

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Third Sunday of Lent • Year C • March 23, 2025

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—EXODUS 3:1-8A, 13-15

In revealing the divine name to the Jewish people through Moses, God grants to his servant a privilege previously denied to the patriarch Jacob (see Genesis 32:30). Despite the enigmatic character of the revealed name, God is identified as one who is compassionate, acting within human history time and again for our benefit.

SECOND READING—1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-6, 10-12

Some of the Christians in Corinth came to believe that their Salvation was guaranteed no matter how they behaved. Paul makes the point that regardless of the Exodus, the Israelites were later “struck down in the desert” (1 Corinthians 10:5) because of their sinfulness. The Corinthians must constantly undergo conversion lest they suffer the same fate as the Israelites, who were punished.

GOSPEL—LUKE 13:1-9

Jesus tells the parable of the Fig Tree, emphasizing the urgency of repentance and reminding the hearers that God is patient while calling us to conversion. The fig tree, symbolic of God’s Chosen People (see Hosea 9:10 and Jeremiah 8:13), is not cut down, as is the usual practice after being barren for three years. Instead, it gets extra care for another year, a chance to bear fruit.

Church Teaching

In his justice, God condemns the human sinfulness and pride that lead away from his kingdom. In God’s mercy and kindness, however, he calls us back to himself. He saves and restores us so that we might live as true children of his kingdom.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 50–73

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 11–19

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1, 8–9

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Have the space set with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a purple cloth, a candle, a dish with sand, and an icon or picture of Moses and the burning bush. When all are seated, light the candle and sit in quiet for a few minutes. If possible, have incense burning in a bowl to create the imagery of the burning bush.

Discover

1. Lead the group to name some phrases and images from today’s readings, such as
 - The burning bush
 - God’s name, “I am who am”
 - The barren fig tree
2. Ask volunteers to share with the large group what thoughts or feelings these phrases and images call to mind.

Deepen

1. Invite the participants to reflect on the readings, the phrases, and the images and ask:

What insights about God do these readings convey?

What questions do the readings raise about one’s responsibility to make ongoing choices to live as a believer and the need for repentance?
2. Encourage each participant to partner with one other person. Then ask them to reflect on and discuss the following questions:

What is the message of today’s Gospel?

Who would be challenged by the message and in what way?

Who would be consoled by the message and in what way?
3. Invite volunteers to share their discussions with the large group.

Pray

Use the Responsorial Psalm from today’s Liturgy of the Word (Psalm 103:1-4, 6-8, 11) as the closing prayer.

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Readings

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15
Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11
1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12
Luke 13:1-9

Welcome

Begin by welcoming everyone who is present, including sponsors, team members, and spouses who are joining the group.

Engage

1. Share with the group a personal story, or one you know, of an experience of being on sacred ground.
2. Invite the participants to think of similar experiences they have had. Have them share together with a partner.
3. Discuss in the large group the impact (immediate and perhaps long-term) of such an experience.
4. Use the following points to begin an exploration of the readings:
 - Moses is captivated by the sight of a burning bush. It lures him into an encounter with God—into the mystery of “I am who am.” As a result of this encounter, Moses takes on a new purpose in life: to be the instrument through which God delivers the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt.
 - The early Church in Corinth is strongly reminded that Salvation is possible for all, but it is not guaranteed because one has been baptized. They have been baptized into a way of life. A believer, a follower of Jesus, is initiated into a lifelong journey of conversion and chooses to align his or her choices to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - God does not give up on us. God is always kind and merciful. God always provides us with all that is needed to produce good fruit. God always waits patiently for our response.
5. Conclude by asking each person to share what they want to carry with them from the liturgy of the third Sunday of Lent.

Explore

1. Discuss the following points with the participants, and invite their input:
 - The Bible contains the story of God’s faithfulness and mercy to us. God established the Covenant with Abraham. The Bible is filled with stories of people wandering away from God, worshipping false idols. God welcomes back the repentant who confess their sins and promise faithfulness, even though they stray again.
 - Jesus, whose name means “God saves,” reveals the depth of God’s love and mercy. Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, suffers and dies on the Cross to redeem us from our sins. The Lord stands ready to forgive the repentant sinner. Thus we can know just how much God always loves us.
 - Just as the fig tree is given another chance—a year with extra care—to bear fruit, so too does God invite and call us to grow and deepen our relationship with him.
2. Highlight key points from **Church Teaching: The Nature of God Revealed in His Mercy**. 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/candidates and their sponsors to discuss what leads them to turn away from God’s love and mercy. As a way for them to focus on God’s love, encourage them to come to the parish celebration of the Stations of the Cross.

Pray

Use minor exorcism 94F found in the ritual text for the OCIA. If possible, have the sponsors place their hands on the shoulders of the catechumens while you pray aloud.