

Young Apprentices

A RESOURCE FOR THE OCIA

CATECHUMENATE SESSION

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). 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

Saint Paul makes the point that regardless of the Exodus, the Israelites were later “struck down in the desert” because of their sinfulness. The Corinthians must constantly undergo conversion, lest they suffer the same fate as the Israelites.

GOSPEL—LUKE 13:1-9

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: God Is Merciful

The scriptural parable for this Sunday illustrates the patience that God extends to us due to his kindness and mercy. Jesus’ teaching and preaching, his healing miracles, his life, suffering, Death, and Resurrection—in short, Jesus’ entire mission and ministry—is a living parable that powerfully points us in the direction of the everlasting mercy and kindness of God. The Lord always stands ready to forgive the repentant sinner.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 53, 64

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: Chapter 2, especially the section entitled “God Reveals His Loving Plan to Save Us,” pages 12–15

The very name *Jesus* means “God saves.” In delivering Israel from slavery and leading them into the Promised Land, God saved them, freeing them from the worst kind of slavery—that is, slavery to sin. All Salvation History is summed up in Jesus, the Savior. He himself epitomizes divine mercy and kindness.

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set the space 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.

Discover

1. Invite the children to reflect on the following phrases and images from today’s readings:
 - The burning bush
 - God’s name: “I am who am”
 - The barren fig tree
 - (*Others that they name*)
2. Ask what thoughts or feelings these phrases and images bring to mind.

Deepen

1. Invite two volunteers to role-play the First Reading as you proclaim it.
2. Proclaim Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15.
3. Ask:

*If you had been Moses, how would you have felt?
What would you have done? Why?*

*What does God say about himself in this passage?
Who is he? What has he done?*

How did Moses respond to God?

How would you have responded to God?
4. What does the passage tell us about Moses? About God?

Pray

Invite the children to help you create a litany by “filling in the blank” of the phrase “God, you are so _____.” Use their responses to create the litany, inviting all to respond, “Be with us.” (*for example, “God, you are so great! Be with us.”*)

Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Supplies

In addition to the prayer table setup, you will need copies of the participant handout.

Sunday Word

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15

Psalms 103:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Luke 13:1-9

Welcome

Welcome everyone and invite one or two children to share some of the key points from the **Dismissal Session**.

Invite

1. Share a personal story about giving someone a second chance, or about having been given a second chance. Invite volunteers to give examples of the same.
2. Proclaim the Gospel, Luke 13:1-9.
3. Ask the children who or what was given a second chance. (*the fig tree*)
4. Discuss the Gospel further, highlighting the following points:
 - The fig tree is given a second chance to produce fruit.
 - Like the fig tree, God never gives up on us but always gives us another chance.
 - Like the gardener, God is very patient with us.
5. Conclude the discussion by asking, “In what ways are we like the fig tree?”

Teach

1. Read and discuss **Key Teachings** and **Faith Word** from the participant handout.
2. Explore these key points:
 - The Bible contains the story of God’s faithfulness and mercy to us. God established the Covenant with Abraham: “I will be your God and you will be my people.” The Bible is filled with stories of people wandering away from God, yet God welcomes back all who confess their sins and who promise to remain faithful to the Covenant, even if they stray again.
 - Jesus, whose name means “God saves,” came to earth to show us God’s love and mercy. Jesus suffered and died on the Cross to save us from our sins.
 - Just as the fig tree is given another chance—a year with extra care—to bear fruit, so too does God give us time to grow and to deepen our relationship with him.
 - God does not give up on us. God is kind and merciful. God provides us with all that is needed to produce “good fruit” and waits patiently for our response.

Challenge

1. Invite the children to think of someone in their lives—a brother or sister, a parent, a friend, a classmate, a teammate—who needs a second chance. Ask them to pray for this person in the coming week and to be the one who gives him or her a second chance.
2. Next invite the children to think of where they need a second chance—from a parent, a brother or sister, a friend, a classmate, a teammate, or God. Invite the children to pray this week to be given that second chance.

Prayer

Conclude by praying Prayer of Exorcism 94F (OCIA), and by singing a refrain or hymn about God’s mercy.