

Prayer Experiences

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

8 The Examen



For more resources on this topic, see:

pastoral.center/ignatian-spirituality

Background

St. Ignatius taught this form of prayer, called “The Examen.” Ignatius believed that following this process—a review of your day with your heart looking for God—was one of the best ways to start noticing more where God was present during your day and where God is trying to lead you.

This practical, core prayer experience is a good one to repeat multiple times, encouraging participants to make it a regular part of their daily lives.

Introduction

- ▶ Today we're going to try a prayer experience, called The Examen, which was taught by St. Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits.
- ▶ This is a very easy form of prayer that you can use anytime, anywhere. You can spend 30 minutes on it, or just two or three minutes if that's all you have. Many people like to pray it at the end of their day, but you can pray it in the morning, on your lunch hour, or on your commute to or from work—whenever you have a few minutes of quiet.
- ▶ It's a fantastic way to help you notice how God is showing up in your life in ways you might not always catch right in the moment.



Audio versions of the examen can be found online, including a number of variations on the Pray As You Go website: <https://pray-as-you-go.org/prayer-resources/the-examen/>. Or search for the excellent “Reimagining the Examen” mobile app.

Begin the Prayer Experience

Turn down/off the lights and put on quiet instrumental music if desired. Invite the group members to get comfortable and close their eyes if they wish. (Note: the numbers correspond to the handout.)

- ▶ (1.) Recall that you are in the presence of God. No matter where you are, God is already present to you. Now intentionally make yourself present to God.

Pause for about 15 seconds.

- ▶ Next, ask the Holy Spirit for insight and wisdom to understand what God wants to show you as you revisit your day.

Pause for about 15 seconds.

- ▶ (2.) Pray in gratitude for God's gifts, big and small, that you have received today.

Pause for about one minute.

- ▶ (3.) Now take some time to review your day systematically. Look at places you have been, people you have interacted with, and things you have done. Be aware of your feelings and moods.
 - ▶ Notice when you experienced any sense of liveliness, hope, and energy. Notice where you experienced God's spirit of love, peace, patience, joy, or trust. When did you feel most alive?
 - ▶ Also, take note of the times when you felt least alive: perhaps bored, angry, impatient, selfish, or unkind. When did you fail to live as Jesus taught?

Pause for a good while here—this is a lot to ponder. Give perhaps three to five minutes of silence at this point.

- ▶ (4.) Ask for forgiveness for those times today when you chose distance over closeness. Ask forgiveness if you have done things to hurt yourself, others, or your relationship with God. Allow yourself to receive the grace of healing with confidence.

Allow a minute or two of silence.

- ▶ (5.) Looking forward: What do you want to ask God for as you look forward to tomorrow? What graces do you need? Be bold in your asking, trusting that God wants to give you those things you need to live with greater freedom, joy, love, and trust.

Allow for a minute or two of silence.

- ▶ When you are ready, open your eyes and allow yourself to rejoin the group.

Group Sharing

Once everyone is ready, invite reflection on the experience. If there is hesitation before anyone shares, it is appropriate for the leader or a team member to begin sharing as a way of modeling how to reflect on the prayer experience.

- ▶ We have some time now to share how that prayer experience was for us. What did you notice? What came up for you?

Allow plenty of time for sharing.

End the session by passing out copies of the handout and encouraging everyone to set aside some time every day in the coming week to practice it.

The Examen

St. Ignatius taught a form of prayer called “The Examen.” He believed that following the process—a review of your day with your heart looking for God—is one of the best ways to start noticing more where God has been present during your day and where God is trying to lead you.

You can use this easy form of prayer anytime, anywhere. You can spend 30 minutes on it or just two or three minutes if that’s all you have. Many people like to pray it at the end of their day, but you can pray it in the morning, on your lunch hour, or on your commute to or from work—whenever you have a few minutes of quiet.

It’s a fantastic way to help you to start noticing how God is showing up in your life in ways you might not always catch right in the moment.

1. Ask God for Light

Remind yourself that you are in the presence of God. God is always present to you—whether you are aware of it or not—so intentionally make yourself present to God.

Ask the Holy Spirit to shine light on your day. Ask for insight and wisdom to understand what God wants you to notice, savor, or reflect on as you do this review.

2. Give Thanks

Pray in gratitude for the gifts you have received from God today.

3. Review Your Day

Look back systematically over your day: look at places you have been, people you have interacted with, and things you have done. Notice when you particularly experienced a sense of hope, energy, and light. Notice where you experienced a spirit of love, peace, patience, joy, or trust. When did you notice that you were cooperating with God? When did you feel most alive?

Also, take note of the times when you felt least alive: perhaps bored, angry, impatient, selfish, or unkind.

4. Ask Forgiveness

When have you chosen distance over closeness? When have you done things to hurt yourself, others, or your relationship with God? For what do you need to ask forgiveness? Allow yourself to accept God’s healing.

5. Look Forward

What do you want to ask God for as you look forward to tomorrow? What graces do you need? Be bold in your asking, trusting that God wants to give you those things you need to live with greater freedom, joy, love, and trust.

Finally, ask God to open your eyes more and more to how God is working in your life.

14 Lectio Divina (Psalm 27)



Catechism
Correlations

▶ CCC: #2708, 2585-2589

▶ CCA: Chapter 35



For more resources on
this topic, see the

following two links:

pastoral.center/lectio-divina

[pastoral.center/bible-study-](http://pastoral.center/bible-study-lectio-divina)

[lectio-divina](http://pastoral.center/bible-study-lectio-divina)

Background

Lectio Divina or “Sacred Reading” goes back to the early monastic tradition when Bibles were not available for everyone, and few people knew how to read. One person would read some verses while the others were encouraged to listen with their hearts to what meaning it had for them. This kind of reflective listening allows a person to note any thoughts, feelings, or insights that the Holy Spirit might prompt.

The method is very simple and can be done by individuals or in a group of any size. A passage from one of the Gospels or the Psalms (generally 10-15 verses or less) works well, although any passage in Scripture will work.

Introduction

The group leader introduces the prayer with these points:

- ▶ We’re going to try an ancient form of prayer called *Lectio Divina*, Latin for “Sacred Reading.”
- ▶ I will read a few verses of Psalm 27 out loud. You are encouraged to listen, notice what word or phrase stands out to you, and then speak that word or phrase into the circle. You don’t need to understand why it stands out to you, just that it does.
- ▶ We will have some time in silence to reflect on what we have heard.
- ▶ After that, I will read it two more times, each time inviting you to share, without discussion, what strikes you from the passage.

If possible, use an actual Bible. Note that verses 4-12 are omitted for this prayer activity.

Begin the Prayer Experience

1. Invite everyone to get comfortable and quiet. If possible, turn out or turn down the lights, and light a candle(s).
2. Read the verses from Psalm 27 out loud (see below).
3. Allow about 30 seconds of silence.
4. Ask: “What word or phrase stood out to you? Please share it into the circle without any explanation or discussion.”

If more than one person is reading, make sure they are reading from the same Bible translation. The listeners may be confused if different versions are used.

5. After everyone has shared, or the sharing has died down, read it again or have another team member read it the second time.
6. Allow about 60 seconds of silence.
7. Ask: “What word or phrase stood out to you this time? It may or may not be the same one.”
8. Before reading it again, say “This time I invite you to listen to what message God might have for you in this passage today.” Read it a third time.
9. Allow 1-2 minutes of silence.
10. Ask: “What message might God have for you today in this passage?” At this point, participants can expand their sharing beyond a word or phrase, but take care to facilitate so that it does not become a discussion. We simply want everyone sharing into the circle.

Psalm 27: 1-3, 13-14

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?
When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.
Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.
I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!

Group Sharing

Facilitate the conversation so all participants get a chance to speak if they wish. When sharing is dying down, ask if anyone else would like to share before you move on to the next part of the meeting.

Creed & Beliefs

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

30 The Communion of Saints

Calendar

We recommend holding this session immediately before or after All Saints Day (November 1).

Materials

- ▶ Handout: "The Communion of Saints."
- ▶ Ask the participants ahead of time to bring a **picture** of someone they know or have known whom they consider a saint—in whatever way they want to define "saint." It might be a father who died when they were a teenager or a beloved grandparent. It might be a special teacher or coach who changed their lives. It might be a neighbor or a close friend who mentored them. Convey to all the team members that they should also bring a photo.
- ▶ Optional: A listing of some patron saints to pass around. You can find one at CatholicSaints.info.



Catechism Correlations

- ▶ CCC: #946-959
- ▶ CCA: Introduction, Chapter 13
- ▶ *Our Catholic Life*: Book 1, Session 7



For more resources on this topic, see:

pastoral.center/saints



Prayer Experience

This session references "15 Litany of the Saints" on page 117.

Brief Reflection & Sharing

Follow these talking points to introduce this topic to the group:

- ▶ Today we're going to talk about **saints in the Catholic tradition**. Who is a saint? How does someone become a saint? What is the "communion of saints?"
- ▶ But before we get to these questions, we're going to share **stories** about people whom we have experienced as saints in our own lives.
- ▶ We can think of saints with a **capital S**, and saints with a **lowercase s**. Most likely, none of us has ever met Saint John XXIII or St. (Mother) Teresa of Calcutta. But we have all known saints with a small "s" who made a difference in our lives.
- ▶ You were all invited to bring a **picture** of someone you know or have known whom you consider a saint—in whatever way you want to define "saint." It might be your father who died when you were a teenager. It might be a beloved grandparent. It might be a special teacher or coach you had. It might be a neighbor who mentored you. Maybe it is a close friend of yours.
- ▶ Take out the picture you brought now. When you are ready, please share the photo and tell us about how this person has been a saint to you.

Allow everyone who is comfortable sharing to do so. Invite them to pass the photo around the circle so that everyone can see it closely. Then have them place the photos in the center of the group, creating an altar-like centerpiece. Welcome anyone who forgot to bring a photo to share anyway.

Teaching on Saints

- ▶ Do any of you have a particular Saint (with a capital S) that you have an affinity for? Who is it, and why is that Saint special to you? *Allow time for answers.*
- ▶ You may have heard the term **patron saints**. Patron saints are special protectors or guardians over occupations, illnesses, churches, countries, etc. There are patron saints for everything from Boy Scouts to butchers to comedians. One source listing patron saints is CatholicSaints.info.

If you've printed out a sample list of patron saints, pass it around now. The group will probably be amazed by how many saints are associated with so many different groups, occupations, etc.

- ▶ One critique that some have for Catholics is that we **worship saints**. In response, we Catholics might ask, "Do you carry around pictures of your loved ones in your wallet or purse or on your phones?"
- ▶ Do you have **photos of loved ones** on your mantle or refrigerator at home or on your office desk? *Allow them to respond.* Does that mean you worship those people in the same sense that you worship God?
- ▶ Do any of you **ask loved ones to pray for you** when you feel the need for extra prayers? Or do any of you ask your loved ones who have died to help you out when you are in a tough situation? *Allow them to respond.*
- ▶ Does that mean you pray to your loved ones like you pray to God? *Allow them to answer.*
- ▶ It is just the same with statues, medals, or pictures of saints for Catholics. We venerate saints, we pray with them, we ask them to intercede for us, but we aren't praying *to* them as if they are God.
- ▶ In fact, the Apostles' Creed states that we believe in "**the communion of saints.**" It refers to the spiritual union among all those who have died and those of us still alive on earth. We believe we are somehow still connected to one another even beyond the reach of death, and that the deceased can intercede for us who are still on earth.



We remain connected to the saints who have gone before us. See: #954-958.

 Learn how the communion of saints is the whole church: #946-948.

Becoming a Saint

- ▶ In the New Testament, the term "saint" was equated with **all Christians**. Of course, we know that not all Christians act "saintly" all the time, but that doesn't mean we aren't all called to aspire to holiness and sainthood.
- ▶ When we talk about Catholic saints with a capital S, we are talking about people who have been **officially recognized** by the church for their holiness. In fact, the word saint is derived from the Latin term *sanctus*, which means holy.
- ▶ Who decides who is a saint with a capital S? For centuries, saints were chosen by **public opinion**. Then, in the 10th century, the pope developed the **canonization process** to officially name saints. The procedure includes:
 - ▶ **The Church waits five years** after the person's death.
 - ▶ Appointed persons **investigate** the person's life and/or writings, as well as any miracles attributed to them.
 - ▶ The findings of this investigation process are **sent to Rome for review** by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints (a board made up of theologians and cardinals).
 - ▶ If the pope approves the review, the person is named "**venerable**"—meaning he/she is a role model for all Christians.
 - ▶ If there is a miracle attributed to the venerable person after his/her death, that person is then "**beatified**." Such miracles usually come about when someone comes forth saying he asked for intercession from the venerated person and his prayer was answered.
 - ▶ After two miracles, the venerated one can be **declared a saint**.

Prayer Experience: Litany of Saints

Follow the instructions in the prayer experiences leader guide because this will be more meaningful to participants after they have learned about saints. Therefore, we have positioned the prayer experience at the end of the session.

The Communion of Saints

Who Are the Saints?

- ▶ In the New Testament, saints = all Christians.
- ▶ Today, saints with a capital S are generally defined as people who are recognized for their holiness through the official church process of **canonization**. In fact, the word saint comes from the Latin term, *sanctus*, which means holy.
- ▶ The **martyrs** who died because they were Christians were early saints, such as St. Stephen in Acts of the Apostles (Acts 6:8-7:60).

Questions about Saints

What are patron saints?

Patron saints are **special protectors or guardians** over occupations, illnesses, churches, countries, etc. There are patron saints for everything from Boy Scouts to butchers to comedians. One source listing patron saints is CatholicSaints.info.

When are saints recognized?

Around the third century, the church created a calendar to honor the saints on particular **memorial and feast days** throughout the year. That calendar has been revised over the centuries as new saints have been canonized. A list of the current calendar can be found at Franciscan Media: <https://franciscanmedia.org/sod-calendar/>

All Saints Day, November 1, is set aside to recognize and remember saints in general (canonized and not).

Is keeping statues or pictures of saints idolatry?

Think about the **photos of loved ones** you carry in your wallet or purse, that you have displayed in your house, or have stored on your mobile phone. You probably have them to remind you of the people you love, and to help you feel close to them when you're not together. You wouldn't claim to worship them. It's the same with statues or pictures of saints.

Do Catholics pray to saints?

No, Catholics may venerate saints, but we don't pray to them. To venerate means to show particular devotion, respect, or honor for persons, not to worship them as if they were God. **We pray with saints, not to them.** Have you ever asked someone to pray for you when you were having a hard time? It's similar with the saints. Since saints led holy lives and we believe they are close to God in heaven, we believe their prayers can be effective.

What is the Communion of Saints?

The communion of saints is the **spiritual union** between all those who have died and are in heaven, those who may be in purgatory, and those of us still alive on earth. We believe we are somehow connected to one another even beyond the reach of death, that our prayers for loved ones who have died can benefit them, and that they can intercede for us who are still on earth. St. Dominic, the founder of the Dominicans, told those gathered around his deathbed that his desire was to spend eternity doing good for those on earth.

What is the Litany of Saints?

The Litany of the Saints is a prayer, usually sung, invoking the intercessions of Mary, the angels, martyrs, and saints from early Christian history until more recently. Various renditions include different saints, depending on the composer and the occasion. It is most commonly sung at the Easter Vigil, on All Saints Day, in connection with the prayers of the faithful at baptism, and at ordinations.

Canonizing Saints

Who decides who are saints? For centuries, saints were chosen through **public opinion**. In the tenth century, the pope developed a **canonization process** to officially name saints. The pope doesn't "make" someone a saint. He simply recognizes what God has already done in a person's life.

Pope John Paul II revised the canonization process in 1983. The procedure now is as follows:

- 1 The church must wait five years after the person's death.
- 2 The local bishop appoints a theologian to investigate the life and/or writings of the individual. Experts investigate miracles attributed to the person's intercessions.
- 3 The bishop sends the findings to Rome where they are reviewed and investigated by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, a committee made up of theologians and cardinals.
- 4 The Congregation sends a report to the pope. If approved, the pope names the person "venerable," meaning the person is upheld as a role model for Christians.
- 5 If there is evidence of one miracle after the person has died, the person is then beatified, referred to as "Blessed," and honored by a particular group or region. Such miracles usually come about when people come forth saying they prayed to that person to intercede for them and their prayers have been answered.
- 6 After beatification, if a second miracle surfaces, another investigation ensues. If that is ratified, the pope then declares the person a saint and an official celebration follows.

Pope Francis canonized more than 800 saints, the most of any pope in history. There are thousands of "official" saints in the church, although we don't have an exact number because not all went through the canonization process.

We Are All Called to Be Saints

If we think of saints as living in a distant time and place and having lived lives of outstanding piety, we risk letting ourselves off the hook in terms of cultivating holiness in our own lives.

The truth is, we are all called to be saints in the particular time and circumstances in which we each live. The sainthood of a stay-at-home mom or dad obviously will look differently from the sainthood of an emergency room doctor, a real estate agent, or a retired parishioner who keeps active with volunteer work.

We are all called to strive to be more and more Christ-like in our everyday lives, in whatever situation we find ourselves. We don't need to spend our days constantly praying on our knees to become a saint. We need only to be the best version of ourselves that we can be—following Christ's example—in the life we were given to live.

Dig deeper: *CCC*: #946-959; *CCA*: Introduction, Chapter 13; *Our Catholic Life*: Book 1, Session 7.

*Copyright © 2018 Ann Naffziger. All rights reserved.
Reprinted with permission. Published by The Pastoral Center /
PastoralCenter.com. All rights reserved.*

45 Discipleship

Materials

- ▶ Handout: "Discipleship."
- ▶ Music player to play a version of "I Surrender All" by Judson W. Van DeVenter. Many versions can be found by performing an internet search on the title.

Brief Reflection & Sharing

Pose these or similar questions to the group to begin the discussion about this topic:

- ▶ When you think of the word *discipleship*, what is the first thing that comes to mind? *Allow a brief period for responses.*
- ▶ **What do you think it means to be a disciple?** Or, put another way, what are the requirements for discipleship? *Allow for responses.*
- ▶ As we've just heard, we have various ideas of what it means to be a disciple. There is **no one right answer** that describes how to be one, but perhaps the best source for learning how to be a disciple is the Gospels.
- ▶ Today we're not going to explore all aspects of being a disciple, but we're going to look at some **broad themes**.

A Way of Life

- ▶ Jesus is quoted 87 times in the Bible as saying "Follow me." He didn't say "Believe in me as the second person of the Trinity" because anyone can intellectually claim to believe in Christ without "walking the walk."
- ▶ **Following Jesus**, on the other hand, requires a change of lifestyle and habits. It is a way of being and acting in the world.
- ▶ Following Jesus is not meant to be simply an *influence* on our lives or a *part* of our lives, but an **entire way of life**.
- ▶ You may be familiar with the old spiritual "I Surrender All." If you're not, you'll hear it when we play it at the end of our session today. But just think how comical it would sound to sing it as "I surrender one-tenth," whether that be one-tenth of our income or one-tenth of our energy, time, skills, talents, or passions.
- ▶ The U.S. bishops once wrote: "Mature disciples make a **conscious, firm decision, carried out in action, to be followers of Jesus Christ no matter the**



Catechism Correlations

- ▶ CCC: #222-227, 1691-1698
- ▶ CCA: Chapter 34
- ▶ *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*



For more resources on this topic, see:

pastoral.center/discipleship



Also see

"**47** Evangelization" on page 299.



Prayer Experience

One good approach would be to adapt "**19** Praying with Scripture (Isaiah 55)" on page 129 by substituting a "call" reading, such as Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 6:7-13, or Luke 5:1-11.



See #222-227 and 2232-2233 on

discipleship and Jesus' way of life.

cost to themselves ... this commitment is expressed ... in an entire way of life. It means committing one's very self to the Lord" (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, #1).

- ▶ **We may very well have some healthy hesitation** or misgivings about committing to being mature disciples, "no matter the cost" to ourselves. Having such doubts is normal! Maybe it would be easier to do if we encountered the human Jesus on the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee like the first disciples. Probably if we did, then we would experience the strength and attraction of his call more easily.
- ▶ But since we don't have the experience of meeting the historical Jesus in the flesh, our response to his call within our hearts **may begin with baby steps**. That's okay, and it's also okay to be honest about our fears and misgivings as we slowly grow to know and trust Jesus more.

Pause here for reflections on the bishops' quote about discipleship. Ask this or a similar question:

- ▶ What is your reaction to the bishops' definition of discipleship as an entire way of life, carried out in action?

This could be a good time for the leader(s) to share some reflections on the challenges or hesitations they have experienced in trying to live a life of discipleship.

Here and Now

- ▶ As individual disciples, we can't claim that attending Mass for an hour each Sunday fulfills our obligation to follow Jesus. Nor can we "contract out" our Christian responsibilities by our financial giving—to the church or other worthy causes. **Our faith should inform everything we do**, from how we spend our time, to what job we take, to how we parent our children, to how we spend our money.
- ▶ Although we cannot all personally visit Third World countries to feed the poor there or become social workers to run a homeless shelter in our own town, we are *all* called to **personally be the face of Jesus** to those in our lives—wherever we find ourselves.
- ▶ As disciples, we are called to **engage these issues individually**. No matter where we live or work, there will always be people in our lives who are poor, sick, lonely, grieving, or struggling in some profound way. These are the people to whom we are called to be Christ.
- ▶ As St. Teresa of Avila wrote, "**Christ has no body now 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."
- ▶ In what ways are you already practicing discipleship in your daily life?
- ▶ Whom have you had the opportunity to be Christ for on a daily basis?

Allow for responses.

This is a good place for the leader and/or team members to share how being disciples has changed the way they live and act on a daily basis. Share how you now experience yourself being called to be Christ's body for others.

Holiness in the World

- ▶ Before the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, there was a **perception that only priests, bishops, and vowed religious were the "holy ones"** in the church, while the rest of the world was profane—*not* holy.
- ▶ Vatican II turned this upside down, proclaiming that *all* Christians should strive for holiness by living their lives as disciples. In fact, the council said, lay people are the experts on the world at large. **It's the laity who have the direct responsibility for making the world holy from within the culture, not from standing outside of it.**
- ▶ Medical professionals are called to make their offices and hospitals holy places. Teachers can make their classrooms (public or private) holy rooms. Garbage truck drivers have the opportunity to make their neighborhood routes holier. Real estate agents can strive to do their buying and selling with integrity and respect for all people involved. The stay-at-home parent and the Little League coach are called to help build the Kingdom of God in their daily interactions with the children in their care and parents they encounter.



For more on the role of the laity and call to holiness, see #940-943 and 2012-2016.

Personal Relationship

- ▶ Another aspect of discipleship is a **commitment to a prayer life** and a personal relationship with God.
- ▶ Some Christian communities are known for their testing question, "**Do you have a personal relationship with your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ?**" This question might be off-putting to some, and it isn't often talked about by Catholics. Yet disciples should absolutely be in a personal relationship with God, however they might define that.
- ▶ Following Jesus is hard work, and we can't do it without being **regularly renewed in spirit**. Prayer helps us to recognize the graces that come to us in our lives of discipleship. It will serve to strengthen, console, and encourage us as we go about trying to live like Jesus in concrete ways.



As the Catechism notes, this personal relationship is experienced through prayer. See #2558 and the full section on prayer following it.

Here is a chance for team members to share about how their prayer lives sustain them on their faith journeys.

The First Disciples

- ▶ The early followers of the risen Christ **let their faith drive their daily lives**, so much so that others noticed and were attracted to them.
- ▶ The early Jesus movement was known simply as "**The Way**" because of the early followers' devotion to the path of discipleship, no matter the cost.
- ▶ As recorded in Acts of the Apostles, the first disciples also held possessions in common and provided for the poor among them (Acts 4:32). They were urgently evangelical, despite persecution and hardship. **They were active, intentional disciples.**
- ▶ For some today, the counter-cultural, radical nature of such discipleship will be exciting and inspiring, while for others it may seem completely unrealistic. **Different people will live out their discipleships in very different ways.**
- ▶ However I live out discipleship, the question to myself should be, "**If I were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict me?**"

Commitment to Community

- ▶ The discipleship that Jesus taught is **not individualistic**. He always sent out disciples in pairs or in larger groups. He said he is present when two or more are gathered in his name.
- ▶ We cannot be disciples in isolation, but only within the supportive community of other disciples. A commitment to following Jesus is also a commitment to being **part of a community of believers**.
- ▶ When we gather together as disciples, we become the **Body of Christ** and are given strength to do what we could never do alone. The Eucharist we share also sustains us for our work in the world.

At this point, ask the following or similar questions to bring the discussion to a close.

- ▶ What has been your experience of Christian community so far in your discipleship journey?
- ▶ What are your thoughts, comments, or responses to these themes of discipleship? Do they ring true for you?

End by playing a version of "I Surrender All," inviting the participants to pray the words for themselves.

Pass out the handout.

Discipleship

Following Jesus: A Way of Life

Being a disciple means following Jesus in all that we do. Jesus is quoted 87 times in the Bible as saying, "Follow me." The heart of Jesus' call leads us to live our lives differently, **not simply to believe particular doctrines**. Being a follower is not an intellectual exercise. It is a way of being and acting in the world. But what does it mean to follow Jesus today?

Jesus calls us to follow him in living our lives in **total surrender to God**. This is not meant to be simply an *influence* on our lives or a *part* of our lives, but an **entire way of life**. You may be familiar with the old spiritual "I Surrender All." Think how comical it would sound to sing it as "I surrender one-tenth," whether that be one-tenth of our income or one-tenth of our time, energy, skills, talents, or passions.

Following Jesus leads to a different way of understanding the world that has the potential to change it. As the U.S. bishops wrote:

Mature disciples make a conscious, firm decision, carried out in action, to be **followers of Jesus Christ no matter the cost to themselves**. Beginning in conversion, change of mind and heart, this commitment is expressed not in a single action, nor even in a number of actions over a period of time, but in an entire way of life. It means committing one's very self to the Lord. (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, #1)

We may have some healthy hesitation to this commitment "no matter the cost" to ourselves. Having such doubts is normal! Perhaps it would be easier to commit if we encountered the physical Jesus on the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee like the first disciples did. Then we would experience more the strength and attraction of his call. But since we don't have that experience, our response to his call within our hearts **may begin with baby steps**. That's okay, and it's also okay to be honest about our fears and misgivings as we slowly grow to know and trust Jesus more.

Here and Now

The way many people today separate aspects of our daily lives from their faith would have been completely foreign to **the Hebrew people** who saw their faith intertwined with everything. Their religion informed everything they did.

As individual disciples, we can't claim that attending Mass for an hour each Sunday fulfills our obligation to follow Jesus. Nor can we "contract out" our Christian responsibilities by our financial giving. **Our faith should inform everything we do**: from how we spend our time to what job we take, how we parent our children, and how we spend our money. Although we cannot all personally visit Third World countries to feed the poor there, or become social workers to run a homeless shelter in our town, we are *all* called to personally be the face of Jesus to those in our lives—wherever we find ourselves.

Yes, it is essential to financially support social organizations, but **we are also called to engage these issues personally**. No matter where we live or work, there will always be people in our lives who are poor, sick, lonely, grieving, or struggling in some profound way. These are the people to whom we are called to be Christ. As St. Teresa of Avila wrote:

Christ has no body now 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.

All Christians, regardless of their stations in life, have the opportunity to **follow Christ by being Christ for others**, here and now.

Holiness in the World

Before the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, there was a perception that only priests, bishops, and vowed religious were the "holy ones." The council turned this upside down, proclaiming a "**universal call to holiness**" that compels *all* Christians to strive for holiness by living their lives as disciples.

In fact, Vatican II said, lay people (those who are not priests, nuns, etc.) are the experts on the world at large. **It's the laity who have the direct responsibility for making the world holy from within the culture.** Doctors are called to make their offices and hospitals holy places. Teachers can make their classrooms (public or private) holy rooms. Garbage truck drivers have the opportunity to make their neighborhood routes holier. Priests and nuns aren't in a position to do those things and don't usually have the gifts to do so.

Personal Relationship

As Christians, we believe in a **personal God**, one who calls us by name. God, especially in the person of Jesus, seeks us out directly and yearns to speak to us through personal prayer. God reaches out to us in our own unique, personal situations.

Conversion happens through a personal encounter with God, and **discipleship is sustained through an ongoing personal relationship.** Following Jesus is hard work, and we can't do it without being regularly renewed in spirit. Fortunately, God *always* gives us our daily bread. One of the reasons we need to cultivate a personal relationship with God and make time for prayer is so we can recognize how God is feeding us. Sometimes, when things are difficult, we may wish there was more bread to go around. At other times, we may not like the form the bread comes in, and we may grumble to God, just as the ancient Israelites grumbled to Moses that they didn't like the food God provided in the wilderness.

Prayer will help us to recognize the graces that come to us in our lives of discipleship. It will strengthen, console, and encourage us as we try to live like Jesus in concrete ways.

The First Disciples

The early followers of the risen Christ let their faith pervade their daily lives, so much so that others noticed and were attracted to them. The early Jesus movement was known simply as "**The Way**" because the early followers' devotion to following the path of discipleship, no matter the cost.

As recorded in Acts of the Apostles, the first disciples also held possessions in common and provided for the poor among them. They were urgently evangelical, despite persecution and hardship. They were **active, intentional disciples.**

For some today, the counter-cultural, radical nature of such discipleship will be exciting and inspiring, while for others, it may seem unrealistic. Different people will live out their discipleships in different ways. However I live as a disciple, the question should be, "**If I were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict me?**"

Commitment to Community

The discipleship that Jesus taught is **not individualistic.** He always sent out disciples in pairs or in larger groups. He said he is present when two or more are gathered in his name. We cannot be disciples in isolation.

A commitment to following Jesus is also a commitment to **being part of a community of believers.** When we gather together, we become the Body of Christ and are given strength to do what we can't do alone. The Eucharist we share together is also a primary means of sustaining and nourishing us for our work in the world.

Dig deeper: CCC: #222-227, 1691-1698; CCA: Chapter 34; *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response.*

*Copyright © 2018 Ann Naffziger. All rights reserved.
Reprinted with permission. Published by The Pastoral Center /
PastoralCenter.com. All rights reserved.*

56 The Mass (Part I)

Calendar

Try to schedule this session back-to-back with "The Mass (Part II)."

Materials

- ▶ Handout: "The Mass (Part I)"
- ▶ A missalette or missal for everyone in the group
- ▶ Copies of the creed for everyone (if your parish has the creed printed out and available in all the pews)
- ▶ A copy of the Lectionary used in your church
- ▶ A copy of the Book of the Gospels used in your church

Liturgy: The Work of the People

Follow these talking points to introduce this topic to the group:

- ▶ The next two sessions review the parts of the Mass: the prayers that we say; what is the same and what differs about the Mass each week; when to sit, stand, and kneel; how to find the readings and prayers in the missalette, etc.
- ▶ **Liturgy broadly means some form of public worship**—so when we talk about liturgy, we might be talking about a Mass or any other public prayer service. It comes from the Greek word *liturgia*, which means **“the work of people.”**
- ▶ We are talking about a communal experience, not something that the priest or the minister does *for* the people, but something that the **people do together**.

Brief Reflection & Sharing

Ask these or other similar questions:

- ▶ Call to mind a particularly moving prayer service, liturgy, or Mass that you attended, either at a Catholic church or somewhere else. What made it particularly noteworthy? How was it different from other worship services or liturgies you have attended?

Allow for responses.



Catechism Correlations

- ▶ CCC: #1154-1155, 1322-1419
- ▶ CCA: Chapter 17
- ▶ *Our Catholic Life*: Book 5, Session 3; Book 7, Session 1-2
- ▶ Vatican II: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*



For more resources on this topic, see:

pastoral.center/mass



Also see "55 Tour of the Church" on page 359 and "57 The Mass (Part II)" on page 369.



Prayer Experience

This topic pairs well with "5 Daily Readings" on page 83, "16 Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office)" on page 119, or any Scripture-based prayer experience.

Be aware that your job isn't to "convince" everyone that something is prayerful, profound, or moving just because you think it is. Their reflections offer valuable feedback to your parish staff.

Invite participants to attend Mass weekly if they aren't doing so already.

Point out the particular ways your parish worships. For example, if the parish always uses the Kyrie for the Penitential Act, point out that it is one of several options. If they attend another Catholic church, it may do things differently.

- ▶ In thinking about a Catholic Mass, what are the elements that you appreciate the most or find the most prayerful?

If they have trouble identifying something, you can prompt them. The music? The Gospel reading? The homily? The sign of peace? The Eucharistic procession? Then ask:

- ▶ Why do you appreciate them or find them prayerful?
- ▶ What elements do you find dry or boring?

Allow them to talk frankly and openly about this.

Introducing the Mass

- ▶ Before the Second Vatican Council, many people assumed that the priest did the praying for them. He celebrated the Mass in Latin while the people in the pews were mostly observers. The bishops at Vatican II made it a goal to engage those who attend Mass more fully. They called for the **"full, conscious, active participation" of everyone**.
- ▶ As you participate in Mass, **pay attention** to which parts of the Mass you find most engaging, powerful, or prayerful, and during which parts it is more challenging for you to be present. In the coming weeks, see how you can be a more fully present and active participant throughout each Mass.
- ▶ The Mass consists of **two main parts** (which each consist of two smaller parts).
- ▶ The first half (discussed in this session):
 - ▶ **The Introductory Rite**
 - ▶ **Liturgy of the Word**
- ▶ The second half (discussed in the next meeting):
 - ▶ **Liturgy of the Eucharist**
 - ▶ **The Dismissal**

Introductory Rites

Begin systematically talking through the Mass parts in the order listed in the handout:

- ▶ **Entrance Song and Procession + Greeting** by the priest
- ▶ **Penitential Act**
- ▶ **Gloria** (consider singing the version your parish usually sings)
- ▶ **Collect** (Opening Prayer)

Rehearse the spoken parts with the group to help everyone recognize the prayers if they are new to attending Mass. For example, you can speak the priest's words, "The Lord be with you," and have the group practice responding, "And with your Spirit."

The Liturgy of the Word

- ▶ One reason we come to Mass is to **listen to the Scriptures** that our ancestors in faith have heard for two thousand years.
- ▶ We believe that Scripture is a "**living word**." You can read the same story, verse, or passage many times in your life and your understanding of its meaning can change and deepen because your place in life has changed. No one interpretation will exhaust the meaning. God still speaks to us today through the Bible.

If your parish uses missalettes, pass some around now and help everyone become familiar with the contents and how to find the readings of the day.

- ▶ **First Reading:** usually from the Old Testament, except during the Easter season (when it is from Acts of the Apostles)
- ▶ **Responsorial Psalm:** often (but not always) from the Book of Psalms
- ▶ **Second Reading:** from the New Testament, usually an epistle
- ▶ **Alleluia:** (or Gloria during Lent)
- ▶ **Gospel Reading**

Have the group practice the response for "A reading from the holy Gospel according to (name of Gospel)." Demonstrate making the Sign of the Cross on your forehead, your lips, and your heart as you say to yourself silently, "May the words of the Gospel be in my mind, on my lips, and in my heart."

- ▶ The readings are determined by the **Lectionary cycle**, a three-year calendar of assigned readings that every Catholic church follows. As a result, the Gospel reading which is proclaimed at St. Columba Church in Oakland, California, is the same one that is proclaimed at a parish in the Philippines, at the Vatican, and at every other parish in the world on the same Sunday.
- ▶ Encourage participants to focus on **listening to the readings** during Mass rather than reading them, because that is how they were originally meant to be proclaimed. On the other hand, if they think the readings sink in more for them by following along in a missalette, by all means this is fine.

Continue with these parts of the Mass:

- ▶ **Homily**
- ▶ **Creed** - parishes may choose to use either the Nicene or the Apostles' Creed.

People who have been away from the church for some time may notice that some of the responses have changed since they last attended Mass. For example, "And also with you," has become "And with your spirit." All English-speaking Catholic churches introduced these changes in 2011.

Note that the Bible is covered more in a separate session. If participants are not familiar with it, they may be overwhelmed trying to track where the various readings are found in the Bible.

If your parish has prayer cards available with the creed printed out, show these now. Ask the group to recite it together, again as a way to begin learning the words and rhythm. If the parish doesn't make prayer cards available, show how to find the creed in the missalette or print out copies.

► **Prayers of the Faithful**

Ask if there are any questions about the first half of the Mass. If there are questions about the Liturgy of the Eucharist, say you'll address those in the next session.

Brief Reflection & Sharing

Ask:

- What is your favorite part of the Liturgy of the Word? Why? *Allow for sharing.*
- How can you more fully live out and share the good news with others this coming week: at home, in your work life, or in your community? *Allow for sharing.*

Homework

Introduce the homework with these notes:

- Pay attention to what part(s) of the Mass you find most engaging, powerful, or prayerful, and come ready to share about them.
- Challenge yourself to become more fully present during those parts of the Mass that are less engaging to you. Remember that **liturgy is not a “spectator sport!”**

When reviewing their answers in the next session, remember to allow participants to talk frankly and openly. Respect whatever it is they say, even if you disagree. Be aware that it isn't your job to convince them about what they should think or feel concerning their experience of the Mass.

The Mass (Part I)

Liturgy

The word liturgy comes from the Greek *liturgia*, which means “the work of people.” **Liturgy is not a spectator sport!**

Before Vatican II, many people assumed that the priest did the praying for the people as he celebrated the Mass in Latin. Vatican II called for everyone to **fully, consciously, and actively participate** at Mass.

The Mass is divided into four parts:

- ▶ Introductory Rites
- ▶ Liturgy of the Word
- ▶ Liturgy of the Eucharist
- ▶ Concluding Rite

Introductory Rites

The Mass begins with the Introductory Rites, which have several purposes:

- ▶ to gather us together physically
- ▶ to help us “get here” mentally, emotionally, and spiritually
- ▶ to communicate that all are welcome in God’s house

The introductory rites include:

① Entrance Song & Procession

② Greeting by the Priest

The Sign of the Cross, followed by a greeting such as:

Priest: “The Lord be with you.”

All: “And with your Spirit.”

③ Penitential Act

A prayer that acknowledges how we have failed. There are multiple options:

- ▶ The **Kyrie** is an echo prayer, sung or recited, in English or Greek:
Minister: Lord, have mercy. All: Lord, have mercy.
Minister: Christ, have mercy. All: Christ, have mercy...
or
Minister: Kyrie, eleison. All: Kyrie, eleison.
Minister: Christe, eleison. All: Christe, eleison...
- ▶ The **Confiteor** is a prayer we say together, which begins with:
I confess to almighty God
and to you, my brothers and sisters...
- ▶ Or there are other forms of the penitential rite.
- ▶ A **Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water** replaces the Penitential Act when it is used (often in Easter Season).

④ Gloria

This song of praise should be sung, not recited. It is omitted during Lent, Advent, and in other specific cases.

⑤ Collect (Opening Prayer)

The presider “collects” all of our prayers during a moment of silence, and then speaks a prayer specific to each Mass. We respond: “*Amen.*”

Liturgy of the Word

We listen to the Scriptures that our ancestors in faith have heard for 2,000 years so that we will be challenged, inspired, encouraged, and strengthened to go out and continue to do God's work in the world.

6 First Reading

A Scripture passage from the Old Testament, except during the Easter season when it comes from the Acts of the Apostles.

7 Responsorial Psalm

A Scripture passage from the book of Psalms which is a collection of ancient songs. A cantor sings the verses, and the assembly repeats the response.

8 Second Reading

A Scripture passage from the New Testament, usually drawn from the epistles (letters).

At the end of the first and second reading, the lector announces: *"The Word of the Lord."* We respond: *"Thanks be to God."*

9 Alleluia or Gospel Acclamation

We sing the Alleluia (or another acclamation during Lent) immediately before the Gospel reading. Alleluia = "Praise the Lord!"

10 Gospel

A Scripture passage from the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.

- ▶ The priest (or deacon) says: *"The Lord be with you."*
- ▶ The people respond: *"And with your spirit."*
- ▶ Priest: *"A reading from the holy Gospel according to ()"*

- ▶ People: *"Glory to you, O Lord!"* (Make the Sign of the Cross on your forehead, your lips, and your heart as you say to yourself silently, *"May the words of the Gospel be in my mind, on my lips, and in my heart."*)
- ▶ The priest or deacon reads the passage and then concludes: *"This is the Gospel of the Lord."*
- ▶ We respond: *"Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ."*

The readings follow a three-year Lectionary cycle and are the same in every Catholic church throughout the world. They are accessible at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/>.

11 Homily

Preaching meant to shed light on the readings as well as inspire and challenge us to make them applicable to our daily lives.

12 Creed (Profession of Faith)

The Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed (often found on prayer cards in the pews or in the missalettes).

13 Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

Often include petitions for the church, global issues, local concerns, and the sick and the dying.

Dig deeper: CCC: #1154-1155, 1322-1419; CCA: Chapter 17; *Our Catholic Life*: Book 5, Session 3; Book 7, Session 1-2. Vatican II: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

Copyright © 2018 Ann Naffziger. All rights reserved.
Reprinted with permission. Published by The Pastoral Center / PastoralCenter.com. All rights reserved.

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

Leader Overview

Introduction

Passing on the Faith

As Catholic Christians, we have been gifted with a rich, powerful faith experience and tradition that has been passed down to us through the church for many generations. Our primary job is to evangelize: to pass on this faith to others, invite them to meet Jesus, introduce them to Scripture, and help them understand the wisdom found in church teaching.

Many Catholics do not have a deep understanding of the faith, but are curious and want to learn more. There are also many seekers who have never been baptized or have not been raised in the Catholic Church who—for whatever reason—have been attracted to the church to "come and see."

Because our faith is so rich, it can be tempting to treat it as an academic subject. As leaders, we can become so excited about our intellectual teachings that we overwhelm those we serve with advanced details, bore them, or even scare them away.

This resource seeks to offer a flexible, down-to-earth introduction to Catholic Christianity that balances the different parts of our faith. Don't think of it as a monolithic, one-size-fits-all curriculum but as more of a toolkit that you can draw from to share the faith with others in many different circumstances.

Opportunities to Share

In my experience, most parishes do not offer many opportunities for adults to learn about the faith in a structured way. In children's faith formation programs, parents can sometimes be heard lamenting that they wish *they* knew what their children are learning.

One common opportunity for adult faith formation is a parish's RCIA program for those adults seeking to enter the Catholic Church or become fully initiated in the church. In my years as an RCIA director, I have encountered many fully initiated parishioners who want to "sneak in" to these meetings because they want to learn more about their faith but there are so few other offerings for them.

I wrote this resource because I have found many parishioners have a hunger to deepen their own spirituality and to understand our faith better. I wanted to provide a tool to make it easy for other leaders to offer both at the same time.

You can use this resource in the following situations:

- ▶ **General adult formation** - Consider offering sessions throughout the year to your entire parish community. Announce the topic each week at Mass, and you may be surprised how many attend. These sessions can also be helpful for returning Catholics, those who are marrying a Catholic, and seekers.
- ▶ **Parent sessions** - The most important factor in whether children grow up in the Catholic faith is how much their parents are engaged in the faith themselves and whether or not they talk to their children about it. You can use these sessions to gather parents while their children are in class and help them understand and discuss the same topics at an adult level.
- ▶ **Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA)** - While the RCIA process should be focused on the faith journey of the catechumens and candidates and help them learn to follow Christ as part of the parish community, these prayer and doctrinal sessions can be used as a key resource to support their growth. The doctrinal sessions can easily be matched up to the liturgical cycle, and the prayer sessions are aimed at helping individuals grow in their relationship to Christ. The handouts can be helpful when participants are curious about a particular subject that you might not have time to cover in detail in your regular sessions.
- ▶ **Confirmation preparation** - Use this resource as the basis for preparing teen or adult candidates for confirmation.
- ▶ **High school religion classes, youth ministry, and campus ministry** - Many youth and young adult resources talk down to learners, put too much emphasis on detailed doctrinal points, are not designed for group use, or are inflexible. Consider using this as a supplemental resource or even the core of your program or class. When particular topics arise, you will always have a session or handout at the ready.
- ▶ **In the flow of parish life** - Pastoral leaders know that opportunities for formation abound in the parish setting. Have this resource at the ready for those "learning situations." Perhaps it is the right time to introduce your finance council to a Catholic understanding of stewardship, help your pastoral council break open the meaning of evangelization, introduce your lectors to *lectio divina*, or educate a family about the anointing of the sick. The prayer sessions can be used for small group prayer or retreat gatherings.
- ▶ **Bulletin inserts** - The doctrinal handouts can be printed and distributed with your bulletin for particular liturgical celebrations (for example: "The Communion of Saints" near All Saints' Day or "Mary, Mother of God" near a Marian feast day) or to form your community on various topics throughout the year.

Your Audience

For any of the above situations, the background of your participants can vary broadly:

- ▶ Some will come with little to no experience with Christianity, much less Catholicism.
- ▶ Others may have gone through Catholic school, done some reading and study on their own, and be quite knowledgeable about their faith.
- ▶ Others may have come from another Christian denomination and have a much better knowledge of Scripture than you do.
- ▶ Still others may be life-long Catholics who have not regularly practiced their faith and have only a second-grade knowledge of the tradition.

I once had a Protestant participant converting to Catholicism who had the knowledge of a Master of Divinity graduate! The spectrum can be, and often is, very wide, and it can be tricky to find the right balance of teaching basic information about the faith while handling the more advanced questions and interests of others.

You will also likely have varying degrees of openness to church teaching. Some may be curious, others fully committed, and still others quite skeptical or even a little combative on specific subjects. This resource does not assume commitment to the church but it explains both church teachings and the reasons behind them.

You may be surprised to find that some of those in the above categories are effectively atheists or agnostics who are curious about the faith. For example, surveys show that a significant number of Catholics say they do not believe in a personal God. It is important for us to meet them where they are, respect their questions, explain why the church teaches what it does, and help them encounter Christ.

Receiving the faith is much more than understanding its intellectual teachings. Ultimately, being able to explain the history behind the Nicene Creed is less important than having a personal relationship with God. As Catholics go through life and experience inevitable trials and tribulations, they should be able to turn in trust to a God of love and compassion who will strengthen and comfort them. Knowing the academic facts about Catholicism will be less helpful to them in such times.

Some people will come to your sessions with a developed, heartfelt faith life. They will be comfortable sharing their prayer experiences and will talk easily about their personal relationships with Jesus. Others will have almost no experience of personal prayer but will be eager to grow in this way. Still others may want to embrace Catholicism by intellectual assent while having no explicit desire to work on their personal spiritual lives. The suggestion of developing a personal relationship with Jesus and God may be off-putting to these folks.

The trick in all this is to find a way to speak to everyone despite a wide range of backgrounds and interests *and* to strike a balance between addressing the intellectual and spiritual sides of our Catholic faith.

Our Approach

We designed this resource to meet this challenge in the following ways:

Offer a Manageable Amount of Content

Some resources are quite overwhelming in the vastness of material they attempt to cover. In whatever situation that you use this resource, you have a limited amount of time, so you must prioritize how you spend that time, including opportunities for substantial prayer, reflection, and discussion. We don't want to "firehose" participants with details when they just need a drink.

It can be a lot of work to whittle down a resource that fits into a reasonable time frame. We've done our best to do that work for you, complete with talking points, instructions, and tips designed for a limited schedule that has been field tested in typical parish settings.

Prioritize Prayer

Prayer is an essential part of being Christian. It is just as important to teach people how to pray as it is to teach them doctrine. For this reason, we have made prayer a first class component of our resource. Because prayer is experiential, we offer many prayer experiences so participants can *learn to pray by praying in the sessions* and not merely talking about prayer or suggesting they try it on their own at home.

Teach the Basics

We cover the basics of the faith in a comprehensive manner without attempting to rival a theological degree program. In our excitement to teach about the faith, we can sometimes forget that the goal of the process is to form disciples who want to follow Jesus, not ensure that they can pass a theology test. We have done our best to provide a good balance.

Be Honest and Seeker-Sensitive

Your participants will come with their own experiences, doubts, and skepticism. We believe the right approach is to treat them as adults, frankly answering their questions and addressing their concerns. In this resource, we proactively address common questions and concerns, even those that can be a bit less comfortable for some people, including leaders!

Suggested reflection questions and points of discussion are meant to invite and encourage direct, open, and honest conversation. In today's world, when many people approach the church and issues of faith with skepticism, it is crucial that we convey a sense of acceptance for every person's starting point. Participants should know that all doubts or questions, especially the tough ones, are valid and welcomed. Our leadership and teaching can be more effective and transformative if we allow for open and respectful dialogue rather than insisting upon formulaic, pat answers to complex issues. Pope Francis has stressed this in his leadership: as pastoral ministers, we are called to accompany people where they are, recognizing that we are all somewhere along the road to the ideal.

Go Beyond the Catechism

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) is an excellent tool for understanding what we believe as Catholics, but it is not the only place to look. The *Catechism* has not been updated to include more recent teachings from the magisterium (e.g., *Laudato Si' / On Care for Our Common Home*), and it does not cover some important concepts, especially on how we apply the faith. We have included all core concepts from the *Catechism*, as well as other key topics that are not treated extensively there (e.g., St. Ignatius' Discernment of the Spirits, practical ways to observe the Sabbath, ideas for honoring Advent and Lent in today's world, etc.).

Provide Options for Going Deeper

One reason we provide handouts is so that you do not have to cover every single point verbally. The handouts are short and simple enough that your participants are likely to read them. We also provide options for exploring the topics more deeply, including references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and other sources.

Format

This program is written to be flexible and used in a variety of ways.

One standard way to use the resource is in weekly 90-minute sessions that address the head *and* the heart. Think of each meeting as containing two separate parts. The first is directed at the heart center—a prayer and faith-sharing component. The second is a period of teaching and discussion of a particular doctrinal topic, aimed primarily at the intellectual, head level.

A *Breaking Open the Word* component of *The Catholic Way* is offered separately, as a simple way to reflect on the Sunday Scripture readings. It can be particularly helpful for dismissals from the Sunday Mass, but also as a way to begin any parish meeting with reflection on Scripture and faith sharing.



Learn more about the *Breaking Open the Word* component of The Catholic Way, designed for small group use, at: pastoral.center/the-catholic-way

Prayer and Faith Sharing

The suggested prayer activities and Scripture reflections do not assume participants have significant experience with personal prayer or discussing their faith. We give tips for leading faith-sharing in a way that is inviting but not intimidating to those who are new to the practice. The reflections will work just as well for those who already have a developed prayer life.

The program introduces a wide variety of prayer types. Some of these practices may be familiar to your participants, and others will likely be new. The point is to offer many methods for participants to access that privileged place of communication between God and self. Some methods may lead to profound experiences and sharing, while others may not seem as “successful.” Don’t be discouraged if the prayer activity doesn’t particularly “stick” with all the group members. They are still practicing how to look for and notice God’s activity in their lives and different experiences will resonate with different people.

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

We're Here to Help

Introducing The Pastoral Center

This resource has been carefully tested and developed by The Pastoral Center, a publisher serving leaders in the church. We focus especially on adult faith formation, as well as our Growing Up Catholic ministry that helps leaders coach parents to pass on faith to their children.

As pastoral leaders ourselves with many years of parish ministry experience under our belts, we know firsthand the many challenges you face. In addition to creating new resources ourselves, we have searched high and low for the best pastoral resources from other publishers so we can make them available to leaders like you!

Visit us at <http://pastoral.center> to review the many resources we offer. We have also provided links to resources related to each topic throughout this text.

Free Coaching

Purchase of this resource includes access to our free and unlimited coaching service by phone or email. Whether you are a seasoned leader or someone with little pastoral experience who was talked into ministry, all you have to do is give us a call or send us a message. We're happy to talk you through how to use this resource in your specific situation, answer questions, or point you to additional resources to support your ministry. We'd love to chat!

Reach us at:

844-727-8672 or **resources@pastoralcenter.com**

Session Preparation

Advance Preparation

Before each session, read through the materials thoroughly and review the associated handouts. Look especially for "Advance Preparation" notes at the beginning of each leader guide, which highlight tasks to complete beforehand.

The leader guides offer talking points which are not intended to be read aloud word-for-word. Instead, they are meant to help you prepare your thoughts beforehand so that you can teach more naturally in your own words.

We have not duplicated the detail found in the *Catechism* or other comprehensive works, but we instead focus on central points and areas that we have found most fruitful for reflection and discussion. We have provided references to the *Catechism* and other works, and we encourage you to follow them to understand the topics covered more deeply and inform your presentations.

Taking cues from your group, you will learn where it is most important to focus your time.

Looking Back and Ahead

You will be accompanying your participants on a journey: whether in one evening, at a one-day retreat, or over the course of many months. An individual session does not have to stand on its own, but it can be a part of the larger process of moving toward Christ, a greater understanding of the church, and a lifetime of faith and discipleship.

If you are offering sessions on a regular basis, provide continuity between them and opportunities to both prepare for upcoming sessions and revisit past experiences. Be aware of what the next session will cover, especially the "homework" you will ask the participants to prepare ahead of time. For example, before the topic on "Mary, Mother of God," the recommended homework is for the participants to bring a meaningful image or statue of Mary and a rosary (if they have them). Even if the leader guide does not specify particular homework, it is helpful to announce the next topic so the group can reflect on it beforehand and perhaps formulate questions ahead of time.

Following a session, participants will often come up with additional questions and insights as they have the opportunity to reflect throughout the week. Plan for this and welcome it, providing time for review, rather than seeing it as a distraction. Some sessions suggest particular questions for reflection. Be sure to revisit them at the next meeting.

Team Members

If you are offering this process in a structured way for adult formation, returning Catholics, confirmation, RCIA, etc., it can be helpful to have a team to support you. Even if you enjoy directing the program and teaching on your own, other team members can be invaluable to the participants.

Hearing more than one person's experience of church, prayer, and faith life is vital for newcomers to Catholicism and those seeking to move deeper in their faith. God works in marvelous ways, and God works in many *different* ways according to each person's life circumstances. The more people hear stories of God's amazing work among different individuals, the more exciting, inspiring, and inviting the spiritual life can become.

Also, it is helpful for participants to get a taste of the wide variety of ways that people live out their Catholic faith. Catholicism is a huge umbrella under which more than a billion people fit. Even if you don't see things the same way as all of your participants or team members, being open about your differences sets a strong example for the group about your commitment to "love your neighbor as yourself."

Finally, some people in the group might connect more naturally with some team members than others. This is normal and healthy.

The number of potential team members is limited only by the number of parishioners in your parish. It's ideal to have a diversity of groups represented on the team: men and women; younger and older; married, single, partnered or widowed; theologically traditional and progressive; cradle Catholics and adult converts.

There is no need for team members to be well-versed in academic theology (although that would be a nice plus!). More importantly, team members must be committed to their own faith journey, open to growing in their faith, and interested in accompanying others as they grow in their faith.

Team members should also have a good sense of boundaries concerning their participation. The focus of the program should be on the *participants*, not on the team members. If meetings start to center on the team, their opinions, or their sharing, then the team is no longer serving the participants. Sometimes your role as the teacher or director will be to gently turn the attention back to those who are coming to you as seekers. You may, indeed, find that you are at times being asked to minister to your own team members. That is fine, but your priority is your inquirers, students, or participants.

Question Box

We highly recommend making a question box available if you are offering multiple sessions or using this as an RCIA or confirmation process. We have found that this is an effective way to solicit questions, especially when participants are too shy to ask them in the group or there is something particularly weighty or controversial someone wants to broach. In our experience, we have found that the questions posed in this way are sometimes a "test" to see if we are willing to openly and honestly engage the controversial points of our faith tradition.

At the end of each meeting, privately check the box and prepare to address any questions at the next meeting. Depending on the subject, a quick answer the next session may suffice. Sometimes you may have to also promise you will cover the subject in greater detail in a future session dedicated to that topic. If that is the case, make sure you follow through on that promise.

As an example, someone might submit the question "Why does the Catholic Church say that homosexuality is wrong?" Perhaps you are not planning to cover the sexual teachings of the church for another two months. However, the fact that someone submitted this question suggests that it is important to that person *now*. If you wait for two more months to address it, you might risk losing a participant. On the other hand, you don't want to throw out your plan to cover the Liturgy of the Word the following week. A solution could be to acknowledge the question and briefly note that it broaches a controversial and complex subject that you will cover in greater depth in the future. Let the group know that to do it justice you can't go into details now, but briefly put: the Catholic Church does not teach that being homosexual is a sin because it is not a chosen state. What the church does teach is that homosexual acts are sinful because by nature they are not tailored to procreation. End by letting the group know that you are willing to talk about this in more detail privately if anyone wants to address it before you cover it in further detail at a later meeting.

We can't stress this strongly enough: when someone has the courage to submit a question, give them the courtesy of acknowledging and answering it, even if it is fraught with complexities or makes you uncomfortable. The advantage of using a question box is that it gives you time to find or formulate the answer without being put on the spot in front of the group.

Create the box in any way you would like. A simple box with a closed lid, slips of paper, and pens to jot down questions will do the trick.

Materials

Each leader guide lists specific materials to gather ahead of time. For example, the session on the Liturgy of the Eucharist suggests that you bring a sacramentary, a chalice, and a paten for “show and tell.”

Here is a list of additional materials to have on hand every week:

- ▶ **Handouts** for the session, copied for each participant.
- ▶ **Material to create a peaceful, prayerful environment** (e.g., candles, flowers, a cloth with the current liturgical color, etc.).
- ▶ **Box of tissues.** Expect that crying will happen during some prayer and sharing sessions, especially if you are using this resource over a long period of time and a small group is deepening in trust with each other. Make sure that you aren't caught off-guard by tears. It will be less embarrassing to the individual who is crying if tissues are readily available so no one needs to scramble for them.
- ▶ **Question box,** slips of paper, and pens (see above for details).
- ▶ **A Bible.** We recommend a standard Catholic translation (NAB or NRSV). Many of the prayer activities will call for a Scripture passage to be read. Rather than reading from a smartphone, tablet, or a piece of paper, make a habit of reading Scripture directly out of the Bible. If possible, find a stand that will allow you to display the open Bible as part of your environment.
- ▶ **Extra Bibles.** It is a good idea to always have extras on hand for those who will forget theirs at times. Ideally, make them available for purchase or as gifts to those who do not already have their own.
- ▶ **Name tags.** Even if you are good at names, everyone in the group probably does not share that gift. Have everyone (including any team members or co-leaders) wear their name tags until you are *positive* everyone knows everyone else's name.
- ▶ **Room signage.** Put up a sign each time directing participants to the meeting location. Don't risk losing people because they can't find where you are meeting!



Find recommended
Bible editions for

purchase at:

pastoral.center/bibles

Anatomy of a Session

The suggested format for each session is very similar, but there will be some variation depending on the subject matter and when the prayer experience may best fit. Within the session you will need the leader guides for both the doctrinal session and the prayer experience. Here is an outline of a complete session.

Opening Prayer

We recommend keeping the opening prayer brief, especially if you are offering a longer prayer experience later in the session. You can choose any short prayer, such as the following:

Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

Good and Gracious God,

You have brought us all together
to learn more about you
and how you are working in our lives.


May your Holy Spirit guide our sharing
so that we may go out from here
with greater faith, hope, and love.

We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Welcome & Review

Be warm and enthusiastic in welcoming everyone. Then cover these nuts and bolts in every session:

- ▶ Review the ground rules for group sharing (see page 27), especially toward the beginning of the sessions or whenever there is a new participant.
- ▶ If you are using these sessions as part of a continuous process:
 - ▶ Briefly answer any questions left in the question box from the previous week. If there are some that will take in-depth conversation, note that you know they are there and will cover them in future meetings.
 - ▶ Address any questions left over from the meeting last week.
 - ▶ Remind the group to bring Bibles each week.

 Extensive treatment of prayer and prayer forms can be found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2558-2865.

Prayer Experience

If the doctrinal session leader guide does not recommend a specific time for the prayer experience, we *strongly* suggest that you schedule it at the beginning of your meetings. While you can always finish up the end of a doctrinal session in a later meeting, you won't want to cut short a prayer experience or have it feel rushed. The prayer experience leader guide will guide you through the prayer and subsequent sharing.

Homework Review

Briefly discuss the previous week's "homework," whether from the doctrinal session or the prayer experience. Remind them what it was, and ask how it went for them or what they would like to share.

Doctrinal Session

Follow the doctrinal session leader guide for whatever topic you are covering.

Distribute Handouts

We recommend giving out the handouts at the end of the meetings. If you distribute them at the beginning, participants may pay more attention to the handout than to you and others who are speaking. The primary purposes of the handouts are to give participants an opportunity to learn a bit more about the topic and to provide them with a printed reference so they won't feel the need to take notes during the session.

Homework & Looking Ahead

Tell the group what you would like everyone to focus on during the next week. We have intentionally avoided assigning reading material. Any homework that we suggest is simple (e.g., bring an image of Jesus you like) or brief but practical (e.g., take five minutes each day to practice the Examen prayer).

Look for suggested homework in the leader guides. Depending on the topic, it may be found at the beginning of a guide (if preparation is necessary for an upcoming session) or at the end of a guide (to build on the topic just covered).

Also, remind the group of the upcoming topic and meeting time.

Closing Prayer

We recommend keeping the closing prayer brief, especially if you offered a longer prayer experience earlier in the session. Choose any short prayer, such as the following:

Good and Gracious God,

Thank you for this time of sharing
and learning more about you.

Help us to know you better,
so that we will love you more
and follow you more closely.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

End with the Sign of the Cross.

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

Digging Deeper

We have provided references throughout this resource for learning more about the topics at hand. The beginning of each leader guide and end of each participant handout lists general correlations to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* (CCA), *Our Catholic Life* (a summary of the CCC, as described below under "Other Books on Church Doctrine"), and other documents.

We have also provided targeted citations to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* throughout the text, denoted by the logo shown on the right. It is important for you as the leader to be aware of the topics in greater detail so you can present them accurately and answer questions.



Look for this icon throughout the leader guides for specific references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Official Documents

- ▶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: This comprehensive document summarizes Catholic teaching with many references to magisterial documents. It is available for free on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website (<http://ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/catechism/>) as well as in print form. The online version is searchable. (Available in English & Spanish.)
- ▶ *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*: This document is easier to read than the core *Catechism*. It is also available for free on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website (<http://ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/uscca/>) and in print form. (Available in English & Spanish.)



Find print editions of the CCC and guides to the CCC at: pastoral.center/ccc



Find print editions of the *U.S. Catholic Catechism* at: pastoral.center/catechisms-us

Other Books on Church Doctrine

The following books are other excellent resources for gaining a greater understanding of church teaching. They present the material in a way that can be much easier to understand than the official documents. They are all available for review and purchase at our website (see right column).

- ▶ *Our Catholic Life*: This series of seven books by Bill Huebsch summarizes the CCC in plain English and Spanish and provides discussion questions. (Available in English & Spanish.)
- ▶ *Life in Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults* presents the faith in question and answer format. (Available in English & Spanish.)
- ▶ *Invitation to Catholicism: Beliefs, Teachings, Practices* by Alice Camille covers the basics and provides reflection questions and suggestions for faith responses in each chapter.
- ▶ Explore our site for even more options.



Find these books and other catechisms and overviews of the faith at the two following links: pastoral.center/catechisms pastoral.center/why-be-catholic

Other Topical Resources

The same green link icon used on the previous page can be found throughout the leader guides. It directs you to pages with additional resources for learning about the given topic.

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

Ground Rules for Group Sharing

The Importance of Guidelines

Be sure to review basic ground rules for faith-sharing whenever you have a new participant to your group. As the facilitator, it is your job to gently remind or re-direct those who need help in learning some of these courtesies. The more you can stop bad habits by continually reviewing the ground rules, the easier the facilitation will be in the long run.

In many groups, at least one person will need more guidance in these rules than others. Don't let someone "take the group hostage" with inappropriate habits.

For example, if Bob tends to go on and on and on so that you see other people's eyes glazing over, it is your responsibility as the facilitator to gently bring him to a conclusion by saying something like, "Bob, I'm conscious of time, and I know you have a lot to share, but I'm going to stop you here to give others a chance to talk as well. I'd be happy to hear more about your experience after the meeting is over if you'd like."

Enforcing these ground rules may initially seem challenging because you may have to interrupt to be heard. However, allowing participants to go on without limit doesn't serve the rest of the group. It will crowd out others' voices and may even lead some people to drop out.

Recommended Guidelines

Here are some suggested guidelines for group sharing:

1. **Use “I” statements.** For example, “When I heard that passage, I felt like Jesus was saying to me X, Y, and Z” is more appropriate than “You know how you feel guilty when you hear Jesus say X?”
2. **Avoid interruptions or cross-talk.** Faith-sharing isn’t a time to offer advice or answer someone else’s questions. It’s a time to allow people to express what they are struggling with or wondering about and to let it be. (If there’s a specific, objective answer you can give about a particular church teaching, let them know you’ll answer it later, not during the faith-sharing part of the meeting.)
3. **Maintain confidentiality.** We can’t stress this enough. Participants need to know that no one will run to the pastor or another parishioner to report that Joan is contemplating a divorce, Sam’s daughter is hospitalized for depression, or Susan had an abortion. What is said in the group must stay in the group. Make sure you hold yourself to this standard as well!
4. **Share the “mic.”** Give everyone the chance to speak once before anyone speaks twice.

Embrace silence. It’s okay to have periods of silence in between individuals’ sharing. In our culture, we aren’t accustomed to sitting together in the quiet. This is a good chance to practice being quiet together and listening to our hearts and to what God wants to communicate in the silence. As a facilitator, make sure you or your team members aren’t the ones to always break the silence.

Three-Year Faith Formation Plan

Overview

The following plan organizes the sessions in this resource for **parish-wide adult faith formation**. Please refer to the RCIA section for more details on using this approach with catechumens and candidates.

The sessions are scheduled **based on the three-year liturgical cycle**, according to the seasons and Lectionary readings where possible. We have repeated some popular and important topics across multiple years.

Have questions or need help? We offer free pastoral coaching and will be happy to talk you through your scheduling. Call us at 1-844-727-8672 or email resources@pastoralcenter.com.

Fall Ordinary Time (leading up to Advent)

This is the season of the liturgical year (in most parishes) during which the children's catechesis process gets up and running. Because of that, it is also the best time of year to initiate a catechetical formation process for the rest of the parish. People are thinking in terms of beginnings at this time of year.

Don't be afraid to ask more from the adults of your parish than has typically been asked in the recent past. Adults want faith. There is an in-born hunger for God.

Suggestions for Use

- ▶ **Invite parents** with children in catechesis to gather during the same times their children do, meeting in a separate space to learn at an adult level.
- ▶ Announce a two week sign up period for membership in **small Christian communities** in your parish. Repeat this sign-up period often throughout the year. Provide handouts from *The Catholic Way: Breaking Open the Word* (with reflections and discussion questions on each week's readings) and/or this resource.
- ▶ Begin the fall season by asking **members of each leadership group** within the parish (council, committees, and others) to spend a half hour per meeting studying their faith. How can they become effective leaders if they do not understand the wonders of Catholic belief?
- ▶ Invite your "**morning weekday Mass crowd**" to begin some formal study after Mass once or twice a week, and open this to the wider community who have daytimes free. You can easily split apart the doctrinal and prayer pieces into separate, shorter sessions.



Learn more about the *Breaking Open the Word* component of *The Catholic Way*, designed for small group use, at: pastoral.center/the-catholic-way

Suggested Curriculum

	<i>Year A</i>	<i>Year B</i>	<i>Year C</i>
<i>September</i>	<p>31 Introduction to the Bible</p> <p>14 Lectio Divina (Psalm 27)</p> <p>We begin each year focused on a different aspect of sacred Scripture. You may wish to offer this introductory session the first year you begin using this plan.</p>	<p>32 The Old Testament</p> <p>19 Praying with Scripture (Isaiah 55)</p> <p>This part of the Bible that we share with our Jewish brothers and sisters is sometimes under-appreciated.</p>	<p>33 The New Testament</p> <p>13 Ignatian Contemplation (Walking on Water)</p> <p>Help your people appreciate the nuances of the Gospels and find their way around the Christian books of the Bible.</p>
<i>October</i>	<p>42 Care for Creation</p> <p>17 Praying in Nature (St. Francis' Canticle of Creation)</p> <p>Pope Francis has brought this topic to the forefront with his encyclical on the subject. We celebrate the feast day of St. Francis, the great creation care saint, on October 4.</p>	<p>39 Divorce, Annulment, and Remarriage</p> <p>8 The Examen</p> <p>If possible, offer this session around the time we hear Jesus questioned about divorce (27th Sunday in OT). This will answer very concrete questions many people in the parish may have about their own or family members' situations.</p>	<p>49 Life Issues</p> <p>9 Five Forms of Prayer</p> <p>The church teaches a consistent life ethic that values human life in all situations.</p>
<i>November</i>	<p>52 Stewardship</p> <p>14 Lectio Divina (use a stewardship-focused reading such as Mt. 25:14-30 or 1 Cor. 12:4-11)</p> <p>Reflect on the many ways we have been gifted by God and how we are called to respond to those gifts. This is a practical and thought-provoking topic that Jesus explored in the many stewardship parables we hear at the end of Ordinary Time.</p>	<p>30 Communion of Saints</p> <p>15 Litany of Saints</p> <p>Share how we are called to be holy and examples of those who have gone before us. This is a good session to hold close to All Saints Day on November 1.</p>	<p>58 The Liturgical Year</p> <p>5 Daily Readings</p> <p>The next liturgical year begins with the first Sunday of Advent. Give your participants insights on the seasons, Lectionary cycles, and scheduling of the calendar.</p>

Advent

Advent is a season which sometimes gets overlooked because it is quite short and it falls during a very busy period of the year in most people’s social calendars. But drawing people to pause during Advent and consider their faith is realistic and powerful! Advent is a perfect time to offer more opportunities to slow down and focus on our faith.

Suggestions for Use

- ▶ Hold special “**Advent parties**” at the parish, inviting each household to take part in one or two of them. During these parties, provide an opportunity for catechesis following the usual assembly format, adding holiday treats as the shared food.
 - ▶ If your parish is large, you might consider organizing it by neighborhood in order to help folks meet those living near them.
- ▶ Introduce the **parents** of your children to *The Catholic Way* as part of their Advent studies. Invite parents to attend catechesis sessions at the same time their children do, at least for this one season.
- ▶ Hold an **Advent activity night** early in the season, teaching households to make Advent wreathes and other ways of remembering the season at home.
- ▶ Hold special evenings for **single young adults** and **single middle aged adults** to offer them study, conversation, and companionship during this season. Use these sessions as your starting point.

Suggested Curriculum

	<i>Year A</i>	<i>Year B</i>	<i>Year C</i>
<i>Early Advent</i>	<p>59 Advent & Christmas</p> <p>2 Advent Wreath — Ideally, lead the group in making Advent wreaths during the session.</p> <p>We recommend that you offer a fresh session focused on the season of Advent every year. Offer the Advent wreaths and handouts every year, but find a new angle each time. Find many creative options for Advent retreats, spirituality, small groups, whole family catechesis, and more at: pastoral.center/advent-christmas</p>		
<i>Late Advent</i>	<p>29 Mary, Mother of God</p> <p>23 The Rosary</p> <p>Mary appears in the Advent readings and is celebrated on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8.</p>	<p>47 Evangelization</p> <p>3 The Angelus</p> <p>This topic is so important and practical that we suggest covering it two out of three years.</p>	<p>28 Jesus</p> <p>21 Praying with the Psalms (The Lord Is My Shepherd)</p> <p>As Jesus' birth approaches, let's come to know him more deeply together.</p>

The Christmas Season and Feast of Epiphany

This is a relatively short—and usually very busy!—season in the life of Christians and of the church. It is probably not possible to schedule much catechesis during this period, either for children or adults. The Feast of the Epiphany, though, falling in early January as the Christmas season comes to a close, is a very suitable time to invite everyone in the parish back to the formation process.

Once the Christmas tree is down and life shifts back to normal, it’s a good time to get catechesis rolling once again!

Suggestions for Use

- ▶ Considering holding “**Epiphany parties**” as a way of ending the Christmas season, but also of re-starting the formation process in your parish. This would be a fine time to gather parents whose children are in formation or young single adults. As the winter months proceed and the holiday trimmings are put away, an active formation program can pick up the slack and be a popular winter activity, even if you live in warm climates!
- ▶ A parish-wide **Epiphany assembly** might work in small parishes, while in larger parishes such gatherings may be held throughout the week leading up to or following this feast.
- ▶ Hold a **sign up Sunday** once each month, inviting people to “start faith formation wherever they are” so folks feel welcome to begin formation at any time!

Suggested Curriculum

	<i>Year A</i>	<i>Year B</i>	<i>Year C</i>
<i>The Feast of the Epiphany</i>	<p>47 Evangelization</p> <p>8 The Examen</p> <p>From the beginning, Jesus was made known to people from faraway countries. How do we continue to share the Good News far and wide?</p>	<p>28 Jesus</p> <p>12 Ignatian Contemplation (Blind Bartimaeus)</p> <p>The “Jesus event” we are celebrating here is God’s full revelation to us of God’s love, as the Magi realized with force!</p>	<p>34 Introduction to Sacraments</p> <p>8 The Examen</p> <p>During the Christmas season and on Epiphany in particular, we recognize how Jesus was a physical sign of God’s grace. The sacraments are physical signs we experience today.</p>

Winter Ordinary Time

The length of this brief liturgical season between Christmas and Lent changes with the year. In some years, it is very short, while in others it is much longer, depending upon the date of Easter. Because of this, we recommend that you maintain flexibility from year to year in your planning. If the season is too short for the three recommended sessions, simply use one or two and use the others later in the year, perhaps in autumn.

However, do not underestimate the importance of this period of winter for getting folks back in the habit of regular, on-going, lifelong catechesis. The recent holidays are over and people are looking ahead at several months of winter before Easter. This is an excellent time to promote adult faith formation!

Suggestions for Use

- ▶ **Invite parents** with children in catechesis to gather at the same times as their children. For those who did not gather with you in autumn, this might be their time to begin. Be open to people at whatever stage of faith they enter.
- ▶ Announce a two week sign up period for membership in **small Christian communities** in your parish. Repeat this sign up period often. Let those already involved in the groups lead this process.

Suggested Curriculum

	<i>Year A</i>	<i>Year B</i>	<i>Year C</i>
<i>Mid-January</i>	<p>35 Sacrament of Baptism</p> <p>19 Praying with Scripture (Isaiah 55)</p> <p>Schedule your review of this sacrament of initiation near the Baptism of the Lord.</p>	<p>27 The Trinity</p> <p>20 Praying with the Holy Spirit (John 14)</p> <p>On the Baptism of the Lord, we hear the words of the Father and see the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Son.</p>	<p>39 Sacrament of Marriage</p> <p>19 Praying with Scripture (substitute Song of Songs 2:10-14)</p> <p>A wedding is the location of Jesus' first miracle, retold on the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time.</p>
<i>Late January</i>	<p>45 Discipleship 19 Praying with Scripture (substitute a "call" reading: Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 6:7-13, Luke 5:1-11)</p> <p>Explore different aspects of this core topic every year around the time when we hear the Gospel readings recalling the beginning of Jesus' ministry and the call of the first disciples.</p>		
<i>Early February</i>	<p>28 Jesus</p> <p>12 Ignatian Contemplation (Blind Bartimaeus)</p> <p>Take a closer look at the person of Jesus as we recall the beginning of his ministry in the Ordinary Time Gospel readings.</p>	<p>40 Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick</p> <p>21 Praying with the Psalms (The Lord Is My Shepherd)</p> <p>During the 6th and 7th Sundays of Ordinary Time, we hear of Jesus' healings.</p>	<p>51 Sexuality Issues</p> <p>14 Lectio Divina (substitute 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)</p> <p>Follow up the Sacrament of Marriage session with these related issues.</p>

Lent & Triduum

In some ways, this is the most natural time of year to provide adult formation within the parish. Many adult members are motivated during Lent to take on additional commitments relative to their faith. We should be careful, however, not to limit our formation only to Lent because the entire liturgical year can become important if, over time, we provide meaningful ways for people to grow in their faith all year long.

Nonetheless, Lent remains a dear time for many people. We recommend that you broaden your invitation to participate in the parish community during this season through local advertising, marketing, and other means. Keep an open door and an open heart to the many people who are not close to the parish in other times.

Suggestions for Use

- ▶ **Invite parents** with children in catechesis to gather at the same times as their children, using a form of gathering that suits your parish. Combine such gatherings with Lenten devotions such as the Stations of the Cross or others.
 - ▶ Use *The Catholic Way*, following the session plan and distributing the handouts.
 - ▶ For additional whole family catechesis resources for the season, see <https://pastoral.center/lent-families>.
 - ▶ If you are not gathering with parents at any other time of year, make Lent the special season in which to do so.
- ▶ Announce a pre-Lent sign up period for membership in **small Christian communities** or other study groups in your parish.
- ▶ During Lent, ask all members of each **leadership group** within the parish (council, committees, and others) to spend a half hour per meeting studying their faith.
- ▶ Provide a **special outreach** to those who do not attend regularly, or who do not feel welcome. Hold special “coming home for Lent” gatherings, using *The Catholic Way* as your resource.
- ▶ Reach out to the **young adults**, especially the large group of single young adults and middle aged adults.

Suggested Curriculum

	<i>Year A</i>	<i>Year B</i>	<i>Year C</i>
<i>Ash Wednesday</i>	<p>60 Lent 24 Stations of the Cross</p> <p>We recommend that you offer at least one session focused on the season of Lent each year, with a fresh approach. Beyond the sessions above, find many creative options for Lenten retreats, spirituality, small groups, whole family catechesis, and more at: pastoral.center/lent</p>		
<i>Early Lent</i>	<p>50 Sabbath</p> <p>19 Praying with Scripture (substitute Mark 6:30-32)</p> <p>The topic of sabbath—making space for rest (and God)—is very relevant and engaging today.</p>	<p>53 Ten Commandments & the Golden Rule</p> <p>23 Traditional Prayers</p> <p>We hear the Ten Commandments—rules for loving God and others—on the 3rd Sunday of Lent.</p>	<p>43 Catholic Social Teaching</p> <p>12 Ignatian Contemplation (Blind Bartimaeus)</p> <p>Share the "best kept secret" of the Catholic Church that guides how we serve and interact with others.</p>
<i>Mid Lent</i>	<p>54 Virtues, Morality & Conscience</p> <p>9 Five Forms of Prayer</p> <p>This topic offers helpful, practical tools from our tradition to embrace morality in the messy situations in which we can find ourselves.</p>	<p>44 Discernment</p> <p>14 Lectio Divina (substitute Philippians 4:8-9)</p> <p>This practical session gives insights on how to make decisions by discerning God's will.</p>	<p>38 Sacrament of Reconciliation</p> <p>22 Repentance (Book of Jonah)</p> <p>This topic fits well with the Lenten season, but especially on the 4th Sunday of Lent, when we hear the parable of the Prodigal Son.</p>
<i>Passion Sunday & Triduum</i>	<p>61 The Triduum & Easter</p> <p>10 Footwashing (John 13:1-15)</p> <p>Increase awareness of this high point of the church year, and encourage your participants to experience Holy Week services, including the Easter Vigil.</p>	<p>41 Sacrament of Holy Orders</p> <p>18 Praying with Memories (Deuteronomy 8)</p> <p>Make the connection between this sacrament and the institution of the priesthood that we celebrate on Holy Thursday.</p>	<p>56 The Mass (Part I)</p> <p>25 Taizé Prayer</p> <p>Start a reflection on the Mass—based on the Last Supper we recall in a special way this week—and continue it in Easter Season.</p>

Easter Season

We turn now to a season when much lifelong catechesis can be offered. Since this is the season during which academic school years are winding up, people tend to be quite busy. First communion and confirmation celebrations often fall during this period, adding to busy schedules and the diffuse attention of the parish.

This is also the season during which those who were baptized at Easter are finding their home within the church. For them, these are the first weeks of “new life” and their experience can be shared with the rest of the community. Because of this, even if you do not have newly baptized or newly received members of your parish, we recommend that you use this time to continue the lifelong catechesis process.

Suggestions for Use

- ▶ **Connect gatherings** for adults with celebrations of the end of the school year and with preparation for receiving the Eucharist. Use the Feast of the Ascension as the occasion for a parish wide renewal of faith.
- ▶ During these spring months, invite someone to give a brief **post-communion presentation** announcing your process of ongoing adult faith formation. Explain how the sessions work, and briefly present the topic for that week in the parish.

Suggested Curriculum

	<i>Year A</i>	<i>Year B</i>	<i>Year C</i>
<i>Early Easter</i>	<p>36 Sacrament of Eucharist</p> <p>7 Eucharistic Adoration</p> <p>On the 3rd Sunday of Easter, we hear how disciples walking to Emmaus recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread.</p>	<p>48 Life after Death</p> <p>6 Easter Reflection (Jesus Is Alive!)</p> <p>In Christ's resurrection, he has freed us from death.</p>	<p>57 The Mass (Part II)</p> <p>16 Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office)</p> <p>Continue this reflection on the Mass from the previous session.</p>
<i>Mid Easter</i>	<p>55 Tour of the Church</p> <p>(No prayer necessary.)</p> <p>Promote this popular session that always raises questions and leads to insights.</p>	<p>62 Church Structure</p> <p>7 Eucharistic Adoration</p> <p>As the Easter readings tell us about the early church, share how it works today.</p>	<p>55 Tour of the Church</p> <p>(No prayer necessary.)</p> <p>Offer this session in two out of every three years, since it is so engaging.</p>
<i>Pentecost</i>	<p>37 Sacrament of Confirmation</p> <p>20 Praying with the Holy Spirit (John 14)</p> <p>Celebrate a renewal of this sacrament of the Spirit.</p>	<p>63 Church History</p> <p>11 Gregorian Chant</p> <p>Connect the dots from the early church to the church we are members of today.</p>	<p>64 The Second Vatican Council</p> <p>4 Contemporary Music</p> <p>Explore how the Spirit blew a breath of fresh air into the church with the Council.</p>

RCIA

Your Audience

If you are using this resource for the RCIA process, remember that RCIA is about helping people to become disciples of Jesus, not just about imparting intellectual knowledge of the Catholic tradition. In fact, as the *Rite* itself states:

The rite of Christian initiation... is designed for adults who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts. By God's help they will be strengthened spiritually during their preparation and at the proper time will receive the sacraments fruitfully. (*RCIA* #1)

If catechumens and candidates celebrate sacraments and can recite the seven sacraments and the four marks of the Church but they don't have a personal relationship with God, the process has failed them.

On the other hand, some people come to the RCIA process because they are genuinely curious to learn about the teachings of the Catholic Church. To deny them the chance to learn on this level does them a disservice. **This resource is meant to address both the heart and the head because Christ draws people to himself through both.**

Resources about the RCIA Process

Beyond the questions of doctrine, the following books can help you and your learners navigate the broader process of growing in faith.

- ▶ The following five books were written by our friends at TeamRCIA.com, encouraging a process based on conversion and immersing catechumens and candidates in the community more than focusing on doctrine:
 - ▶ *Seek the Living God: Five RCIA Inquiry Questions for Making Disciples* by Nick Wagner
 - ▶ *Your Parish Is the Curriculum: RCIA in the Midst of Community* by Diana Macalintal
 - ▶ *Field Hospital Catechesis: The Core Content for RCIA* by Nick Wagner
 - ▶ *The Way of Faith: A Field Guide for the RCIA Process*: This book by Nick Wagner of TeamRCIA guides leaders through the entire process, keeping the transformation of hearts firmly at the center.



Find these books
and more at:

pastoral.center/rcia

- ▶ *The Heart of Faith: A Field Guide for Catechumens & Candidates*, also by Nick Wagner, is written to help your participants enter into the process more fully and open their hearts to Jesus.
- ▶ *Introducing Catholic Prayer for RCIA Leaders* by Kathleen Glavich, SND, can give you additional insights on how to accompany your catechumens and candidates in strengthening their experience of prayer.
- ▶ *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* itself is an essential resource to have on your shelf, as it beautifully defines the process.

Scheduling the Year

Parishes take many different approaches to scheduling their RCIA gatherings. We encourage you to join the growing number of parishes with a year-round program, which will allow you to welcome participants at any time and move away from the expectation of a fixed preparation period.

We have provided the following tools to help you craft your schedule:

- ▶ The next section includes **sample schedules**, for both year-round and academic year calendars.
- ▶ **Individual sessions** include suggestions on scheduling as well as correlations between prayer and doctrinal topics.
- ▶ The **liturgical index** at the end of this resource shows correlations between sessions and the lectionary readings over the course of the three year cycle.

You may need to combine some topics to fit everything in during your available time, as shown in the sample schedules. You may choose to shorten the period of teaching and discussion on a particular topic in order to treat the material of two sessions in one. At other times, you may focus the meeting on one topic but distribute the handout for the second topic, soliciting questions the following week on the material.

Sample Schedules

The following example schedules are simply recommendations that serve as a starting point. There may be particular topics you want to spend more time on, while others will be of less interest or relevance to a particular group.

Since these schedules are coordinated with the liturgical year, you will need to make adjustments based on the calendar. Feel free to adapt these suggestions to what will best serve your group.

Three-Year, Parish-Wide Schedule

Our recommended approach is to offer doctrinal and prayer sessions to your whole parish once or twice a month based on the **Three-Year Faith Formation Plan found earlier in this document**. Invite your RCIA participants to attend these sessions based on their interest in addition to other RCIA meetings, which may include Breaking Open the Word based on the Sunday readings, experiencing parish ministries, and faith-sharing gatherings.

This approach has a number of advantages:

- ▶ For the same effort, you can offer doctrinal and prayer topics to both RCIA participants and the parish at large.
- ▶ Your RCIA catechumens and candidates will never "graduate" from the faith formation process, as they can continue to attend these sessions as long as they would like. Many neophytes struggle with ways to continue growing in faith after having such a strong experience in the RCIA process.
- ▶ This will help you find a better balance across the different aspects of the RCIA process, instead of placing an overwhelming emphasis on church doctrine.
- ▶ In your other meetings, you will be able to respond better to issues that your participants raise based on what is most important to them and what is being raised in their faith journeys.
- ▶ Ongoing formation, based on a three-year cycle, will help you build a program that welcomes new inquirers at any time of the year and shift any expectations that an individual's preparation needs to be forced into a specific schedule.

Year-Round RCIA Schedule (40 sessions)

This is a year-round approach with 40 weeks of meetings. Feel free to rearrange or combine topics depending on your group's needs and interests.

Schedule some off weeks for holidays and occasional breaks. If you want to meet for more than the given 40 weeks, use some meetings for review, open question and answer sessions, guest speakers, a focus on parish ministries, a visit by the parish priest, or socializing, perhaps with a meal and family and friends invited.

The suggested prayers include a repetition of some forms (particularly the Examen which is suggested once during every liturgical season). Repeat any others that are received well or reteach some of them as new people join the group.

Summer Ordinary Time

At this time of year, parish life usually slows down as parish staff and parishioners take summer vacations. However, God doesn't take a vacation in the summer! While we recommend a lighter schedule, the summer months are a time when inquirers may have extra time and flexibility to "come and see" if the RCIA process may be for them. Neophytes may be eager to continue their learning during these months.

	<i>Doctrinal Topic</i>	<i>Prayer Topic</i>	<i>Additional Notes</i>
1	27 Trinity	9 Five Forms of Prayer	Trinity Sunday is the ideal time to explore who God is, followed by an overview of how we communicate with God.
2	63 Church History 64 Second Vatican Council	11 Gregorian Chant	Pick up the church's story beyond what we hear in the Easter Season readings, giving a whirlwind tour ending with the dramatic changes from Vatican II.
3	62 Church Structure	8 The Examen	Explain how the church is organized today.
4	39 Sacrament of Marriage	19 Praying with Scripture (substitute Song of Songs 2:10-14)	Across these two weeks, explore how we are called to be holy in the context of romantic relationships.
5	46 Divorce, Annulment & Remarriage	18 Praying with Memories (Deuteronomy 8)	
6	41 Sacrament of Holy Orders	4 Contemporary Music	Some are called to serve the church from the inside, through the gift of ordination.
7	48 Life after Death	21 Praying with the Psalms (The Lord Is My Shepherd)	In Christ's resurrection, he has freed us from death.
8	49 Life Issues	3 The Angelus	The church teaches a consistent life ethic that values human life in all situations.

Fall Ordinary Time

This is a natural time of year to especially welcome inquirers, offer an overview of the process, and focus on some foundational aspects of our faith.

9	<p>1 Introductory Session — Begin this session as a welcome for new participants, followed by a brief overview of the RCIA process. Use the "Journey of Faith" exercise; it is an excellent way to focus your participants on where they are spiritually and where they are headed.</p>		
10	55 Tour of the Church	23 Traditional Prayers	<p>The reflective time of autumn is a perfect time to reflect on the source and summit of the Christian life. Your candidates will likely come alive with questions during the Tour of the Church.</p>
11	56 The Mass (Part I)	16 Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office)	
12	57 The Mass (Part II)	8 The Examen	
13	28 Jesus	12 Ignatian Contemplation (Blind Bartimaeus) — This will give your participants a powerful opportunity to ask Jesus what they want from the process (which you can revisit with them later).	<p>As we continue to hear about Jesus' ministry in the Ordinary Time Gospel readings, look closer at the person of Jesus.</p>
14	30 The Communion of Saints	15 Litany of Saints	<p>We are all called to be saints. Here we look at examples of those who have gone before us. Hold this session close to All Saints Day, on November 1.</p>
15	31 Introduction to the Bible	14 Lectio Divina (Psalm 27)	<p>Help your candidates understand the Bible and how we interpret it. National Bible Week is celebrated each year in the month of November.</p>
16	32 The Old Testament	19 Praying with Scripture (Isaiah 55)	
17	33 The New Testament	13 Ignatian Contemplation (Walking on Water)	
18	58 The Liturgical Year	5 Daily Readings	<p>The next liturgical year begins with the first Sunday of Advent. Give your participants insights on the seasons, Lectionary cycles, and scheduling of the church calendar.</p>

Advent

Advent is a season which sometimes gets overlooked because it is so short and falls during a very busy time of year in most people's social calendars. Inviting your candidates to pause during Advent and reflect on their faith is realistic and powerful.

19	59 Advent & Christmas	2 Advent Wreath — Ideally, lead the group in making Advent wreaths during the session.	Schedule this session on the first Sunday of Advent or just beforehand.
20	29 Mary, Mother of God	23 The Rosary	Mary appears in the Advent readings and is celebrated on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8.
21	44 Discernment	14 Lectio Divina (substitute Philippians 4:8-9)	This practical session gives insights on how to make decisions by discerning God's will.

Christmas Season & Winter Ordinary Time

The length of these brief liturgical seasons vary with the year. In some years, this section of Ordinary Time is very short, while in others it is much longer, depending upon the date for Easter, which moves each year. Because of this, we recommend that you maintain flexibility from year to year in your planning.

22	45 Discipleship	16 Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office)	If possible, hold this close to the time when the Sunday readings focus on the call of the disciples.
23	51 Sexuality Issues (first half)	14 Lectio Divina (substitute 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)	Take your time working through the many issues in this session, which tend to raise questions and lead to rich discussion.
24	51 Sexuality Issues (second half)	4 Contemporary Music — Revisit with different songs.	
25	50 Sabbath	19 Praying with Scripture (substitute Mark 6:30-32)	The topic of sabbath—making space for rest (and God)—is very relevant and engaging in our busy world.
26	47 Evangelization	9 Five Forms of Prayer (revisited)	Discuss how we each are called to share the Good News with others and help the church continue to grow.
27	34 Introduction to Sacraments	8 The Examen	Jesus was a physical sign of God's grace. The sacraments are physical signs of that same grace that we experience today.

Lent

These 40 days leading up to triduum and Easter are a time when many put a more intense focus on their faith. Help your candidates understand this special time of year and especially prepare and lead the prayer experiences well. In addition to focusing on the season, we explore the sacraments in greater detail.

28	60 Lent	24 Stations of the Cross	If possible, hold this session just before the beginning of Lent to get your participants engaged in the season.
29	35 Sacrament of Baptism	25 Taizé Prayer — This can be a very moving experience during Lent, with its focus on the Cross.	These sacraments of initiation prepare us to fully live out our call to serve the world as disciples of Christ. Help the catechumens and candidates understand the sacraments they will receive soon.
30	36 Sacrament of Eucharist	7 Eucharistic Adoration	
31	37 Sacrament of Confirmation	20 Praying with the Holy Spirit (John 14)	
32	38 Sacrament of Reconciliation	22 Repentance (Book of Jonah)	Reconciliation is a good sacrament to cover in this penitential season, Encourage candidates to celebrate the sacrament in Lent.
33	61 The Triduum & Easter	10 Footwashing (John 13:1-15)	Cover this session close to Palm Sunday so candidates will better be able to appreciate this week and hopefully participate in triduum liturgies in a fresh way.

Easter Season: Period of Mystagogy

The final months before Easter will be very full with a deepening of prayer and faith-sharing, much topical material to cover, dismissals, various scheduled rites and scrutinies, and final preparations and rehearsals for the triduum. Although you may be tempted to take a week off immediately after Easter, in our experience it is a better idea to hold the regularly scheduled meeting in order to debrief and deepen the Easter experience when it is still very fresh.

Consider giving everyone a break by taking off the second week of the Easter season. Continue to meet during these 50 days leading to Pentecost, then come full-circle to the summer sessions.

34	Sharing on the triduum experience	6 Easter Reflection (Jesus Is Alive!)	Rather than cover any doctrinal topic, use the entire meeting time in the first session after Holy Week to share about the triduum and Easter experience. Participants should have many impressions and experiences to reflect upon. They may also have questions about the liturgies themselves, especially if it was their first experience of a triduum.
35	52 Stewardship	14 Lectio Divina — Repeat this practice with a stewardship-focused reading such as Mt. 25:14-30 or 1 Cor. 12:4-11.	Particularly after receiving the Easter sacraments, participants will be "on fire" about stewarding their gifts with the wider world.
36	54 Virtues, Morality, and Conscience	8 The Examen	This session offers helpful, practical tools and insights from our tradition to embrace morality in the messy situations in which we can find ourselves.
37	40 Sacrament of Anointing	4 Contemporary Music (use different songs)	During Easter Season, we hear the stories of how the disciples have continued Jesus' ministry of healing.
38	43 Catholic Social Teaching	14 Lectio Divina (Luke 24:13-35 - Road to Emmaus)	Flesh out principles for applying our faith to the way we treat other individuals as well as the way our society treats others.
39	42 Care for Creation	17 Praying in Nature (St. Francis' Canticle of Creation)	The beautiful days of spring are a perfect time to celebrate the gift of creation and our responsibility to care for it.
40	53 Ten Commandments & the Golden Rule	25 Taizé Prayer	Use this time to relate the guidelines our faith gives us for turning away from sin and living a loving life.

Academic Year RCIA Schedule (30 sessions)

This schedule begins around mid-September with 30 weeks of meetings. Note that some topics are not included, so rearrange or combine topics depending on your group's needs and interests.

Fall Ordinary Time

This is a natural time of year to especially welcome inquirers, offer an overview of the process, and focus on some foundational aspects of our faith.

	<i>Doctrinal Topic</i>	<i>Prayer Topic</i>	<i>Additional Notes</i>
1	1 Introductory Session — Begin this first session as a welcome, followed by a brief overview of the RCIA process. Use the "Journey of Faith" exercise, an excellent way to focus your participants on where they are spiritually and where they are headed.		
2	55 Tour of the Church	23 Traditional Prayers	The reflective time of autumn is a perfect time to reflect on the source and summit of the Christian life. Your candidates will likely come alive with questions during the Tour of the Church.
3	56 The Mass (Part I)	16 Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office)	
4	57 The Mass (Part II)	8 The Examen	
5	28 Jesus 27 Trinity	12 Ignatian Contemplation (Blind Bartimaeus) — This will give your participants a powerful opportunity to ask Jesus what they want from the process (which you can revisit with them later).	
6	30 The Communion of Saints	15 Litany of Saints	We are all called to be saints. Here we look at examples of those who have gone before us. Hold this session close to All Saints Day on November 1.
7	31 Introduction to the Bible 32 The Old Testament	14 Lectio Divina (Psalm 27)	Help your candidates understand the Bible and how we interpret it. National Bible Week is celebrated each year in the month of November.
8	33 The New Testament	13 Ignatian Contemplation (Walking on Water)	

Advent

Advent is a season which sometimes gets overlooked because it is so short and falls during a very busy time of year in most people's social calendars. Inviting your candidates to pause during Advent and reflect on their faith is realistic and powerful.

9	<p>58 The Liturgical Year</p> <p>59 Advent & Christmas</p>	<p>2 Advent Wreath — Ideally, lead the group in making Advent wreaths during the session.</p>	<p>Give your participants insights into the seasons, Lectionary cycles, and scheduling of the church calendar. Schedule this session on the first Sunday of Advent or just beforehand.</p>
10	<p>29 Mary, Mother of God</p>	<p>23 The Rosary</p>	<p>Mary appears in the Advent readings and is celebrated on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8.</p>
11	<p>44 Discernment</p>	<p>14 Lectio Divina (substitute Philippians 4:8-9)</p>	<p>This practical session gives insights on how to make decisions by discerning God's will.</p>

Christmas Season & Winter Ordinary Time

The length of these brief liturgical seasons vary with the year. In some years, this section of Ordinary Time is very short, while in others it is much longer, depending upon the date for Easter, which moves each year. Because of this, we recommend that you maintain flexibility from year to year in your planning.

12	<p>45 Discipleship</p>	<p>5 Daily Readings</p>	<p>If possible, hold this close to the time when the Sunday readings focus on the call of the disciples.</p>
13	<p>51 Sexuality Issues</p>	<p>14 Lectio Divina (substitute 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)</p>	<p>The issues in this session tend to raise many questions and lead to rich discussion.</p>
14	<p>50 Sabbath</p>	<p>19 Praying with Scripture (substitute Mark 6:30-32)</p>	<p>The topic of sabbath—making space for rest (and God)—is very relevant and engaging in our busy world.</p>
15	<p>47 Evangelization</p>	<p>9 Five Forms of Prayer</p>	<p>Discuss how we each are called to share the Good News with others and help the church continue to grow.</p>
16	<p>53 Ten Commandments & the Golden Rule</p>	<p>18 Praying with Memories (Deuteronomy 8)</p>	<p>Use this time to relate the guidelines our faith gives us for turning away from sin and living a loving life.</p>
17	<p>54 Virtues, Morality, and Conscience</p>	<p>19 Praying with Scripture (Isaiah 55)</p>	<p>This session offers helpful, practical tools and insights from our tradition to embrace morality in the messy situations in which we can find ourselves.</p>

Lent

These 40 days leading up to triduum and Easter are a time when many put a more intense focus on their faith. Help your candidates understand this special time of year and especially prepare and lead the prayer experiences well. In addition to focusing on the season, we explore the sacraments in greater detail.

18	<p>60 Lent</p>	<p>24 Stations of the Cross</p>	<p>If possible, hold this session just before the beginning of Lent to get your participants engaged in the season.</p>
19	<p>43 Catholic Social Teaching</p> <p>49 Life Issues</p>	<p>14 Lectio Divina (Luke 24:13-35 - Road to Emmaus)</p>	<p>Flesh out principles for applying our faith to the way we treat other individuals as well as the way our society treats others.</p>
20	<p>34 Introduction to Sacraments</p> <p>35 Sacrament of Baptism</p>	<p>25 Taizé Prayer — This can be a very moving experience during Lent, with its focus on the Cross.</p>	<p>Jesus was a physical sign of God's grace. The sacraments are physical signs of that same grace that we experience today.</p> <p>These sacraments of initiation prepare us to fully live out our call to serve the world as disciples of Christ. Help the catechumens and candidates understand the sacraments they will celebrate soon.</p>
21	<p>36 Sacrament of Eucharist</p>	<p>7 Eucharistic Adoration</p>	<p>These sacraments of initiation prepare us to fully live out our call to serve the world as disciples of Christ. Help the catechumens and candidates understand the sacraments they will celebrate soon.</p>
22	<p>37 Sacrament of Confirmation</p>	<p>20 Praying with the Holy Spirit (John 14)</p>	
23	<p>38 Sacrament of Reconciliation</p> <p>40 Sacrament of Anointing</p>	<p>22 Repentance (Book of Jonah)</p>	<p>Reconciliation is a good sacrament to cover in this penitential season. Encourage candidates to celebrate the sacrament in Lent. You may also choose to cover Anointing of the Sick, the other sacrament of healing, in this session.</p>
24	<p>61 The Triduum & Easter</p>	<p>10 Footwashing (John 13:1-15)</p>	<p>Cover this session close to Palm Sunday so candidates will better be able to appreciate this week and hopefully participate in triduum liturgies in a fresh way.</p>

Easter Season

The final months before Easter will be very full with a deepening of prayer and faith-sharing, much topical material to cover, dismissals, various scheduled rites and scrutinies, and final preparations and rehearsals for the triduum. Although you may be tempted to take a week off immediately after Easter, in our experience it is a better idea to hold the regularly scheduled meeting in order to debrief and deepen the Easter experience when it is still very fresh. Consider then giving everyone a break by taking off the second week of the Easter season. Spend the next several weeks looking at various other topics during this period of mystagogia.

25	Sharing on the triduum experience	6 Easter Reflection (Jesus Is Alive!)	Rather than cover any doctrinal topic, use the entire meeting time in the first session after Holy Week to share about the triduum and Easter experience. Participants should have many impressions and experiences to reflect upon. They may also have questions about the liturgies themselves, especially if it was their first experience of a triduum.
26	52 Stewardship	14 Lectio Divina — Repeat this practice with a stewardship-focused reading such as Mt. 25:14-30 or 1 Cor. 12:4-11.	Particularly after receiving the Easter sacraments, participants will be "on fire" about stewarding their gifts with the wider world.
27	39 Sacrament of Marriage 46 Divorce, Annulment & Remarriage	19 Praying with Scripture (substitute Song of Songs 2:10-14)	Explore how we are called to be holy in the context of romantic relationships.
28	62 Church Structure 64 Second Vatican Council	4 Contemporary Music	Pick up the church's story beyond what we hear in the Easter Season readings, explaining how the church is organized today and ending with the dramatic changes from Vatican II.
29	42 Care for Creation	17 Praying in Nature (St. Francis' Canticle of Creation)	The beautiful days of spring are a perfect time to celebrate the gift of creation and our responsibility to care for it.
30	Final Session: Reflection and celebration — Dedicate this session to reflecting on where the participants have come so far as well as on the questions, "Where do we go from here?" and "What comes next in this process of learning and growing in our faith?" Return letters from Blind Bartimaeus session (session 5).		

Confirmation

Your Audience

If your audience is a group of teenagers, you will obviously choose different topics and emphases than if you were facilitating an adult RCIA process. Depending on the specific needs and interests of your group, expand, eliminate, or combine the suggested topics as best serves your group. For example, the history of the Second Vatican Council or the doctrinal development of the sacraments will not be as central to the faith development of a 15-year-old as open and honest conversations about the sexuality teachings of the church or the radical nature of Jesus' teachings will be.

Particular prayer forms will be more or less adaptable for a teenage group. Change the language used to fit your group. Use the prayers listed here as suggestions to get you started.

We encourage you to use *The Catholic Way* as the basis for a small group oriented confirmation process. This is also a great opportunity to involve parents, inviting them to be a part of these sessions and conversations.

We recommend the book *Rebuilding Confirmation: Because We Need More Than Another Graduation* by Christopher Wesley for suggestions.

One-Year Monthly Academic Year Confirmation Schedule (9 sessions)

Because there are only a total of nine sessions in this format, you will want to schedule longer meetings, perhaps two and a half or three hours each; think of them as mini-retreats. We have provided a number of topics for each session, but you can always distribute handouts for topics you do not have time to cover.

Adjust your schedule depending on how the liturgical seasons fall on the calendar. We encourage you to also build service, social, or community-building activities into the year.

1. Fall Ordinary Time #1

Begin this first session—in August or September—with an icebreaker or other "getting to know you" activities, followed by a brief overview of the year. The Journey of Faith exercise from the Introductory Session is an excellent way to focus your candidates on where they are and where they are headed. Then move to the main topic of the day: Sacred Scripture. While you may not have the time to deeply treat all three sessions, give a solid introduction to the Bible and distribute all of the handouts.

Doctrinal topics

- 1 Introductory Session (Journey of Faith)
- 31 Introduction to the Bible
- 32 Old Testament
- 33 New Testament

Prayer topics

- 14 Lectio Divina (Psalm 27)
- 19 Praying with Scripture (Isaiah 55)

2. Fall Ordinary Time #2

As you move deeper into autumn and Ordinary Time, offer this overview of the different persons of God, especially Jesus. The Blind Bartimaeus prayer experience will give your participants a great opportunity to ask Jesus what they want from the process (which you can then revisit later), and the "Five Forms of Prayer" exercise offers a helpful general overview to prayer.

Doctrinal topics

- 27 The Trinity
- 28 Jesus

Prayer topics

- 12 Ignatian Contemplation (Blind Bartimaeus)
- 9 Five Forms of Prayer

3. Fall Ordinary Time #3

Help those in your group learn about how they are called to be holy and the example of those who have gone before us around the time of All Saints Day on November 1. This session also explores how we are called to be holy in the context of romantic relationships and our sexuality.

Doctrinal topics

- 30 Communion of Saints
- 51 Sexuality Issues
- 39 Sacrament of Marriage

Prayer topics

- 15 Litany of Saints
- 16 Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office)

4. Advent/Christmas

Schedule this session just before or soon after the liturgical year begins. In addition to giving an overview, spend some focused time on Advent. This is also a good time to focus on Mary, who appears in the Advent readings and is featured on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8.

Doctrinal topics

- 58 The Liturgical Year
- 59 Advent & Christmas
- 29 Mary, Mother of God

Prayer topics

- 2 Advent Wreath
- 5 Daily Readings
- 23 The Rosary

5. Winter Ordinary Time #1

On the last day of the Christmas season, we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, a good entry point to review the sacraments.

Doctrinal topics

- 34 Introduction to Sacraments
- 35 Sacrament of Baptism
- 36 Sacrament of Eucharist
- 40 Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick
- 41 Sacrament of Holy Orders

Prayer topics

- 7 Eucharistic Adoration
- 21 Praying with the Psalms

6. Winter Ordinary Time #2

At the beginning of Ordinary Time, we hear about the beginning of Jesus' ministry and usually hear a Gospel reading recounting the call of the disciples. Help your participants explore what it means to be a disciple and live their faith in their daily lives.

Doctrinal topics

- 45 Discipleship
- 52 Stewardship
- 42 Care for Creation

Prayer topics

- 8 The Examen
- 4 Contemporary Music
- 17 Praying in Nature (St. Francis' Canticle of Creation)

7. Lent #1

During the Lenten season, we especially focus on how we are called to conversion and to turn away from temptation. We hear about Jesus' temptation in the desert on the first Sunday of Lent every year.

Doctrinal topics

- 60 Lent
- 53 Ten Commandments & the Golden Rule
- 54 Virtues, Morality & Conscience
- 38 Sacrament of Reconciliation

Prayer topics

- 24 Stations of the Cross (use a version written for teens)
- 22 Repentance (Book of Jonah)

8. Lent #2

In the approach to Holy Week, lead reflections on the triduum and how our faith informs the way we value and treat others in society.

Doctrinal topics

- 61 The Triduum & Easter
- 43 Catholic Social Teaching
- 49 Life Issues

Prayer topics

- 10 Footwashing (John 13:1-15)
- 25 Taizé Prayer

9. Easter Season

As we hear the stories of Jesus' resurrection and approach both the candidates' confirmations and Pentecost, help the group understand the sacrament more deeply and how the Holy Spirit helped the church grow from the beginning.

Doctrinal topics

- 37 Sacrament of Confirmation
- 47 Evangelization

Prayer topics

- 6 Easter Reflection (Jesus Is Alive!)
- 20 Praying with the Holy Spirit (John 14)

Two-Year Monthly Academic Year Confirmation Schedule (18 sessions)

This 18 session schedule covers a lot of ground. We have provided a number of topics for each session, but you can always distribute handouts for topics you do not have time to cover.

Adjust your schedule depending on how the liturgical seasons fall on the calendar. We encourage you to also build service, social, or community-building activities into the year.

Year 1

1. Fall Ordinary Time #1

Begin this first session—in August or September—with an icebreaker or other "getting to know you" activities, followed by a brief overview of the year. The "Journey of Faith" exercise from the Introductory Session is an excellent way to focus your candidates on where they are and where they are headed. Then, spend time exploring who God is and how we relate to God. The "Five Forms of Prayer" exercise offers a helpful general overview to prayer.

Doctrinal topics

- 1 Introductory Session (Journey of Faith)
- 27 The Trinity

Prayer topics

- 9 Five Forms of Prayer

2. Fall Ordinary Time #2

As you move deeper into autumn and Ordinary Time, focus on the person of Jesus. The Blind Bartimaeus prayer experience will give your participants a great opportunity to ask Jesus what they want from the process (which you can then revisit later).

Doctrinal topics

- 28 Jesus

Prayer topics

- 12 Ignatian Contemplation (Blind Bartimaeus)

3. Fall Ordinary Time #3

Help those in your group learn about how they are called to be holy and the example of those who have gone before us around the time of All Saints Day on November 1.

Doctrinal topics

- 30 Communion of Saints

Prayer topics

- 15 Litany of Saints

4. Advent

Schedule this session just before or soon after the liturgical year begins. In addition to giving an overview of the year, spend some focused time on Advent. Ideally, lead the group in making Advent wreaths during the session (they probably wouldn't do them at home).

Doctrinal topics

- 58 The Liturgical Year
- 59 Advent & Christmas

Prayer topics

- 2 Advent Wreath
- 5 Daily Readings

5. Christmas Season

On the last day of the Christmas season, we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, a good entry point to review the sacraments.

Doctrinal topics

- 34 Introduction to Sacraments
- 35 Sacrament of Baptism
- 36 Sacrament of Eucharist
- 40 Anointing of the Sick
- 41 Sacrament of Holy Orders

Prayer topics

- 7 Eucharistic Adoration

6. Winter Ordinary Time

Early in Ordinary Time we hear about the start of Jesus' ministry and usually hear a Gospel reading recounting the call of the disciples. Help your participants explore what it means to be a disciple and live their faith in their daily lives.

Doctrinal topics

- 45 Discipleship

Prayer topics

- 8 The Examen

7. Lent #1

If possible, hold this session just before the beginning of Lent to get your participants engaged in the season.

Doctrinal topics

- 60 Lent
- 61 The Triduum & Easter

Prayer topics

- 24 Stations of the Cross (use a version written for teens)

8. Lent #2

This session focuses on how our faith informs the way we value and treat others in society, a good subject to cover as we prepare to pray through the Passion.

Doctrinal topics

- 43 Catholic Social Teaching
- 49 Life Issues

Prayer topics

- 10 Footwashing (John 13:1-15)
- 25 Taizé Prayer

9. Easter Season

In the midst of spring is a wonderful time to recognize the gift of God's creation and how we are called to care for it.

Doctrinal topics

- 42 Care for Creation

Prayer topics

- 17 Praying in Nature (St. Francis' Canticle of Creation)
- 6 Easter Reflection (Jesus Is Alive!)

Year 2

10. Fall Ordinary Time #1

At this busy time of year, as students are getting back into their school routines and setting their schedules, introduce the topic of sabbath: making space for rest (and God). We have found this to be a very relevant and engaging topic for youth and young adults.

Doctrinal topics

- 50 Sabbath

Prayer topics

- 19 Praying with Scripture (Isaiah 55)

11. Fall Ordinary Time #2

Offer this overview to Sacred Scripture as the year is getting started. While you may not have the time to deeply treat all three sessions, give a solid introduction to the Bible and distribute all of the handouts.

Doctrinal topics

- 31 Introduction to the Bible
- 32 Old Testament
- 33 New Testament

Prayer topics

- 14 Lectio Divina (Psalm 27)

12. Fall Ordinary Time #3

Explore how we are called to be holy in the context of romantic relationships and our sexuality.

Doctrinal topics

- 51 Sexuality Issues
- 39 Sacrament of Marriage

Prayer topics

- 15 Litany of Saints
- 16 Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office)

13. Advent

In this session, focus on Mary, who appears in the Advent readings and is featured on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8.

Doctrinal topics

- 29 Mary, Mother of God

Prayer topics

- 23 The Rosary

14. Christmas Season

While we celebrate the gift of Jesus, lead your group in reflecting on the many ways we have been gifted by God and how we are called to respond to those gifts. This is a practical and thought-provoking topic that can bring your group alive.

Doctrinal topics

- 52 Stewardship

Prayer topics

- 21 Praying with the Psalms

15. Winter Ordinary Time

Take this opportunity before Lent to give your learners a deeper understanding of the Mass. If possible, give them a chance to also go on a tour of the church building, which will bring out their curiosity and interest.

Doctrinal topics

- 56 The Mass (Part I)
- 57 The Mass (Part II)
- 55 Tour of the Church

Prayer topics

- 16 Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office)

16. Lent #1

During the Lenten season, we especially focus on how we are called to conversion. We hear about Jesus' temptation in the desert on the first Sunday of Lent every year. Use this time to relate the guidelines our faith gives us for turning away from sin and living a loving life. A review of the sacrament of reconciliation—a tool for when we don't live up to these standards—would also be helpful. Encourage participants to receive the sacrament during Lent.

Doctrinal topics

- 53 Ten Commandments & the Golden Rule
- 38 Sacrament of Reconciliation

Prayer topics

- 22 Repentance (Book of Jonah)

17. Lent #2

Continue the discussion of Catholic morality to explore proactive ways we can develop our character, live a good life, and discern God's will for us.

Doctrinal topics

- 54 Virtues, Morality & Conscience
- 44 Discernment

Prayer topics

- 4 Contemporary Music

18. Easter Season

As we hear the stories of Jesus' resurrection and approach both the candidates' confirmations and Pentecost, help the group understand the sacrament more deeply and how the Holy Spirit helped the church start to grow.

Doctrinal topics

- 37 Sacrament of Confirmation
- 47 Evangelization

Prayer topics

- 20 Praying with the Holy Spirit (John 14)

Two-Year Weekly Academic Year Confirmation Schedule (50 sessions)

This schedule sets aside time for service, social, and community building sessions as well as breaks. We have grouped topics into series, so that you can develop related topics over a number of weeks. Adjust the schedule depending on how the liturgical seasons fall on the calendar.

Year 1

Fall Ordinary Time

Kick off your process with an overview of the process and a reflection on the candidates' faith journey. Then focus on some very foundational aspects of our faith: the different persons of God and Scripture. Since we list only eight sessions, you have the flexibility to start in the middle of autumn, add additional sessions, or space them out a bit through the season.

	<i>Doctrinal Topic</i>	<i>Prayer Topic</i>	<i>Additional Notes</i>
1	1 Welcome and overview	Begin this first session with an icebreaker or other "getting to know you" activities, followed by a brief overview of the year. Use the "Journey of Faith" exercise, an excellent way to focus your candidates on where they are and where they are headed.	
2	27 The Trinity	9 Five Forms of Prayer — An overview of how we communicate with God.	Explore who God is and how we relate to him. Then, as you move deeper into autumn and Ordinary Time, focus on the person of Jesus.
3	28 Jesus	12 Ignatian Contemplation (Blind Bartimaeus) — This will give your participants a powerful opportunity to ask Jesus what they want from the process (which you can revisit with them later).	
4	31 Introduction to the Bible	14 Lectio Divina (Psalm 27)	
5	32 The Old Testament	19 Praying with Scripture (Isaiah 55)	Help your candidates understand the Bible and how we interpret it. National Bible Week is celebrated each year in the month of November.
6	33 The New Testament	13 Ignatian Contemplation (Walking on Water)	
7	Service/social/community-building		

Advent

Advent is a season which sometimes gets overlooked because it is so short and falls during a very busy time of year in most people's social calendars. Inviting your candidates to pause during Advent and reflect on their faith is realistic and powerful.

8	59 Advent & Christmas	2 Advent Wreath — Ideally, lead the group in making Advent wreaths during the session (they probably wouldn't do them at home).	Schedule this session on the first Sunday of Advent or just beforehand.
9	58 The Liturgical Year	5 Daily Readings	Follow up by teaching how Advent fits into the full liturgical year.
10	Service/social/community-building		

Christmas Season & Winter Ordinary Time

The length of these brief liturgical seasons vary with the year. In some years, this section of Ordinary Time is very short, while in others it is much longer, depending upon the date for Easter that moves each year. Because of this, we recommend that you maintain flexibility from year to year in your planning. We begin here with a review of the sacraments that stretches through the Easter season.

11	34 Introduction to Sacraments	8 The Examen — Introduce this very helpful tool and remind candidates about it in the weeks ahead.	During Christmas season and on Epiphany in general, we recognize how Jesus was a physical sign of God's grace. The sacraments are physical signs we experience today.
12	35 Sacrament of Baptism	4 Contemporary Music	If possible, schedule this session the week of the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.
13	36 Sacrament of Eucharist	7 Eucharistic Adoration	Christ remains with us throughout history, especially through this sacrament.
14	Service/social/community-building		

Lent

These 40 days leading up to triduum and Easter are a time when many put a more intense focus on their faith. Help your candidates understand this special time of year and especially prepare and lead the prayer experiences well. In addition to focusing on the season, we continue to explore the sacraments.

15	<p>60 Lent</p>	<p>24 Stations of the Cross — If possible, use a version specifically created for teens.</p>	<p>If possible, hold this session just before the beginning of Lent to get your participants engaged in the season.</p>
16	<p>38 Sacrament of Reconciliation</p> <p>40 Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick</p>	<p>22 Repentance (Book of Jonah)</p>	<p>Reconciliation is a good sacrament to cover in this penitential season, perhaps near the first Sunday when we hear of Jesus' temptation. Encourage candidates to receive the sacrament in Lent. Also, briefly cover the other sacrament of healing, anointing of the sick.</p>
17	<p>39 Sacrament of Marriage</p> <p>39 Divorce, Annulment, and Remarriage</p>	<p>21 Praying with the Psalms (The Lord Is My Shepherd)</p>	<p>Across these two weeks, explore how we are called to be holy in the context of romantic relationships and our sexuality.</p>
18	<p>51 Sexuality Issues</p>	<p>25 Taizé Prayer — This can be a very moving experience during Lent, with its focus on the Cross.</p>	
19	Service/social/community-building		
20	<p>61 The Triduum & Easter</p>	<p>10 Footwashing (John 13:1-15)</p>	<p>Cover this session close to Palm Sunday so candidates will better be able to appreciate this week and hopefully participate in triduum liturgies in a fresh way.</p>

Easter Season

During these 50 days leading to Pentecost, the academic school year is coming to a close and your candidates will increasingly be focused on finals and distracted by year-end activities. Therefore, we have limited the number of weeks at this time of year. We complete the review of the sacraments and then move on to other topics and a wrap-up of the year.

21	<p>41 Sacrament of Holy Orders</p> <p>62 Church Structure</p>	<p>8 The Examen — Repeated</p>	<p>Make the connection between this sacrament and the institution of the priesthood that we just celebrated on Holy Thursday.</p>
22	<p>37 Sacrament of Confirmation</p>	<p>20 Praying with the Holy Spirit (John 14)</p>	<p>The candidates will be interested to know more about the sacrament they will be receiving. If other candidates in your parish are a year ahead and receiving the sacrament this year, invite the first year candidates to attend the service.</p>
23	Service/social/community-building		
24	<p>47 Evangelization</p>	<p>19 Praying with Scripture (substitute Matthew 28:16-20)</p>	<p>As we hear stories of the early church, reflect on our role in helping the church continue to grow.</p>
25	<p>Final Session: Reflection and party — Dedicate this session to reflecting on where the candidates have come so far as well as on the questions, "Where do we go from here?" and "What comes next in this process of learning and growing in our faith?" Return letters from Blind Bartimaeus session (session 3).</p>		

Year 2

Fall Ordinary Time

As the second year of your process begins, we again focus on some core topics. Care for Creation is a topic that particularly engages young people and one that Pope Francis has brought to the forefront with his encyclical on the subject. The Mass and the Communion of Saints are also keys to living out our Catholic lives.

1	Welcome and overview — Begin again with an icebreaker or other "getting to know you" activities, followed by a brief overview of the year.		
2	42 Care for Creation	17 Praying in Nature (St. Francis' Canticle of Creation)	Schedule this session around the time of the Feast of St. Francis on October 4.
3	56 The Mass (Part I)	16 Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office)	The reflective time of autumn is a perfect time to reflect on the source and summit of the Christian life. Your candidates will likely come alive with questions during the Tour of the Church.
4	57 The Mass (Part II)	9 Five Forms of Prayer (or other repeat)	
5	55 Tour of the Church	23 Traditional Prayers	
6	30 Communion of Saints	15 Litany of Saints	Share how we are called to be holy and examples of those who have gone before us near All Saints Day on November 1.
7	Service/social/community-building		

Advent

During this reflective time of year, return to the question of who Jesus is—from both doctrinal and personal perspectives. Then shift to his mother, Mary.

8	28 Jesus	2 Advent Wreath — Offer this again so candidates will have a wreath to pray with this year.	We recommend revisiting the person of Jesus as we prepare again for his birth.
9	29 Mary, Mother of God	23 The Rosary	Mary appears in the Advent readings and is celebrated on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8.
10	Service/social/community-building		

Christmas Season & Winter Ordinary Time

Early in Ordinary Time we hear about the start of Jesus' ministry and usually hear a Gospel reading recounting the call of the disciples. Help your participants explore what it means to be a disciple and live their faith in practical ways covered by these three topics.

11	45 Discipleship	3 The Angelus	If possible, hold this close to the time when the Sunday readings focus on the call of the disciples.
12	52 Stewardship	14 Lectio Divina — Repeat this practice with a stewardship-focused reading such as Mt. 25:14-30 or 1 Cor. 12:4-11.	Reflect on the many ways we have been gifted by God and how we are called to respond to those gifts. This is a practical and thought-provoking topic that can bring your group alive.
13	50 Sabbath	26 Traditional Prayers	The topic of sabbath—making space for rest (and God)—is very relevant and engaging for youth and young adults.
14	Service/social/community-building		

Lent

During the Lenten season, we especially focus on how we are called to conversion. Use this time to relate the guidelines our faith gives us for turning away from sin and proactively living a loving life.

15	54 Virtues, Morality & Conscience	18 Praying with Memories (Deuteronomy 8)	These topics will give your candidates helpful, practical tools from our tradition to embrace morality in the messy situations in which we can find ourselves.
16	44 Discernment	8 The Examen — Revisit this practice in the context of discernment.	
17	53 Ten Commandments & the Golden Rule	25 Taizé Prayer	In Year B, we hear the Ten Commandments in the first reading on the 3rd Sunday of Lent.
18	43 Catholic Social Teaching	24 Stations of the Cross — If possible, use a version specifically created for teens.	These two topics flesh out principles for applying our faith to not only the way we treat other individuals, but also the way our society treats others.
19	49 Life Issues	10 Footwashing (John 13:1-15)	
20	Service/social/community-building		

Easter Season

Leading up to the candidates' confirmation, help them see themselves in the context of the larger church which we learn about through the Easter Season readings.

21	48 Life after Death	6 Easter Reflection (Jesus Is Alive!)	In Christ's resurrection, he has freed us from death.
22	63 Church History	11 Gregorian Chant	Pick up the church's story beyond what we hear in the Easter Season readings, giving a whirlwind tour ending with the dramatic changes from Vatican II.
23	64 The Second Vatican Council	4 Contemporary Music — Revisit this experience with different songs.	
24	Service/social/community-building		
25	Final Session: Looking Back and Looking Forward — Host a closing celebration in which participants can share about the gifts/graces of the two-year experience.		

About the Author

Ann Naffziger has her MDiv from the Jesuit School of Theology and MA in Biblical Languages from the Graduate Theological Union, both in Berkeley. She has worked in a variety of parish roles, including director of RCIA and director of religious education. She has also served as a hospital chaplain, spiritual director, scripture instructor, and as a lecturer at the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University.

Ann has written articles in the field of spirituality and scripture for *America*, *BustedHalo.com*, *Commonweal*, *The National Catholic Reporter*, *Spiritual Life: A Journal of Contemplative Spirituality*, *Celebration*, and other publications. She is the author of *Bearing the Cross Today: A Station of the Cross Event Kit*, and the small group resources *Around the Advent Circle* and *Around the Lenten Circle*.

Ann and her husband, Paul Canavese, are co-directors of GrowingUpCatholic.com, which provides resources for coaching parents to form their own children in the Catholic Faith. They co-authored *Taming Technology* and *Parenting with Joy*, both part of the *Growing Up Catholic Parent Conversations* series. They also co-authored *Growing Up Catholic Baptism Preparation*, *Room at the Inn: A Pastoral Planning Kit for Christmas Visitors* and the *Earth-Keepers Vacation Bible School*.

Ann and Paul are kept on their toes by their daughters Madeleine and Rachel. Ann is also a Master Gardener, girls' softball coach, and triathlete.