

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion • Year B • April 1, 2012

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—ISAIAH 50:4–7

The Suffering Servant described by the prophet is taken by Christians to refer to Christ himself. He accepts afflictions, knowing God, the Most High, will raise him up.

SECOND READING—PHILIPPIANS 2:6–11

This passage from Saint Paul's letter quotes an early Christian baptismal hymn. Chosen for today's liturgy, its themes of selflessness and humility fit so well as a backdrop for the Passion narrative.

GOSPEL READING—MARK 14:1–15:47
[OR (SHORT FORM) 15:1–39]

At the climax of this passage, the bystanders taunt Jesus to come down from the cross and then they will believe. The challenge for us is whether we believe that Christ's suffering and crucifixion apply to our own lives.

Church Teaching

We can indeed accept our sufferings if we willingly offer to unite those sufferings with the suffering of Christ. In turn, this generates a new outlook on all the difficulties and travails of this world. Believers help to "complete" the work of Christ insofar as they unite their sufferings to his. With this unique outlook, we gain perseverance, the ability to steadfastly move toward our final goal: total union with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in Heaven.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1820–1821, 2016

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 91–93

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 387, 540, 543

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set space with chairs in a circle. On a small table place a red cloth, palms, a candle, and an open Bible.

Discover

- Gather their responses to today's liturgy with these or similar questions:
 - ◆ *In what way did today's liturgy start differently?*
 - ◆ *Have you participated in a Palm Sunday liturgy before today?*
 - ◆ *Today begins what we call Holy Week. What do you understand about the events of this week?*
- Share with them the tradition of blessed palms in the home. Also, that these palms are returned prior to the beginning of next lent and are burned for the ashes of Ash Wednesday.

Deepen

- In a slow, reflective pace, proclaim the Second Reading: Philippians 2:6–11. Give each person a copy of the passage and invite them to spend some time in quiet rereading of the passage.
- Ask the group to reflect quietly and then share their responses to these questions with one other person:
 - ◆ *What does this passage proclaim about Christ Jesus?*
 - ◆ *In what ways are Christians called to respond to this gift?*
 - ◆ *How do Christians "put on the mind of Christ"?*

Pray

Play a recording or sing a song from today's Liturgy of the Word.

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Sunday Word

(Procession) Mark 11:1–10 or John 12:12–16
Isaiah 50:4–7
Psalm 22:8–9, 17–18, 19–20, 23–24
Philippians 2:6–11
Mark 14:1–15:47 [or (short form) 15:1–39]

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

Discuss with the whole group:

- ◆ How they learn what it means to obey?
- ◆ How their understanding of obedience developed in adulthood?
- ◆ In what ways are we called to be obedient today?
- ◆ What does it take for us to obey?
—When is it easy? Why?
—When is it difficult? Why?
- ◆ How they would describe someone who has perseverance?
- ◆ Why perseverance is an important quality for a believer to have?
- ◆ Other words and/or phrases we use to describe perseverance such as *stamina*, *backbone*, *courageous*, etc.

Explore

1. Explain the following points:
 - ◆ The suffering and death of Jesus has a purpose. For our sake, for the sake of the whole world, Jesus willingly went forward to his passion and

death. In this he is resolute; he does not falter in his will to complete his mission, given to him by the Father.

- ◆ Jesus perseveres at all cost; we, too, are to remain steadfast in our commitment to live the Gospel.
 - ◆ He unites his will to the Father's will and freely embraces whatever comes from his decision.
 - ◆ One who chooses to follow Christ must also willingly embrace the cross—to lay down one's life for others.
 - ◆ Christ's sacrifice does not end in death but in his resurrection—his triumph over death. Christ restores us to God's grace.
 - ◆ Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.
2. Highlight key points from participants' Church Teaching: The Gift of Perseverance. Also highlight the Key Terms and Voices of Faith.

Apply

1. Encourage 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 . . .

2. Share with the group the events of Holy Week. Describe for them what happens at each of the liturgies and encourage all to participate in them. Perhaps, the sponsors can offer to meet with their catechumens or candidates before and after each of the liturgies.

Also review with them, the rules for fasting and abstinence for Good Friday.

Pray

Invite them to pray in the quiet of their hearts the second reading from today's liturgy—Philippians 2:6–11.