

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Fourth Sunday of Lent • Year C • March 30, 2025

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—JOSHUA 5:9A, 10-12

The Book of Joshua describes the conquest of Canaan. The “disgrace” that has been removed from the People of God is most likely a reference to their Egyptian enslavement, ended now as they are established in the Promised Land. The particular setting for this passage is the encampment and rest period prior to the siege of Jericho.

SECOND READING—2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21

For Saint Paul, conversion is like being made into a “new creation,” remaking the person in Christ. The consequence of conversion for Paul is that the one who is totally remade in Christ’s image must now share with others the reconciliation received in Jesus.

GOSPEL—LUKE 15:1-3, 11-32

Today’s Gospel describes the process of conversion with a powerful and shocking image of the unconditional nature of God’s forgiveness. It offers a sharp rebuke to the self-righteousness typified in the attitude and words of the older brother. Read against the background of the First Reading, the parable becomes a story of how the “disgrace” of the son’s slavery to sin is removed.

Church Teaching

The troubling news is that while we are freed from Original Sin by Baptism, our human nature is still prone to concupiscence. From time to time, we fall into sin. The wonderful news is that God gives us, in Christ, the grace to battle concupiscence and to continually reorient our lives to his own divine life and kingdom. The call to lifelong conversion remains a theme of the Church’s ministry, which in turn echoes the theme of Jesus’ mission.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 978, 2514–2516, 1427–1433

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 233–247

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 73–78, 107, 165

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 a crucifix. When all are seated, light the candle and sit in quiet for a few minutes. Conclude by praying aloud the Ash Wednesday call to “repent, and believe in the Gospel.”

Discover

1. Reflect on the Liturgy of the Word just celebrated and help the participants to name words, phrases, or images that have stayed with them.
2. Invite the participants to choose one word, phrase, or image that has stayed with them and share with one or two other people what it means to them.

Deepen

1. Invite everyone to consider an experience of forgiveness and reconciliation they might have had that is similar to the experience described in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Then ask:

What was the experience?

Who was involved?

How did you know you were forgiven?

How did you convey your sorrow to the other?

In what way is your experience similar to the story of the prodigal son (daughter)?

2. Allow some time for quiet, then invite the participants who wish to share with one or two other people.
3. As a conclusion, ask the group to reflect on what such experiences tell us about God’s desire to forgive us.

Pray

Use a suggested hymn for today’s session, or use the prayer from the participant page as the closing prayer: *Almighty Father, because we were dead in our sins, you sent your Son to redeem us. In Christ, we are called back to you. In Christ, we are restored to your family, sons and daughters saved by your love. Amen.*

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Readings

Joshua 5:9a, 10-12

Psalms 34: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Welcome

Begin by welcoming everyone who is present, including sponsors, team members, and spouses who are joining the group. Rephrase one or two questions from the Dismissal Session and invite the participants to share in small groups. Then ask several volunteers to share their reflections with the large group.

Engage

1. Proclaim the Second Reading (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Then use the following points to explore the reading with the group:

- Baptism makes us into a new creation in Christ.
- In Baptism we are reconciled to God through Christ.
- In Baptism we are given the mission to be ambassadors for Christ, carrying out the message and the ministry of reconciliation.

2. Explore the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32) and its message of forgiveness and reconciliation. Make sure to cover the following:

- God offers abundant mercy and forgiveness.
- God's love is unconditional.
- God welcomes us to the feast to celebrate reconciliation.

3. Invite the participants to reflect on the following questions and to share their thoughts with the large group:

What is the message for this Fourth Sunday of Lent?

Who would be challenged by this message and why?

Who would be consoled by this message and why?

In what way are we called to be the ambassadors of reconciliation?

Explore

1. Share with the group a personal story of a conversion moment (experience). Then invite the participants to think of conversion moments (experiences) that they have had.
2. After a few minutes of silent reflection, continue with a discussion on the following points:
 - Conversion is the heart of Lent. Lent is an invitation for each of us personally, and also communally, to reflect on our need to realign our lives to Christ.
 - Conversion is a lifelong process and a journey that involves the head (to put on the mind of Christ), the heart (to love as Christ loves), and the feet (to live as Christ lived).
 - We are immersed in the struggle to be faithful to the Gospel. Through Christ, God's grace is freely given to help us reorient our lives to the Gospel.
3. Highlight key points from **Church Teaching: Conversion**. 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 think of a way in which they can be ambassadors of reconciliation. Invite them to consider writing a letter to someone with whom there is tension, or to write a letter of support or apology to a group that has been estranged from the community.

Pray

Invite the group to reflect silently on the experience of Ash Wednesday. Pray the Act of Contrition or use the prayer from the participant page: *Almighty Father, because we were dead in our sins, you sent your Son to redeem us. In Christ, we are called back to you. In Christ, we are restored to your family, sons and daughters saved by your love. Amen.*