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Proclaiming God's Word

Background

Divine Revelation

One of the most important documents promulgated at the Second Vatican Council was the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* [Dei Verbum]. In that document the bishops taught about how God has communicated with us in the past. While Revelation has come to completion in Christ and “no new public revelation is expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (4), the tasks of proclaiming and appropriating it remain with the Church and its members. The importance of God’s Self-Revelation cannot be overstated. At the heart of our faith is the belief that God wishes to be in relationship with us and that he has taken the initiative by telling us about himself, inviting us to hear and accept his call to love.

The Self-Revelation of God is embodied most perfectly in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, and is passed on to us both in Sacred Scripture and in Sacred Tradition. These two sources of Divine Revelation contain the one living Word of God, offering us Salvation in a deeply mysterious way under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

We need to understand how important it is that we be open, attentive, and receptive to God’s Revelation and his invitation to enter into a relationship of faithful love with him. That is why the Liturgy of the Word is such a vital part of each and every liturgical celebration. It is there, as God’s word is spoken in human fashion, that we learn how to be both hearers and responders to God’s offer of grace. Over a lifetime of listening to Sacred Scripture proclaimed in the liturgy and reading and praying over it privately, we learn how to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of our life.

For Reflection

In what ways am I open, attentive, and receptive to God’s Revelation?

The Church Teaches . . .

The Church provides insight into the nature and purpose of Divine Revelation. In the *National Directory for Catechesis* the Church teaches:

“It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will.”⁴¹ The divine will is that we should come to the Father through Christ, the Word made flesh, and, in the Holy Spirit, become sharers in the divine nature.

NDC 16a, page 42

In this chapter the candidates will explore how we listen and respond to God’s revelation in Sacred Scripture and in Sacred Tradition.

See the Catechism . . .

For more on the teachings of the Catholic Church on Divine Revelation, Sacred Scripture, and Sacred Tradition, see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 50–184.

First Thoughts

The living Word of God is transmitted to us by the Church through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is our calling as Christians to listen to God’s word and respond to it in faith. As the young people move toward Confirmation, it is important that they continue to grow in their ability to hear God’s word and respond to it.

*Lord God, open my heart
to your word and give me
the courage to respond in faith.
Amen.*

Footnote references may be found on page 205.

Now . . . turn the page and let’s get organized!

chapter focus

Explore the mystery of God revealing himself in word and deed in order that we may respond and enter into a covenantal relationship with him.

overview

Gathering: Involve the candidates in an activity that heightens their awareness of the importance of listening attentively and responding to other people.

Opening Ritual: Reflect on the ritual experience of showing reverence for the Word of God.

Scripture Focus: Examine the parable of the Sower and explore what it teaches about our need to listen and respond to God's word.

Doctrine Focus: Discover the work of the Holy Spirit in the transmission of Divine Revelation.

Ritual Focus: Understand the role of the Liturgy of the Word in the rite of Confirmation.

The Church Lives the Faith: Appreciate Sister Dorothy Stang's heroic response to God's word.

Living the Faith: Choose to improve one's own listening skills in order to fully participate in the Liturgy of the Word.

materials needed

- Large Bible set up prominently on a prayer table
- Blindfolds
- Rocks or stones, thorns, and soil
- Bibles for candidates
- Pens

connections

Music Connection

"Envia Tu Espíritu," B. Hurd. *Flor y Canto* #516; *Singing Our Faith* (SOF) #172.

"Here I Am Lord," D. Schutte. *Gather Comprehensive*, 2nd edition (GC 2) #671; *Ritual Song* (RS) #802; SOF #211.

"Send Us Your Spirit," David Haas. GC 2 #476.

"We Are Many Parts," Marty Haugen. GC 2 #727; RS #840; SOF #182.

Family Connection

- *Candidate Book*. "My Thoughts" discussion question on page 28.
- *Sponsor Handbook*, pages 8–11.

Web Connection

Visit the Confirmation section of "RCL Sacraments" at www.FaithFirst.com.

Key Teachings

You may wish to review with the candidates the appropriate sections of "Key Teachings of the Catholic Church" on pages 117–124 of the *Candidate Book* that relate to this chapter.

Gathering Activities

These icebreaker activities serve to help the candidates get to know one another, get ready to take part in the opening ritual, and focus on the content of the chapter. The icebreaker activities for this chapter will provide the candidates with an opportunity to take part in listening attentively. See page 55 of this guide for their use in the lesson plan.

With Younger Teens

Telephone Game

Directions

Share with the candidates that they will participate in a the traditional game of Telephone to test the accuracy of their listening skills. Point out that how well they listen will determine the quality of their response.

- Divide the candidates into two or more groups and have each group form into a line.
- Review the directions for the game of Telephone with the groups. To make it more difficult, add the rule that a person can only say the message once to the person next in line. This will force them to really listen attentively to each other. Point out that each group is to begin only after you give the signal.
- Have the first person in each line come to you, then whisper this statement to each: "God reveals himself to us through word and deed."
- Have them return to their lines. Then when everyone is ready, give the signal to begin.
- When each group has completed sharing the message, have the last person to receive the message in each line repeat it aloud. Congratulate those who repeat it accurately.
- Ask the candidates to share what they thought some of the challenges were in doing this activity.
- Summarize by emphasizing the importance of listening attentively, and make the connection with our need to listen attentively to the proclamation of the Word of God in the celebration of the liturgy.

Materials

none

With Older Teens

Wordless Obstacle Course

Directions

Share with the candidates that they will participate in a game that will test their listening skills. Explain that a volunteer will be blindfolded and be directed through an obstacle course. Point out that the directions they will be given will be limited to noises, such as whistling, and no words may be spoken.

- Set up a simple obstacle course in your learning space.
- Explain that you will select a volunteer to be blindfolded and navigated through the obstacle course from one side of the room to the other. The other teens are to help the blindfolded person by making noises such as whistling, but they cannot use words or touch the blindfolded individual.
- Have a volunteer put on a blindfold. Have the other candidates guide the volunteer through the course.
- As time allows, have other volunteers take turns navigating the course.
- Ask all the young people what techniques they used to convey their message and which ones worked well. (Note how the group will begin to develop a set pattern for communicating with the blindfolded candidate.)
- Ask the candidates who were blindfolded what it was like trying to listen, understand, and respond to the others as they tried to navigate them through the course.

Materials

blindfolds

Opening Ritual

Listening to the Word of God

The opening ritual takes place after the gathering (icebreaker) activity. See page 55 of this guide for its place in the lesson plan. This ritual, without the directions for celebrating the ritual, is found on page 102 of the Candidate Book.

Preparation

Place an open Bible in a prominent place in the center of the prayer area.

Select readers and help them locate the Scripture readings in the Bible before beginning.

Gathering

Gather the candidates together in the prayer area and sing or play an appropriate hymn.

Leader: Jesus promised that whenever we gather in his name he is in our midst. With this in mind, we begin with the Sign of the Cross.

All: *Sign themselves.*

Leader: Let us bow our heads as we remember that the Lord is with us in this moment of prayer. (Pause.)

All-powerful God, in the fullness of time, you spoke your Word who took on human flesh and saved us from our sins. Speak to us now in a living word, a word that touches our hearts and fills us with love. We ask this in the name of Jesus your Son, the Living Word come down from Heaven, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading

Leader: Let us listen now to the inspired words of Scripture with faith-filled hearts, remembering that through these words it is God himself who speaks to us. Let our hearts be fertile soil, receptive to the seeds that are planted today by these words of Salvation.

Have volunteers read the following Scripture using the Bible enthroned in the prayer area. Encourage each reader to pause briefly after their reading before handing the Bible to the next reader. This will help everyone reflect on the Word of God.

Reader 1: A reading from the Book of Deuteronomy.
Proclaim Deuteronomy 28:1, 2. (Pause.)

Reader 2: A reading from the Book of Isaiah.
Proclaim Isaiah 55:10, 11. (Pause.)

Reader 3: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.
Proclaim Matthew 13:3-9. (Pause.)

Reader 4: A reading from the Gospel of John.
Proclaim John 6:63, 68. (Pause.)

Communal Response

Ideally, musical accompaniment will be provided while an appropriate Responsorial Psalm is sung. If it is not feasible to have the participants sing the Psalm response, then the response may be recited:

Leader: Let us respond to God's word by saying together:
Your words, O God, are Spirit and light.

All: **Your words, O God, are Spirit and light.**

Leader: Your word, LORD, stands forever; / it is firm as the heavens. / Through all generations your truth endures. PSALM 119:89, 90

All: **Your words, O God, are Spirit and light.**

Leader: Your word is a lamp for my feet, / a light for my path. / I make a solemn vow / to keep your just edicts. PSALM 119:105-106

All: **Your words, O God, are Spirit and light.**

Leader: I call to you to save me / that I may keep your decrees. / I rise before dawn and cry out; / I put my hope in your words. PSALM 119:146, 147

All: **Your words, O God, are Spirit and light.**

Ritual Action: Reverencing God's Word

Leader: Let us now express by some visible sign how much the Word of God means to us. Please approach the enthroned Bible and with a special awareness and prayerfulness, reverence it by kissing it, tracing a cross on it, or offering some other expression of your reverence for God's word.

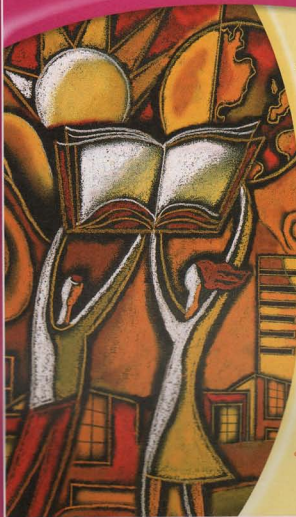
Begin by reverencing the open page and then inviting the candidates to follow.

Closing

Leader: Let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught.

All: **Our Father . . .**

Proclaiming God's Word



Reflection on the Opening Ritual

Which reading or readings in the opening ritual caught your attention? Why?

Before the age of printing technologies, manuscripts and books were highly valued and treated with greater care and respect than they seem to be today. In times past the Bible was often decorated with original artwork as a sign of great honor and reverence for the Word of God. Today we tend to take less care of the printed Word of God. For example, we routinely throw away missalettes, which contain the Word of God proclaimed at Mass. We need to be careful that the mass printing of Bibles does not contribute to a lessening of our reverence that is due the printed Word of God.

How can we show respect and reverence for the printed Word of God?

17

With All Teens

Awkwardness. It is natural for people to feel awkward when taking part in certain elements of ritual that are new to them. With young people, this awkwardness will often present itself in their giggling or in other forms of nervous movement. Explain to them that it is normal to feel awkward the first time they use a ritual that is new to them. This assurance will help them enter more easily and deeply into the celebration of the opening ritual and really focus on what is taking place during its celebration.

ICEBREAKER

- Invite the young people to quiet themselves. Present and explain the appropriate icebreaker activity on page 53 of this guide.
- Have the candidates take part in the activity.

CELEBRATE

- After the gathering activity, invite the candidates to quiet themselves in preparation for the celebration of the opening ritual.
- Lead the young people in the celebration of the ritual "Listening to the Word of God," which is found on page 54 of this guide and on page 102 of the *Candidate Book*.

REFLECT

- Call the group back into the learning area and ask the candidates to reflect on and describe their experience of reverencing God's word.
- Invite additional comments about their experience of the ritual.
- Ask the group to define the word *reverence*. **Reverence is the attitude and response one has toward someone or something deserving of honor or respect.**
- Summarize the opening paragraph, emphasizing the reverence due God's word.
- Invite volunteers to share their interpretation of the image on page 17 and how we might show respect and reverence for the Word of God in the Bible.

Teach

FOCUS

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the "Scripture Focus" question. Ask the young people to think about how they might answer it. Tell them that these two pages will help them explore what Jesus teaches about listening and responding to God's word.

DISCOVER

- Ask candidates if they have ever "tuned out" someone or have been "tuned out" by someone. Invite volunteers to share examples of such experiences and explain some of the reasons why this might have happened.
- Summarize the opening paragraph for the group.
- Ask for a volunteer to read the definitions in "Faith Vocabulary." Then invite volunteers to name some of the parables Jesus used to teach his listeners. Responses might include parables of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep, and so on.
- Ask a volunteer to describe what the illustration on page 19 portrays. A contemporary illustration of the parable of the Sower.
- Break the candidates into three groups and ask each group to read pages 18 and 19. Invite each group to discuss these or similar questions to deepen their understanding of their reading:
 - Why did Jesus use parables?
 - What is the message of the parable of the Sower?

The Word of the Lord

Scripture Focus

Why is attentively listening to and responding to the Word of God vital for our lives?

Faith vocabulary

parable

A type of story that Jesus told comparing one thing to another to teach and invite his listeners to make a decision to live for the Kingdom of God.

Kingdom of God

The biblical image used to describe all people and creation living in communion with God when Jesus Christ comes again in glory at the end of time.

All of us have had times when we "tuned out" what someone was saying to us. This response may have occurred because we were distracted by something or someone else. Or perhaps we deliberately refused to listen because of negative feelings about the speaker or what was being said. Such inattentive and nonresponsive listening can have serious consequences. Saint Matthew's Gospel points out the tragic consequences of not listening attentively and responding to Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God.

The Parable of the Sower

Matthew's Gospel is organized around a series of narratives and sermons of Jesus. The third narrative and sermon, Matthew 11:1—13:1–52, contains a number of parables about the Kingdom of God and describes how the preaching of Jesus meets with growing resistance. The parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1–9) comes from this third sermon in Matthew's Gospel and teaches the importance of listening to Jesus and not resisting his word.

Matthew begins the parable of the Sower with the seemingly unimportant detail of Jesus sitting down to speak to the crowds. Including this detail emphasized the importance of listening attentively to and not resisting the teacher. Sitting down was the posture taken by a teacher who spoke with authority.

Matthew writes that after Jesus got into a boat, he sat down and taught the crowd that was standing on the beach. After instructing them to listen he said:

"A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear." Matthew 13:3–9

18

With Younger Teens

Scripture. Many younger teens may not be familiar with the format of the Bible. Be sure to spend some time helping them understand how to look passages up by the book, chapter, and verse. The more experience they have using a Bible during these sessions, the more likely they will feel comfortable reading it on their own at home.

With Older Teens

Social Groups and Cliques. You might use the discussion of "tuning out" others to highlight how social groups and cliques often can lead people to tune others out. Encourage the candidates to examine their own attitudes and behaviors toward other social groups.

The Fruit of Rich Soil

After Jesus finished speaking to the crowd, his disciples approached him privately and asked him about the meaning of the parable. Jesus replied:

"This is why I speak to them in parables, because they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand."

Jesus continued:

"The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold." *Matthew 13:13, 19-23*

What do the images of the sower and the seed help you understand about listening and responding to the Word of God?

Affirm appropriate responses.



Parable of Sower, contemporary illustration, artist unknown

lifelinks

Identify different circumstances that might distract you from listening and responding to the Word of God. List some of those distractions below. Then brainstorm changes that you could make to your listening habits to be more attentive in the future.

Affirm appropriate responses.

Distractions

Changes

19

Background: Scripture

Parables. God's desire for us to carefully listen and respond is particularly evident in Jesus' parables. In these stories Jesus uses everyday things and settings such as sheep, coins, and weddings so the listener may more easily enter into the story. The more we study parables and begin to incorporate their message into our daily life, the more we are able to respond to God's invitation to follow him. Encourage the young people to continue to read Scripture and explore other parables on their own. You might suggest these parables for Matthew's Gospel: Matthew 13:1-52 (parables of the Kingdom), 18:15-20 (parable of the Lost Sheep), 18:21-25 (parable of the Unforgiving Servant), 20:1-16 (parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard), 21:28-32 (parable of the Two Sons), 21:33-46 (parable of the Tenants), 22:1-14 (parable of the Marriage Feast), and 25:14-30 (parable of the Talents).

Apply

REINFORCE

- Write this question on the board: What effect does a person's being attentive and open to God's word have on the ability of the seed of God's word to grow properly in the soil of their life?
- Have the young people continue to work in their groups. Give several rocks or stones to one of the three groups, some thorns to one of the other two remaining groups, and some soil to the third group.
- Ask each group to imagine that the item given to them symbolizes their attitude toward God's word. Then have each group answer the question on the board.
- Ask each group to share their responses with the large group.
- Invite the young people to respond to the question on page 19. **Affirm appropriate responses.**
- Have a volunteer reread the "Scripture Focus" question on page 18 and invite responses from the group. **Affirm appropriate responses.**

INTEGRATE

- Have the three groups complete the "Life Links" activity.
- Optional:** You may wish to use the "Taking a Listening Walk" activity on page 67 of this guide to help the candidates further integrate the content of these pages into their daily lives.

Teach

FOCUS

Have the candidates silently read the "Doctrine Focus" question. Ask the young people to think about how they might answer it. Tell them that these two pages will help them explore the mystery of God revealing himself.

DISCOVER

- Ask the candidates if they have ever had a friend who they were so close to that they could practically read each other's minds. Invite volunteers to share appropriate examples.
- Ask a volunteer to read the opening paragraph and "God's Words and Mighty Deeds" to learn how God reveals himself.
- Create a T-chart on the board with the headings "Words" and "Actions." Invite the candidates to share things God has said and done. List responses under the appropriate heading.
- Summarize by sharing the definition of *Divine Revelation* in "Faith Vocabulary."
- Draw the candidates' attention to the stained-glass image on page 21 and present the definition of *biblical inspiration* in "Faith Vocabulary." Then have the young people silently read "The Holy Spirit, Teacher and Advocate."
- Ask the candidates how Divine Revelation is passed on to us. **It is passed on to us both in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.**

God Speaks to Us

doctrine focus

How and why has God "spoken" to us?

Sometimes when we meet someone, we are immediately attracted to that person and sense that we could become a good friend with that person. Conversation comes about very easily, and we quickly share stories about ourselves. But it can also happen that the other person is very shy. Sometimes the person does not "open up" and tell us about themselves. If people will not tell us about themselves, it is virtually impossible for any relationship to begin, grow, and develop.

Faith vocabulary

Divine Revelation

God's free gift of gradually, over time, communicating in words and deeds his own mystery and his divine plan of creation and Salvation.

biblical inspiration

The process by which the Holy Spirit assisted the human writers of Sacred Scripture so that they would teach faithfully, and without error, the saving truth that God, the principal author of the Scriptures, wished to communicate.

God's Words and Mighty Deeds

God has told us much about himself. He has made known, or revealed, in words and deeds the mystery of who he is and his divine plan of creation and Salvation for humankind. The action of God "speaking" to us is called **Divine Revelation**. Through his Self-Revelation, God invites us to enter into relationship with him. In the New Testament we read:

In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets. In these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe. HOMILETICS 1: 1-2



Jesus Christ is the final and definitive Word of God. He is the only Son of God the Father who became incarnate, assuming human nature without losing his divine nature. After Jesus Christ there is no further Revelation.

The Holy Spirit, Teacher and Advocate

Divine Revelation is passed on both in Sacred Scripture and in Sacred Tradition. Sacred Tradition is the "living memory" and "living transmission" of God's truth with the assistance of the Holy Spirit among the People of God in every generation. It is the ministry of the Church to grasp, over time, the meaning and significance of Divine Revelation.

20

With Younger Teens

Activity Options. Skits and role-plays are effective ways to have young people get involved, have fun, and process important information. For the T-chart activity, you may wish to ask volunteers to act out the words or actions of God instead of simply naming them. Have the other members of the group guess the words or actions and then add them to the chart.

With Older Teens

Holy Spirit Role-play. Older teens can think in more abstract terms and enjoy using role-plays to apply the teachings of Scripture and the Church to contemporary life. For this section, you might divide the class into groups of equal size and invite each group to create a role-play showing the Holy Spirit at work in people's lives.



Biblical inspiration is the term the Church uses to name the Holy Spirit's action of assisting the human writers of Sacred Scripture so that they faithfully and without error communicate the saving truth that God wanted to share. It is through the action of the same Holy Spirit that the Church, through her Magisterium, authentically interprets and faithfully hands on "the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 85).

God has freely spoken his word and invites us to listen and respond because he wants us to live in friendship and communion with him. He wants us to know him and love him and serve him. This is why it is so vital that we listen attentively to the Word of God proclaimed at Mass and respond in a way that deepens our relationship with him. When this happens, we are "good soil." We receive his word in faith, live in hope of its promise, and act on it in love.

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in communicating God's word to us?

lifelinks

In a small group list three key things you have come to know about God from Sacred Scripture and from the teachings of the Church. Circle one and describe how it makes a difference for your life.

What I Have Come to Know

The Difference It Makes

Affirm appropriate responses.

21

Liturgy Link

The Rite of Confirmation states: "Great emphasis should be placed on the celebration of the word of God that introduces the rite of Confirmation. It is from the hearing of the word of God that the many-sided work of the Holy Spirit flows out upon the Church and upon each one of the baptized and confirmed. Through this hearing of his word God's will is made known in the life of Christians." (Rite of Confirmation, "Introduction" 13).

Apply

REINFORCE

- Invite responses to the question on page 21. **Affirm appropriate responses.**
- Present the "Liturgy Link" feature to reinforce the candidates' understanding of the text and their preparation for Confirmation.
- Have the candidates silently reread the "Doctrine Focus" question on page 20. Invite responses. **God "speaks," or reveals, himself to us through words and actions so that we may live in relationship with him.**

INTEGRATE

- Give the young people time to independently complete the "Life Links" activity.
- Ask volunteers to share their thoughts from the activity as time permits.

Background: Doctrine

Divine Revelation. God is a mystery beyond human comprehension. In the Second Vatican Council document on Divine Revelation, the bishops teach that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the Church is always moving toward the fullness of divine truth. As we continue to study Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition and respond in faith to the preaching of the truth, we grow in our understanding of all that God has revealed. (See *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* 8.)

Teach

FOCUS

Read the "Ritual Focus" question to the group. Ask the young people to think about how they might answer it. Tell them that these two pages will help them explore the role of the Liturgy of the Word in the Rite of Confirmation.

DISCOVER

- Summarize the opening paragraph for the group, emphasizing the importance of both words and actions in human communication.
- Invite a volunteer to describe what the photo on page 22 depicts. **A priest proclaiming the Gospel.**
- Ask a volunteer to read aloud the terms and definitions in "Faith Vocabulary."
- Invite a young person to read the first paragraph under "Roots in Ancient Jewish Worship" to the group and proclaim Luke 4:16–20 for the group from a Bible.
- Invite candidates to identify similarities between the Gospel passage and what takes place at Mass. **The faithful gather. There are readings which are proclaimed.**
- Ask the candidates to silently continue reading page 22 and then read "Listening with Faith, Hope, and Love" on page 23 to learn about the structure of the Liturgy of the Word at Confirmation and the importance of our listening and responding to God's word.

The Liturgy of the Word

Ritual Focus

Why is the Liturgy of the Word an essential part of the celebration of Confirmation?

Faith vocabulary

Liturgy of the Word
The part of the Church's liturgical celebrations during which the Sacred Scriptures are proclaimed and the assembly of the faithful is invited to respond with faith.

Lectionary
The book that contains the Scripture readings that are assigned to be proclaimed at the celebration of the liturgy.

Digital forms of communication that have changed the way families, friends, and businesses carry on relationships each day. Yet, for all that is new about today's communication technologies, people still connect by communicating in words and actions that allow them to be present with one another. The **Liturgy of the Word** God includes words and other ritual gestures and the assembly of the faithful's response in faith.



Roots in Ancient Jewish Worship

The Liturgy of the Word at Mass as we celebrate it today is rooted in ancient Jewish worship rituals. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament we read about the Jewish people not only gathering to listen to the proclamation of God's word but also responding to his word by renewing their commitment to live the Covenant. For example, Luke 4:16–20 describes a synagogue service at which Jesus gathered with the people of Nazareth for the proclamation of the Scriptures of ancient Israel. These synagogue services of the Word of God became the model for proclaiming the Word of God when the early Church gathered.

Today, the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word at Mass is similar to the ritual of the ancient Jewish people. God's word is solemnly spoken among the faithful, and he is present and acts with power in the assembly's midst. That is why we treat Sacred Scripture, the Word of God and the book in which it has been written down, with such respect and reverence.

22

With Younger Teens

Jewish Roots. Some of the candidates may have already attended a friend's Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah. Encourage them to share what they experienced. Summarize by explaining that "Bar Mitzvah" literally means "son of the commandment" and that "Bat Mitzvah" means "daughter of the commandment." Technically, the term refers to taking responsibility for living the commandments.

With Older Teens

Synagogue Experience. Share with your group the structure of a Jewish Shabbat service. This will provide them with insight into the roots of our liturgy in Judaism. You can research information about the Shabbat on the "Judaism 101" Web site at www.jewfaq.com.

Listening with Faith, Hope, and Love

The Lectionary is the book that contains the Scripture readings that are assigned to be proclaimed at the celebration of the liturgy. For the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation the Lectionary designates five Old Testament texts for the First Reading, six Psalms for the Responsorial Psalm, twelve New Testament texts for the Second Reading, and twelve Gospel selections for the Gospel Proclamation. In these Scripture passages God has revealed himself to be the mystery of One God in Three Divine Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We call this mystery of One God in Three Divine Persons the mystery of the Holy, or Blessed, Trinity.

When Sacred Scripture is proclaimed during the Liturgy of the Word on the day of your Confirmation, how ready will you be to listen to what God is telling you about himself? How ready will you be to experience God's presence in word and deed on that day? How open will your heart be to respond in faith, hope, and love to God, who invites you to live in friendship and communion with him?

How ready will you be to open yourself to the Gifts of the Holy Spirit that he wants to pour out upon you that day? To be ready you must prepare yourself. The Church puts it this way, "It is necessary that the faithful come to [the liturgy] with proper dispositions" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 11).

Why is it important to participate fully in the Liturgy of the Word?

Affirm appropriate responses.



Liturgy Link

There are many actions the Church uses during the Liturgy of the Word to show reverence for God's word. We stand for the proclamation of the Gospel. The book of the Gospels is often surrounded by lighted candles and is incensed before the priest or deacon proclaims the Gospel. After reading from the Gospel, the priest or deacon kisses the page where Jesus' words are contained. The assembly responds at the end of each reading with a special acclamation, acknowledging that they have listened to the Word of God.

lifelinks

Think about what you can do to prepare yourself to participate actively, fully, and consciously in the Liturgy of the Word at your Confirmation and at every liturgical celebration. List what you will do.

Affirm appropriate responses.

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Background: Liturgy

Proper Dispositions. In the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* the Church teaches that "in the readings, as explained by the homily, God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation and offering them spiritual nourishment" (55). From this we can discern that our disposition for the Liturgy of the Word must include two important elements. The first is a deep reverence and awe at the fact that God himself is speaking to us. The second is that we must come with a desire to be nourished; we must seek a greater relationship with God.

Apply

REINFORCE

- Share the "Liturgy Link" feature with the youth to help them understand the different ways we show reverence to the Word of God during the Liturgy of the Word.
- Reread the "Ritual Focus" question on page 22 to the candidates and ask volunteers to respond. **When God's word is solemnly spoken among the faithful, God is present and acts with power in the assembly's midst. God reveals himself through his word.**

Optional: You may wish to use the "Exploring Scripture" activity on page 67 of this guide to reinforce the candidates' understanding of the content presented on pages 22 and 23 of the *Candidate Book*.

INTEGRATE

- Have the candidates independently reread and respond to the questions in the second and third paragraphs of the text on page 23.
- Have the candidates work in small groups to complete the "Life Links" activity.
- Encourage volunteers from each group to share what they discussed.
- Remind the candidates that an excellent way to prepare for the Liturgy of the Word is to look at and reflect on the readings in advance.

FOCUS

Remind the candidates that God has gradually, over time, revealed himself through word and deed so that through listening and responding we may live in friendship, or communion, with him. Tell them that these two pages will help them learn about some of the heroic responses people have made to God's word and how they have taken it to heart and made it central to their lives.

DISCOVER

- Recall the Gospel narrative of the Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16–30) with the candidates. Ask the youth to share what the message of the narrative might mean for them today.
- Read the opening paragraph to the class.
- Talk about the photos on pages 24 and 25 to introduce Sister Dorothy Stang and her heroic response to God's word.
- Ask the group to silently read "The Angel of Trans-Amazonia."

The Church Lives the Faith

Faith-filled people who have listened to the Word of God, taken it to heart, and made it part of their lives continue to play a significant role in the history of the Church. Saint Anthony of the Desert is one example of such a faith-filled person. When he heard the Gospel passage "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to [the] poor . . . Then come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21), Saint Anthony responded by doing exactly that. He gave all his possessions to the poor and lived out the rest of his life as a person of prayer in solitude in the desert. Christians today



Sister Dorothy Stang.

respond to the Word of

God and make similar heroic responses to the one made in the fourth century by Saint Anthony of the Desert. Sister Dorothy Stang is one of those heroic Christians.

The Angel of Trans-Amazonia

Sister Dorothy Stang, a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, worked for several decades with the rural poor of the Amazon rain forest basin in Brazil, South America. Because of her work of helping and advising the rural poor to protect their land, Sister Dorothy received numerous death threats from wealthy landowners and loggers who wished to profit by cutting down the trees in the rain forest. Despite these threats, Sister Dorothy continued to be outspoken in her efforts on behalf of both the poor and the environment.



Sister Dorothy visiting village in Amazon region.

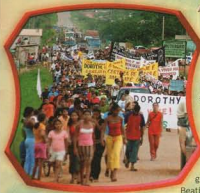
24

With Younger Teens

Response Role-plays. Have the young people work in two groups. Ask one group to create a role-play depicting the response by Saint Anthony of the Desert to God's word, and ask the other group to create a role-play depicting the response made by Sister Dorothy Stang.

With Older Teens

Talk Show. Have the older teens process the information about Saint Anthony of the Desert and Sister Dorothy Stang by creating a talk show. Choose volunteers to play the roles of Saint Anthony and Sister Dorothy. Have the group play the role of host and ask questions of the "guests."



Funeral procession from airport to Santos Misses Church in Anapu, Northern Brazil, February 14, 2005.

A Witness for Christ

Sister Dorothy's ministry resulted in her giving her life for the people. According to news reports, two gunmen approached her on February 12, 2005, and aimed their weapons at her while she was reading the Bible. Witnesses reported that while at gunpoint, she read the Beatitude "Blessed are the peacemakers, / for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9) to her assassins. The assailants, whom police said were hired by Brazilian landowners, responded by shooting her at point-blank range.

Sister Dorothy responded to the Word of God by reaching out to the rural poor of Brazil. That response included her standing on the side of the poor, no matter what. In the end, she proclaimed God's word, not only by the words she uttered from the Gospel, but just as loudly by her life of solidarity with "the least of my brothers" (Matthew 25:40). As news of her death spread, more than two thousand poor Brazilian farmers marched to the remote jungle town of Anapu for the funeral of this seventy-three-year-old woman whom they called the "Angel of Trans-Amazonia."

When has your response to the proclamation of the Word of God required you to act with courage to be a witness for Christ?

Affirm appropriate responses.

Procession to cemetery.



25

The Church's Mission

Life and Dignity of the Human Person. *The National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)* teaches: "The dignity of human persons is initially rooted in our creation by God in his image and likeness. The divine image is present in every person" (NDC 159). Our acceptance of this fundamental truth guides us in our moral life. Fully recognizing God's image within ourselves can build self-esteem and encourage Christian responsibility. Fully recognizing God's image within others calls us to treat everyone with dignity and respect.

INTEGRATE

- Have the group share their reactions to the stories about Saint Anthony of the Desert and Sister Dorothy Stang. Ask, What impacted you most in these stories?
- Tell the group that sometimes a heroic response to God's call can lead to the ultimate sacrifice.
- Invite the young people to respond to the question on page 25. **Affirm all appropriate responses.**

Optional: You may wish to use the "Seeing Christ in Others" activity on page 67 of this guide to reinforce the candidates' understanding of the content presented on pages 24 and 25 of the *Candidate Book*.

RESPOND

- Ask the young people to brainstorm ways they can respond to the Word of God in their daily lives. Highlight situations or examples that might require the teens to have courage to respond.
- Encourage the young people to study the lives of the saints on their own. Point out that saints serve as excellent examples for us today.

FOCUS

Recall with the candidates that listening attentively and responding to God's word require developing and using good interpersonal communication skills. Tell them that these two pages will provide some practical ways they can learn the skills of listening attentively.

DISCOVER

- Read the opening paragraph to the group and ask who can relate to either of the scenarios presented in the paragraph. Invite volunteers to briefly share stories.
- Encourage the youth to share what it feels like to be listened to attentively and what it feels like to not be listened to, or to be "tuned out" by someone.
- Invite a volunteer or several volunteers to read "Interpersonal Communication" and "Developing Active-Listening Skills" on pages 26 and 27 to the group.
- Divide the group into pairs and have partners share about a person who has been a positive influence in their lives. Emphasize the need to listen to each other using the active listening tips.
- Invite the partners to share with each other how well their partners listened to them.
- Encourage them to reread the tips and share with their partners which skills they noticed being used or not used.

Living the Faith Makes a Difference

We have all been with people at one time or another who seem not to pay much attention to us when we are trying to communicate with them. They are so distracted or distant that it seems as if they are not really "there"—beyond their mere physical presence to us. We have also known people who are so tuned in to what we are saying or doing that they quickly come to understand and respond. In other words, the latter group has good interpersonal communication skills.



Interpersonal Communication

Good interpersonal communication skills do not just come about by chance. People learn and develop these skills over a lifetime. One of the most basic of these skills is active listening.

Researchers tell us that while most people speak at a rate of between 100 and 175 words per minute, we can listen intelligently at a rate of 600 to 800 words per minute. Since only a part of our mind is required to follow a speaker, it is easy to let our minds drift while we are listening. The cure for this is active listening. Active listening is a skill which allows us to be intent and focused on the other person in a very deliberate way.



With Younger Teens

Listening. The tips for active listening may be new to the candidates. Take some time to explain each one. Providing humorous examples of the opposite approach can help emphasize each tip for the group. You might also encourage them to dramatize both positive and negative listening scenarios.

With Older Teens

Working Together. Small-group and partner work provides a good opportunity for the youth to practice active listening. Throughout your time together, occasionally remind the candidates of the importance of using good listening skills, and invite the groups or partners to share constructive comments about how well their group or partner listened.

Developing Active-Listening Skills

Fortunately, a good bit of study has been devoted to the skills and qualities that go into making someone an active listener. Active listening includes being involved on a thinking and a feeling level both to the person speaking and to what is being said. Here are some tips to help you become a better active listener:

- **Be present.** Focus your attention deliberately on the person who is speaking and on what is being communicated. Avoid distractions.
- **Make eye contact.** Look directly at the person who is speaking. Listen not only with your ears but also with your eyes and other senses.
- **Be open-minded.** Avoid making quick judgments about what the person is saying.
- **Clarify.** Acknowledge and clarify points as they are being communicated.
- **Communicate.** Show interest in what is being said through verbal and nonverbal actions.

While you are learning how to more effectively listen and respond to God's word, it is also important to develop good listening skills and to become an active listener. Listening actively will help you grow as a member of the Body of Christ.



Faith Decision

- In a small group identify the things you have found that help you to be an active listener. Then discuss how you can strengthen these skills.
- Next, review your responses to the "Life Links" activity on page 19. Reflect on what can be done to overcome those obstacles.
- Finally, think about the steps you can personally take to become a better active and attentive listener.

This week I will listen more attentively to God's presence in my life by

Responses will vary.

Affirm appropriate responses.

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RESPOND

- Optional:** You may wish to use the "Taking a Listening Walk" activity on page 67 of this guide to give the candidates an opportunity to practice the skills presented on page 27 of the Candidate Book.
- Read and explain the directions for the "Faith Decision" activity to the group.
 - Have the young people work in small groups to complete the first two parts of the "Faith Decision" activity.

CHOOSE

- Ask the candidates to complete the third part of the "Faith Decision" activity independently.
- After a moment of prayerful reflection, have them make and write their faith decision.
- Encourage everyone to put their faith decision into practice this week.

Decision Making

Practice Makes Perfect. Committing to something involves an ongoing decision-making process. Remind the candidates that they need to develop the habit of using the tips for developing active-listening skills presented on these pages. They will need to make the decision to practice these tips each time they find themselves being a listener. Whenever we make a decision to commit to something, we will find ourselves making and remaking decisions to support that initial commitment. Emphasize that developing skills requires continuing practice.

JOURNAL

- Ask the candidates to read the introductory paragraph and the directions for the "My Thoughts" journal-writing activity.
- Clarify any questions they might have.
- Allow the young people time to begin to write their reflections on the page. If necessary, encourage the young people to complete their reflections at home.

PRAY

- Invite the group to quiet themselves for prayer.
- Begin by praying the Sign of the Cross together.
- Have a volunteer proclaim John 6:63, 68 from a Bible.
- Invite the group to reflect on the Gospel reading and silently pray to the Holy Spirit to open their hearts and minds to God's word.
- Conclude by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

SHARE

- Invite the young people to read the box at the bottom of page 28.
- Encourage them to share and discuss the question with their parents and their Confirmation sponsor.

my thoughts

In this chapter you reflected on the Liturgy of the Word that precedes the celebration of the Rite of Confirmation. You have learned more about the significance of this part of the celebration of Confirmation. You have discussed the importance of listening attentively and responding to God's word by making it part of your daily life.

Write about the ways you can become a better "hearer of the word" as part of your preparation for the day of your Confirmation.

A question to share with your sponsor and parents:

How have you encountered the Scriptures in the Liturgy of the Word, in reading the Bible individually, or in other ways that have "made a difference" in your life?

28

Journaling

Daily Practice. The need to listen carefully to God's word extends beyond hearing the Word of God in the liturgy. We must seek to listen to him in the events and people we encounter in our daily life. Encourage the young people to keep a daily journal in which they can reflect on God's presence in their life. One easy and effective way to do this is to have the teens simply create a list at the end of each day of all the things that they are thankful for that occurred that day. Even if they are having a "bad" day, this list will help them see the everyday signs of God's love in their life.

Enriching the Lesson



Exploring Scripture

Purpose

To further explore how God's people have experienced the Holy Spirit's presence by examining some of the suggested Scripture readings for the rite of Confirmation (taught on pages 22 and 23)

Directions

- Divide your candidates into groups and give each group poster board, markers, and copies of the activity handout on page 68 of this guide.
- Assign each group one of the Scripture passages from the Rite of Confirmation that are on the handout.
- Ask each group to read their passage and answer the questions on the handout.
- Invite each group to draw a picture on the poster board that depicts what is taking place in the Scripture passage.
- Have each group present their illustration and answers to the entire group.

Materials

Bibles
poster board, markers
copies of the activity handout on page 68



Seeing Christ in Others

Purpose

To reinforce that we are surrounded by people who respond to God's word and that we are called to respond as well (taught on pages 24 and 25)

Directions

- Share with the group about a friend or family member you admire because of their faith in Christ.
- Explain how you see Christ in that person.
- Divide the young people into groups made up of four or five candidates.

- Ask each individual to spend some time sharing about a Catholic whom they admire because of the way they live.
- After everyone has had a turn, ask the candidates to reflect quietly on how they see Christ in themselves.

Materials

none



Taking a Listening Walk

Purpose

To reinforce that listening attentively to people takes practice (taught on pages 26 and 27)

Directions

- Ask the candidates to share what they remember hearing in the learning space as they arrived today.
- Tell the group that they will be going on a listening walk. Point out that on the walk they are to simply follow you, to listen, and to refrain from talking.
- Lead the group on a brief walk both inside and, if possible, outside the building.
- Invite the candidates to share what they heard while on the walk after you return to the learning space.
- Compare what they could name about what they heard when they first arrived with what they heard while they were on the walk.
- Conclude by suggesting that their conscious and deliberate effort to listen attentively during the walk resulted in their remembering more of what they heard than when they first arrived for the day's session.
- Remind the candidates that listening actively to people is a sign of respect.

Materials

none

The Holy Spirit

Select and circle one of the Scripture readings assigned for the Rite of Confirmation. Read the passage and answer the questions below.

Isaiah 61:1–3a, 6a, 8b–9: Anointed to bring Good News to the poor and suffering

Matthew 5:1–12a: The Beatitudes

John 16:5b–7, 12–13a: The Spirit of truth will guide you.

Acts of the Apostles 2:1–6, 14, 22b–23, 32–33: Pentecost

Romans 8:14–17: Gifted with the Spirit we give witness that we are children of God.

1. What are some of the characteristics of the Holy Spirit named in the passage?

4. Based on the passage, what are some ways you can respond to God's word?

2. What impact does the Holy Spirit have on the person or people mentioned in the passage?

5. Illustrate the passage on poster board.

3. What does the passage tell about the Holy Spirit and God's desire for you to live in friendship, or communion, with him?

