

Young Apprentices

A RESOURCE FOR THE RCIA

INQUIRY SESSION: CHURCH STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Inquiry Session (Approximately 60 minutes)

Prepare

For this session, you will need to have copies of the participants' handout and a flip chart or whiteboard and markers. If possible, display timelines showing all of the Popes since Saint Peter, the arch/bishop of your diocese, and the priests who have served your parish. Have available a thank you card for the pastor and deacon of your parish (see *Our Response 3*).

You may find it helpful to review pages 59, 88, and 89 of *Our Catholic Heritage, Levels I and II*, in preparation for a brief discussion on Church structure and leadership.

Set the space with chairs in a circle, and in the center place a prayer table covered in the color of the liturgical season. Place on the table a candle, a Bible, and pictures of the Pope, the archbishop or bishop, and the pastor.

If needed, have nametags. Make refreshments available, too.

Gather (10 – 15 minutes)

1. Greet the children as they arrive and invite them to introduce themselves and their parent(s) to the group.
2. Ask all gathered to share the names of various groups and organizations they belong to, such as sports teams, dance troupes, choirs, scouts, parent-teacher association, etc. Record responses on the flip chart or whiteboard, and beside each organization name, write the name of the organization's coach or leader.
3. Invite volunteers to name the responsibilities of the coaches and leaders.

4. With the group, create a top ten list of qualities of a good leader.
5. Read together the *My Story* section of the participants' handout and discuss the question found there.

Expand (15 – 20 minutes)

1. Read and discuss the *God's Story* section of the participants' handout.
2. Lead a discussion, highlighting the following discussion points. (You may find it helpful to create a diagram on the flip chart or whiteboard so that the children can see the connections between Pope, diocese, parish, etc.)
 - The Catholic Church can trace its beginning back to Matthew 16:18, when Jesus said to Peter, “. . . [Y]ou are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, . . .”
 - Saint Peter was the first Pope.
 - The Pope is the visible head of the Church. The Pope is also the bishop of the diocese of Rome, Italy. (*Review with the children the name of the current Pope, Pope Francis.*)
 - To help him lead the Church throughout the world, the Pope appoints other bishops to head dioceses. A diocese is an area that is made up of many parishes. (*Review with the children the name of your arch/bishop and of your arch/diocese.*)
 - Every diocese has a main church called a cathedral. The name of the cathedral for the diocese of Rome is St. John Lateran. (*Review with the children the name of the cathedral of your diocese. If available, show pictures or use the Internet to show a virtual tour of the cathedral.*)

- Priests help the bishop in carrying out the Church's mission of teaching and guiding the Catholics in every diocese. Deacons help priests in these tasks.
- Together, the Pope, bishops, priests, and deacons are called to shepherd all the members of the Church.

3. Review the *Faith Words* on the participants' handout.

Our Response (15 – 20 minutes)

1. Invite the pastor or deacon of your parish to come to the session to meet the children and share what his role in the parish is.
2. Review with the children the timelines of the Popes, the arch/bishops of your diocese, and the priests who have served your parish.
3. Conclude by inviting the children to sign a thank you card to the pastor and deacon who serve your parish.

Pray (2 – 3 minutes)

Lead the children in praying for the Pope, the arch/bishop, the pastor, deacon, and leaders of the worldwide and local parish church. Invite the children to respond, "Holy Spirit, help Church leaders."