

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Forgiveness and Eternal Life

Catechist Preparation

Clarifying the Essentials

There is no obstacle that can separate us from God.

- ◆ After a person is baptized, the Church holds the sacramental means for any and all sin to be forgiven. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 979.)
- ◆ There is no offense against God or others that the Church cannot address in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (See CCC 982.)
- ◆ The mission of the Church attests to the limitless mercy of God who is on our side. (See CCC 983.)

Not just our spirits, but our bodies will rise to everlasting life.

- ◆ Our bodies, which seem so fragile, prone to sickness, degeneration, and decline, will participate in the redemption won for us by the suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. (See CCC 990.)
- ◆ Our bodies will rise on the last day, just as Christ's own body was glorified after he rose from the dead. (See CCC 999.)

Why Is This Important?

The Eucharist, this great Sacrament of unity, nourishes and strengthens the risen life of Christ within our whole being, body and soul. As a seed that is hidden in the earth and grows, the new life of Christ grows within us—within each of us individually and within the community of faith. We catch glimmers of this new life as we live the teaching of Jesus and put the Eucharist into action by loving God and one another as Christ commanded. In so doing, we surrender to divine Love and patiently await when that Love will become all in all.

*Through the Holy Spirit
we are restored to paradise,
led back to the Kingdom of heaven,
and . . . given a share in eternal glory.*

SAINT BASIL, *LIBER DE SPIRITU SANCTO*

Doctrinal Session Guide

(Approximately 60 minutes)

Have the space set with chairs, and provide a focal point with a candle and a Bible. Provide name tags and have some refreshments available.

Welcome

Greet the participants as they arrive, and take time for introductions as the session begins. Then invite everyone to pray silently for the Spirit to open their mind and heart to God's message.

Engage

Invite the group to read the story in Insight. Then have them share their response to the story, and explore the For Reflection questions together. Conclude by asking them to think of (1) a time when they experienced forgiveness for something and (2) a time when they forgave another person. Encourage them to name some of the elements of forgiveness.

Teach

Summarize or invite the group to read Church Teaching. Then discuss the following:

- ◆ Through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, all sins are forgiven.
- ◆ We are invited to accept God's forgiveness and to forgive others as we are forgiven.
- ◆ God's mercy is boundless.
- ◆ God's desire for us is that we live forever with him in Heaven, body and soul.

Apply

Encourage the participants to complete these statements and share their thoughts:

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

Pray

Invite the participants to reflect quietly on their need for forgiveness and their need to forgive others. Then pray together the Confiteor from the Penitential Rite of Mass.