

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God • Year B • January 1, 2012

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—NUMBERS 6:22–27

God instructs Moses on how his people are to be blessed. A blessing is conferred by invoking the name of the Lord, asking that God's face shine upon and be gracious to the people.

SECOND READING—GALATIANS 4:4–7

God sends his Spirit into our hearts through Christ that we might receive adoption from him. We are his sons and daughters, heirs of a graced treasure made available to us in Jesus.

GOSPEL READING—LUKE 2:16–21

Upon hearing the angel's message, the shepherds go in haste to see the infant lying in a manger. We too, in the Liturgy, make haste to Bethlehem to worship in spirit and in truth the Savior of the world.

Church Teaching

Mary is accorded a singular honor with the title, Mother of God. This honor accrues to her not only because of her humble, open assent to God's will but because she is made holy by God from the first moment of her own conception. She is the appropriate vessel by which the Incarnate Word of God is conceived and born into the world. The beauty within Mary, which the angel Gabriel announced as "full of grace," the "favored one" (see Luke 1:28) illustrates how the loving power of God penetrates this world to bring about Salvation.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 494–495, 2676

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 146–147

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 95, 97, 100

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set space with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a white cloth, a white candle, an icon or statue of Mary, and a Christmas crèche (a nativity scene).

Discover

1. Invite everyone to reflect on today's Liturgy quietly for 1–2 minutes. Then slowly repeat the words of the blessing from the First Reading:

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Numbers 6:24–26

2. Now have the participants respond to the following questions in small groups:
 - ◆ *How would you describe the God who blesses the people with these words?*
 - ◆ *When do you ask God for a blessing?*
 - ◆ *What are the blessings that God has bestowed upon you and your loved ones?*
 - ◆ *When and/or how do you thank God for your many blessings?*

Deepen

Have participants discuss the beginning of a new year by pointing out the following:

- ◆ Today begins a new calendar year. As this year begins, let this be a time to step back and reflect on the many ways God has blessed us.
- ◆ Consider those to whom you are most grateful for how they have helped you come to know God, especially his Son, Jesus.

Pray

Use the prayer found on the Participant Handout.

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Sunday Word

Numbers 6:22–27

Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 6, 8

Galatians 4:4–7

Luke 2:16–21

Welcome

Welcome everyone who is present, including sponsors, team members, and spouses who join the group. Invite one or two people to share some of the key points from the Dismissal Session.

Engage

1. Proclaim the Gospel: Luke 2:16–21. Then discuss the meaning of the passage using the following points:
 - ◆ Verse 16: The shepherds displayed trust upon hearing the message of the angels; they immediately sought out Jesus, Mary and Joseph.
 - ◆ Verse 19: Mary keeps all these happenings in her heart. She ponders the meaning of these events.
 - ◆ Verse 21: In keeping with the Jewish tradition, Jesus is taken to the Temple. He is given the name, Jesus, just as the angel Gabriel had announced to Mary.
2. If there is time, relate the story of Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:22–38). God had promised them that they would not die until they had seen the Messiah.

Explore

1. Highlight key points from the Participant Handout's Church Teaching: Mother of God, using these points:
 - ◆ Mary is our model of faith. She said yes at the request to be the mother of God even though she did not know how this could be possible; she had perfect trust in God.

- ◆ Mary traveled to visit her older cousin Elizabeth who is pregnant with John, the cousin of Jesus and who will later baptize Jesus in the Jordan River.
- ◆ Though near the time to give birth, Mary travels with Joseph to Bethlehem; hence the Messiah is born in the city of David as the prophets had foretold.
- ◆ Mary holds in her heart the message of the angels and the visits by the shepherds.
- ◆ Mary ponders the message of Simeon, who, at the presentation of Jesus, tells her that a sword will pierce her heart.
- ◆ Mary, the Mother of God, is the spiritual mother of every person. She is the New Eve.
- ◆ Mary shows us how to love Jesus; she shows us how to say yes to the will of God.

2. Highlight the Voices of Faith section by having two volunteers read aloud each of the two quotations. Invite volunteers to share their thoughts about Pope Benedict's statement regarding Mary. Ask, *How can reflecting on Mary's pondering in her heart help us to accept the will of God in our hearts?*

Apply

1. Invite the catechumens and candidates to complete these statements, and share responses with a partner:

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 . . .
2. Invite participants to share their responses to the For Reflection section with the group. Encourage them to share their responses also with their family and friends this coming week.

Pray

Pray the Hail Mary.