

# Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA  
Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year B • August 23, 2009

## Catechist Preparation

**First Reading**—Joshua 24:1–2a, 15–17, 18b

The actual conquest of the Promised Land was probably a gradual process taking place over many years, as opposed to an abrupt, particular moment, such as is alluded to in this passage from Joshua. Nonetheless, the narrative of the conquest is told in terms of dramatic moments, such as this one where the people commit to God.

**Second Reading**—Ephesians 5:21–32

This passage is modeled after the “household codes” common to Stoic and Hellenistic Jewish writers of the time. Through this literary genre, practical examples of virtue in family life were presented.

**Gospel**—John 6:60–69

When confronted with the difficulties of believing in Jesus, those who encounter him are forced to decide. They must choose either to follow the Lord or abandon his ways. The choice highlights the difficulty of discipleship and clarifies for us that a commitment to Jesus comes about not on our own power, but by the generous action of God’s grace in our lives.

### Why Is This Important?

The mystery of faith is just that. It is a tremendous mystery because its focus and grounding is the one who is the Mystery that draws us to himself, God.

This does not mean that faith is impossible. It is within our grasp because:

- it is a free gift from God himself, accessible to all who humbly seek it;

### Additional Background

**Catechism of the Catholic Church:** 31–38, 84–95

**United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:** pages 49–63

**Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:** 25–32

- it is a human act based in the intellect of the human being who freely assents to divine truth;
- it works and grows continually as the believer listens to the Word of God and prays.

## Dismissal Session

*(Approximately 20 minutes)*

Set a table with a green cloth, a candle, and a place for a book containing the Sunday Scriptures.

### Discover

Ask the following questions, and invite the group to reflect on them quietly before sharing their responses with one or two other people:

*What did you see or hear in the Liturgy of the Word?*

*What word, phrase, or image from the readings stays with you?*

Ask several volunteers to share their reflections with the large group.

### Deepen

Ask the group to share how they might respond if Jesus were to ask them the same question that he posed to his disciples, “Do you also wish to go away?” (John 6:67). Invite the participants to share why they think some disciples did, in fact, decide to turn away from Jesus.

Ask the following questions based on today’s Second Reading, and invite the group to reflect on them quietly before sharing their responses with one or two other people:

*Describe the “household codes” given in this reading. What is the deeper meaning of these codes?*

*How is it that we can become one in Christ?*

### Pray

Use the prayer on the participant page as the closing prayer.

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## Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

### Readings

Joshua 24:1–2a, 15–17, 18b

Ephesians 5:21–32

John 6:60–69

### Welcome

Begin by welcoming everyone who is present, including sponsors, team members, and spouses who are joining the group.

### Engage

Rephrase one or two questions from the Dismissal Session, and invite the group to share in small groups. Then ask several volunteers to share their reflections with the large group.

### Teach

1. Summarize or invite the group to read the Sunday Word section of the participant resource. Then discuss the following:
  - In the First Reading and in the Gospel, people are asked to make a choice. In what way are you also asked to make a choice about faith?
  - What might it cost you to make a choice about faith? What doubts might cause you to hesitate?
2. Invite the group to read the Catholic Doctrine section of the participant resource. Then highlight the following points:
  - Faith is a dynamic relationship between God (Christ) and us. As in any relationship, it requires trust, commitment, and attention.

- God invites every person into this relationship, but each person is free to choose how they will respond.
  - Our yes to God's invitation joins us to the Covenant that God established with his people.
  - We have a responsibility to grow in faith.
    - There are obstacles to faith.
    - The Church offers many forms of support for growth in faith.
3. Highlight the Key Terms, Sainly Speak, Papal Speak and Furthermore sections.

### Apply

1. Encourage the participants to take a few minutes at the end of each day during the week to reflect on three things for which they would like to give thanks to God. Invite them to also share their needs with God and ask God to bless their loved ones.
2. Invite the catechumens and candidates to complete these statements:

*From the prayer, discussion, and study for this Sunday, I understand the Church's teaching to be . . .*  
*I am challenged to live the message of this Sunday by . . .*

### Pray

Use a minor blessing #96 B found in the ritual text for the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. If possible, have the sponsors place their hands on the shoulders of the catechumen or candidate while you pray it aloud.