

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Fourth Sunday of Easter • Year C • May 11, 2025

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—ACTS 13:14, 43-52

Some in the Jewish community at Antioch welcome the Good News preached by Saint Paul. Others respond with jealousy and rejection. The conflict between the Apostles and those who reject their message culminates in the announcement that the Good News will be preached to the Gentiles. Paul's explanation shows that the mission to the Gentiles is part of God's plan.

SECOND READING—REVELATION 7:9, 14B-17

The "time of great distress" refers to the period of tribulation at the end of the world, yet the tears and hunger and thirst that will be wiped away by God are also present realities for the first hearers of this message undergoing persecution.

GOSPEL—JOHN 10:27-30

Safe pasture, guidance, and protection are promised to the flock of Jesus. This flock is also promised eternal life. The final statement of the passage, "The Father and I are one" (John 10:30), makes explicit that Jesus' promise to give life to the sheep and protect them forever from destruction lies in his oneness with God.

Church Teaching

It is a marvelous oneness that we perceive in Jesus, a total oneness between God the Father and God the Son. This beloved Son, the eternal Word of God, has taken upon himself our human weakness, giving our mortal nature an immortal value. There is, due to the mystery of the Incarnation, a marvelous oneness between Christ and humanity, in that through Christ, a human person restores to all men and women the gift of everlasting life.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 238–242

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 78–87

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 46–49, 89–92

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Have the space set with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a white cloth, a white candle, an item that reflects the Easter environment of the church, and an icon or picture of the Good Shepherd.

Discover

1. Proclaim the following Gospel verse: "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Invite the participants to reflect on the verse with these or similar questions, sharing their responses with one or two other people:

What qualities characterize a good shepherd?

In what way does Christ know each of us—his sheep?

In what way does this verse challenge us and console us?

2. Invite volunteers to share their reflections with the large group.

Deepen

Invite everyone to close their eyes and listen to a reflective proclamation of the Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 100:1–2, 3, 5). Then lead the participants in a guided mediation using these or similar words:

Imagine a beautiful meadow punctuated with outcroppings of rock on a warm and sunny spring day. *(Pause.)* Picture yourself sitting on one of the rocks. Take in the sights and the sounds that surround you. *(Pause.)* In this place of beauty, Christ, the Good Shepherd, approaches you and sits with you. You converse with him about your cares, concerns, and joys. *(Pause.)* He listens intently to you and assures you of his care for you; that he will never abandon you; that no matter what life deals you, he will stand with you.

Pray

Listen to a recording of the Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 100:1–2, 3, 5) or pray it together: "We are his people, the sheep of his flock."

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Readings

Acts 13:14, 43-52

Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5

Revelation 7:9, 14b-17

John 10:27-30

Welcome

Begin by welcoming everyone who is present, including sponsors, team members, and spouses who are joining the group. Encourage the participants to share their understanding of the phrase “Shake the dust from your shoes and move on.” (See Acts 13:51.)

Engage

1. The First Reading continues the story of the early Church’s endeavors to share the Good News. Proclaim the First Reading (Acts 13:14, 43-52), then discuss the following points:

- The Apostles Paul and Barnabas attempt to share the Good News with the Jewish people, but their words fall on deaf ears. In fact, the leaders incite the people to protest against Paul and Barnabas’ efforts. Indeed, they get them expelled from the territory.
- Paul and Barnabas continue to preach the Good News, reaching out to the Gentiles—non-Jews who eagerly accept the message and become believers.

2. Ask the participants to share their reflections on the following questions:

Who would be consoled by the message of this reading? Why?

Who would be challenged by the message of this reading? Why?

Explore

1. Lead the group in a discussion about the following points:

- Jesus, the Good Shepherd, leads us to eternal life, where we will be gathered into the oneness of God: Father, Son, and Spirit.
- In the Nicene Creed, we pray, “I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, . . . consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.”
- Jesus is fully divine and fully human.
- Saint Augustine focuses on the unity of the divine that is common to all Three Persons of the Trinity. He uses different analogies to illustrate the relationship of One God in Three Persons.

2. Highlight key points from ***Catholic Teaching: The Divinity of Christ***. Also highlight the ***Key Terms*** and ***Voices of Faith*** sections.

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. Invite the catechumens and candidates and their sponsors to discuss a good work or activity that they will do this week to share the message of Christ, the Good Shepherd. Suggestions might include planting flowers for an elderly neighbor, taking food to a food pantry, or baking cookies for a parish function.

Pray

Invite the participants, in the quiet of their hearts, to thank the Good Shepherd for his protection and guidance.