

Young Apprentices

A RESOURCE FOR THE OCIA

CATECHUMENATE SESSION

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A • February 15, 2026

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—SIRACH 15:15-20

God places before us both life and death. By choosing the good, we embrace life. By choosing evil, we embrace death.

SECOND READING—1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-10

God's wisdom has been established from the beginning. The Holy Spirit energizes the believer and by the grace of God's love, illumines and reveals that wisdom.

GOSPEL—MATTHEW 5:17-37 OR 5:20-22A, 27-28, 33-34A, 37
In the Person of Jesus, the Mosaic Law is fulfilled. We have a new Teacher, the Lord, who instills within us the New Law of Love.

Church Teaching: Free Will

Free will is the mechanism by which we grow and mature in truth and goodness—for when our free will is focused on and disciplined for the Kingdom of God and its values, we achieve a blessedness of life and holiness.

The most exceptional sign of the exercise of human freedom is found in the person of Jesus Christ, who acted in complete obedience to the will of his heavenly Father. Jesus reveals the mystery of God's love for us and how we might best respond to that loving kindness of the Most High. Thus Christ sums up and brings to fulfillment the Law of Moses by proposing a new, more perfect Law. This Law is the Law of Love, as found in the Gospel and in the very Person of Jesus.

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1730, 1734, 1739

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: Chapter 23, especially pages 310–311

Our Catholic Heritage, Levels I and II: pages 96 and 140

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.

Discover

1. Invite the children to name everyday choices they have to make. (Be prepared to share a couple of examples from your own life.) Ask whether the choices they name are easy to make or hard to make, and why.
2. Ask them what they would choose if they had a choice between fire and water; life and death; good and evil.

Deepen

1. Gather the children around the prayer table, light the candle, and proclaim the First Reading, Sirach 15:15-20.
2. Ask the children whether they heard any familiar words in the reading. (*fire and water, life and death, good and evil*)
3. Invite them to explain the meaning of the phrase "whichever he chooses shall be given him."
4. Invite the children to return to their seats, and review with them the Ten Commandments (they are listed on page 140 of **Our Catholic Heritage, Levels I and II**). Conclude by proclaiming again the first phrase of the reading: "If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you."
5. Ask the children what this phrase means. Invite a discussion of other reasons it is good to keep the Commandments. (If time allows, lead the discussion by actually naming the Commandments one by one, asking the children to share why it is good to keep that individual Commandment.)

Pray

Pray together the prayer on the front of the participant handout.

Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Sunday Word

Sirach 15:15-20

Psalms 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Matthew 5:17-37 or 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37

Welcome

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

Invite

1. Review with the children the Ten Commandments. Take the time to explain those they do not understand (brief explanations are given on page 96 of **Our Catholic Heritage, Levels I and II**).
2. Ask volunteers to share which Commandments they think are the easiest to follow and why, and which Commandments are the hardest to follow and why.
3. Gather the group around the prayer table, light the candle, and proclaim Matthew 5:17-19 from today's Gospel.
4. Ask the group what Jesus says will happen to those who break one of the Commandments and teach others to break the Commandments (*they will be called least in the kingdom of heaven*), and what will happen to those who obey and teach the Commandments to others (*they will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven*).

Teach

1. Invite the children to return to their seats, and lead a discussion about free will, highlighting the following points:
 - We have the choice to break the Commandments or to obey them.
 - God gives us the freedom to make such choices; we call that freedom free will.
 - When we use our gift of free will, we are responsible for our choices. We cannot blame other people for the choices we make.
 - The Commandments of God include the Ten Commandments, the Great Commandment, and the Beatitudes (see **Our Catholic Heritage, Levels I and II**, pages 139 and 140).
 - Knowing and choosing to live by these Commandments helps us make good choices and become good disciples of Jesus.
2. Read and discuss **Key Teaching** and **Faith Word** from the participant handout.

Challenge

1. Spend several minutes role-playing scenarios of choices that honor God's Commandments and choices that do not honor God's Commandments. Scenarios could include inviting a new classmate to join in a game on the playground; inviting a new classmate to sit with you at lunchtime; helping a student pick up the books he or she drops in the hallway; doing the chore a parent has asked you to do; consoling a younger sister or brother who has fallen down and gotten hurt; and feeding or taking the family pet for a walk.
2. Encourage the children to be mindful in the coming week of making choices that honor God's Commandments.

Prayer

Celebrate the Rite of Anointing of the Catechumens (*Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* 98–103) or pray the prayer on the front of the participant handout.