

# Young Apprentices

A RESOURCE FOR THE OCIA

## CATECHUMENATE SESSION

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A • February 1, 2026

### Catechist Preparation

#### Scripture

**FIRST READING**—ZEPHANIAH 2:3; 3:12-13

The prophet Zephaniah directs the peoples' gaze toward the Lord: seek him alone!

**SECOND READING**—1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-31

Paul proclaims Christ crucified. Those who embrace this Good News, the “foolish,” shame the so-called “wise” ones.

**GOSPEL**—MATTHEW 5:1-12A

Jesus' teaching presents themes of reversals. The poor, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers, and those persecuted for righteousness will be blessed by God!

#### Church Teaching: Do the Right Thing

Catholic morality arises out of God's Law, which is planted in the hearts of human beings. This natural law is knowable, available to all people—not just the Christian faithful. Is there, however, a specifically Christian ethic? The answer is yes, definitely, because its motivation lies in pleasing and loving God. Jesus Christ shows us the way to please God by his life, his public ministry, and most especially his self-offering on the Cross.

### Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set space with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a green cloth, a candle, and an open Bible or Lectionary. Also place several rule books for sports or games.

#### Further Reading

**Catechism of the Catholic Church:** 1694, 1716, 1723

**United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:** Chapter 23, especially page 318

**Our Catholic Heritage, Levels I and II:** pages 104–105, 139

#### Discover

1. Invite the children to name the different games they enjoy playing.
2. Ask the following or similar questions:
  - Is it important to have rules for the games you enjoy? Why or why not?*
  - How do you feel when someone breaks the rules of a game? Why?*
  - What would playing the game be like if there were no rules?*
  - What are some rules that you follow every day?*
  - Do all people have the same rules? Why or why not?*

#### Deepen

1. Invite the children to gather around the prayer table. Light the candle and proclaim the First Reading, Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13.
2. Ask the children to say the first word that was in the reading (*seek*). Make sure that all of the children understand the meaning of the word.
3. Remind the children that the first phrase of the reading is “Seek the LORD.” Invite volunteers to name ways they seek the Lord.
4. Invite the children to return to their seats, and continue the discussion as follows:
  - Point out that the reading also invites us to seek justice and to seek humility. Ask volunteers to explain the words *justice* and *humility*.
  - Ask the children what justice and humility would look like in their classroom at school, at home, on their sports team, at church, and in the world.

#### Pray

Invite the children to quiet themselves and to seek the Lord in quiet prayer. Allow a few minutes for this time of prayer.

## Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

### Supplies Needed

In addition to the prayer table setup, you will need copies of the participant handout, copies of the Beatitudes (*see the **Our Catholic Heritage** pages listed in the **Further Reading** section*), drawing and writing paper, crayons or markers, pencils or pens, and instrumental music.

### Sunday Word

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

Psalms 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Matthew 5:1-12a

### Welcome

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

### Invite

1. Gather the children around the prayer table. Light the candle and proclaim the Gospel, Matthew 5:1-12a.
2. Invite the children to listen to the Gospel again, and ask them to remember at least one “Blessed are. . .” phrase from the reading.
3. Invite the children to share the phrases they remember.
4. Have the children return to their seats, and continue a discussion of the Gospel as follows:
  - Explain that in Scripture, a mountain is a place of importance. Ask the children to recall other Bible stories that involve a mountain. (*For example: Moses received the Ten Commandments while on a mountain; the commissioning of the Apostles took place on a mountain; Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, including the Beatitudes, on a mountain; and the Transfiguration of Jesus took place on the top of a mountain.*)

- Today’s Gospel includes the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes name attitudes and behaviors that followers of Jesus should show in their words and deeds.
  - If we follow the Beatitudes, God promises us that we will be blessed and that our reward will be great in Heaven.
5. Distribute copies of the Beatitudes and drawing or writing supplies. Begin playing the instrumental music. Invite the children to each choose one Beatitude and to write or draw what they think it means. At the end of this time, invite those who wish to share what they wrote or drew.

### Teach

1. Read and discuss *Key Teachings* and *Faith Word* from the participant handout.
2. Explore these key points:
  - Jesus is the example of right living. Jesus wants us to imitate him.
  - The parish community provides support and an example of what it means to live a moral life.
  - The Church, through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, teaches us the best ways to know right from wrong.

### Challenge

1. Tell the children that in a prayer called the examen, we look back over our day and think and pray about how our words and actions were or were not in keeping with God’s Laws and Jesus’ example.
2. Review with the children the simple examen questions listed in the lower left box on the back of the participant handout.
3. Challenge the children to pray the examen at the end of every day.

### Prayer

Sing or listen to a recording of “Lead Me, Lord” (J. Becker, OCP Publications).