

# Young Apprentices

A RESOURCE FOR THE OCIA

## INQUIRY SESSION: SYMBOLS

### Inquiry Session (*Approximately 60 minutes*)

#### Prepare

For this session you will need a flip chart or whiteboard and markers. You will also need a baptismal candle and a small bowl of holy water. If possible, prepare a basket with small containers of holy water for each child.

Set the space with chairs in a circle and in the center place a prayer table covered with a cloth in the appropriate liturgical color. On the table place a lighted candle, a Bible, incense, bread, the holy water, and a crucifix. You may also wish to place ribbons in the colors of the liturgical seasons (purple, violet, white, and green). If you plan to send home a container of holy water, place the basket of holy water containers on or near the prayer table.

If needed, have name tags. Make refreshments available, too.

#### Gather (10–15 minutes)

1. Greet the children as they arrive. Invite each child to share his or her name and something good that has happened since the last time the group gathered.  
  
Take time to find at how the children are doing. Ask whether they had an experience of prayer or church since the group last gathered.
2. Show the children one of your personal treasures (for example, a family photo, a baptismal candle, a childhood toy, or a family heirloom) and explain why it is so important to you.
3. Invite volunteers to tell about a treasure they had as a young child (for example, a baby blanket, a stuffed animal, or a toy) and what that treasure meant to them. Ask whether they ever lost that

treasure, and if so, how they felt. How did they feel when they found it again?

4. Read together the **My Story** section of the participant handout and discuss the question found there.

#### Expand (15–20 minutes)

1. Read and discuss the **God's Story** section of the participant handout.
2. Explore the symbol of water together by challenging the group to name as many ways as possible that we use water at home, at school, and in our play. List the responses on the flip chart or whiteboard. Then ask the following questions:

*What would our lives be like without water?*

*What can we do to take care of our sources of water?*

3. Share that water is also a very important symbol of our faith. Again ask volunteers to name the ways water is used in the life of the Church. If they mention ways that are not already listed on the flip chart or whiteboard, add their responses to the list.
4. Affirm the responses, and highlight these points about water as a symbol of our faith:
  - Water is used in Baptism. It symbolizes our being washed clean. In Baptism we become new creations in Christ.
  - In Baptism we become adopted daughters and sons of God.
  - Every time we enter the church, we stop at the font to take holy water and mark ourselves with the Sign of the Cross. These remind us of our Baptism.

- Especially during the Easter season, the blessing and sprinkling of water may take place in order to remind the baptized of their Baptism.

*Note that volunteers may also mention the washing of the priest's hands and the adding of the water to the wine at the conclusion of the Preparation of the Altar and Gifts. You may wish to give a brief explanation about water used in this way.*

5. If time allows, continue the discussion by challenging the group to name the ways they see candles used in daily life. Again list the responses on the flip chart or whiteboard. Ask:

*When does your family use candles?*

*Where do you see candles used in church?*

6. Highlight these points about candles as a symbol of our faith:

- The Church uses a very special candle called the Paschal candle (Easter candle), which is lit for the first time at the Easter Vigil.
- We name Jesus the Light of the world because he is the light, and no darkness can cover up his light.
- At our Baptism we are given a special candle called a baptismal candle. It reminds us to always be a light in the world to help others know about God.

*Note that volunteers may also mention the candles at the ambo and altar, candles in devotional niches, the tabernacle candle, and the taper candles used at Easter Vigil. You may wish to give a brief explanation about candles used in these ways.*

## ***Our Response (15–20 minutes)***

1. Read the ***Our Response*** section of the participant handout. Discuss the ***Stop and Share*** questions by doing the following.
2. Turn the group's attention to the various religious symbols placed on the prayer table. Begin by naming each symbol.
3. Invite volunteers to share the meaning of each symbol, and why they think the symbol is important in the life of the Church. (*For example, the crucifix reminds us that Jesus died for us, to free us from our sins.*)
4. If members of the group participated in the inquiry session focusing on sacramentals and devotions, ask which symbols are sacramentals and why.
5. If you were able to prepare a small container of holy water for each child, distribute the containers and invite the children to take them home and put them in a special place as a reminder of today's session on symbols. Encourage them to use the holy water every day in the coming week as they pray the Sign of the Cross.
6. Review the ***Faith Words*** on the participant handout.

## ***Pray (2–3 minutes)***

Conclude by singing or listening to a recording of "We Are the Light of the World" (Tom Tomaszek/OCP Publications) or "This Little Light of Mine" (African-American spiritual).