

Young Apprentices

A RESOURCE FOR THE OCIA

CATECHUMENATE SESSION

Fourth Sunday of Lent • Year C • March 30, 2025

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—JOSHUA 5:9A, 1-12

The particular setting for this passage is the encampment and rest period prior to the siege of Jericho. The Passover meal celebrated here marks the end of the manna, the miraculous food God provided during the wandering in the desert.

SECOND READING—2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21

This portion of Paul's Letter to the Corinthians is situated within a longer section wherein he talks about his apostolic ministry, a ministry based in the conversion experience that makes Paul an "ambassador for Christ."

GOSPEL—LUKE 15:1-3, 11-32

Today's Gospel parable is rich with many layers of meaning. It describes the process of conversion, with a powerful and shocking image of the unconditional nature of God's forgiveness, even before we repent.

Church Teaching: Conversion

At the beginning of our Lenten journey, we were marked with the sign of the cross—the sign of Redemption. As the cross was traced upon our foreheads, we were commanded to "repent, and believe in the Gospel."

Even though the baptized are freed from sin through the suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus, everyone who has been initiated still experiences the weakness of the human condition. Recognizing this, during Lent the baptized strive to turn away from all those things that lead them from God or that seek to

drag them down into sin. The lifelong struggle to turn away from sin and to keep oriented toward goodness and godliness is *conversion*.

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 a crucifix. When all are seated, light the candle and sit in quiet for a few minutes.

Discover

1. Share an example of a time when someone forgave you. Describe how that person's forgiveness made you feel. Invite volunteers to share their experiences of being forgiven.
2. Ask the children when they find it easy to forgive someone. Encourage them to give specific examples, such as, "When my friend forgets to call me."
3. Ask the children when they find it hard to forgive someone. Again encourage them to give specific examples, such as, "When my brother gets mad and breaks one of my favorite toys."
4. Finally, ask, "What would Jesus want us to do in all of these situations?"

Deepen

1. Proclaim the parable of the Lost Son, Luke 15:1-3, 11-32. Invite children to play the roles of the father, the younger son, and the older son. Have them act out the story as you read it.
2. Reflect on the parable using the following or similar questions:
Which character in the parable is your favorite? Why?
Which is your least favorite? Why?
How would you feel if you were the prodigal son? The older brother? The father?
What does this parable tell us about God? About God's love for us? About forgiveness?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 978, 1427, 1431, 2514

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: Chapter 18, especially the section entitled "Conversion, Confession, Forgiveness," pages 236–237

Pray

Invite the children to pray after you: *Father, / thank you for the gift of forgiveness. / As you have forgiven me, / help me to forgive others. / Amen.*

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

Joshua 5:9a, 10-12

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

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Welcome

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

Invite

1. Proclaim the Second Reading, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
2. Read again verse 17. Invite the children to reflect on their journey in the OCIA process. Ask them what “old things” (*habits, attitudes, behaviors*) have passed away? What “new things” (*praying, reading God’s Word, coming to Mass*) have begun?

Teach

1. Review **Key Teachings** and **Faith Words** from the participant handout. (Note that this is the same column on this week’s handout.)
2. Explain that in the Sacrament of Baptism, often called a sacrament of conversion, many “new things” begin. We are freed from sin. We are joined to Jesus Christ. We become daughters and sons of God. We become members of the Church. We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

3. Reread verses 17-19. Ask the children to listen for the ministry God has given the baptized. (*the ministry of reconciliation*) Explain that *reconciliation* means “to make friends again.” The ministry of reconciliation is the ministry of helping others become friends again with God and with one another. Invite the children to share their ideas on ways they can help make this happen at home, at school, among their friends, and in their community.

Challenge

Ask the children to recall and to name aloud the three Lenten practices. (*prayer, fasting, and almsgiving or works of charity*) Ask them how they are doing with their Lenten practice choices. Encourage them to stay faithful to these.

Prayer

Conclude by praying the prayer on the front of the participant handout.