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Chapter 16

Grace and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Overview

In this session the students will explore the gift of God's grace. After defining and discussing God's grace, the students will examine the responsibilities of being a Christian and how the Gifts of the Holy Spirit help us participate in God's life.

“Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit.”

—John 15:5

Learning Goals

Enable the students to

- define God's grace and recognize the presence of God's grace in their lives
- understand that God's grace makes it possible for them to fulfill their job descriptions as Christians
- describe the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Preparing for the Chapter

Background Reading

- *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers*, chapter 16
- *CCC*, numbers 1830–1832 (gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit); 1996–2005 (grace); 2006–2011 (merit); 1987–1995 (grace and justification)
- John 13:34–35; Matthew 7:16–17, 22:34–40

Background for the Teacher

Seven Gifts

One advantage to teaching the faith is that one is in the constant position of learning the faith. Each lesson becomes an interior examination: Hmm . . . how do I put this into practice in my life? Exploring the Gifts of the Holy Spirit with this attitude could be particularly fruitful. After all, we've been using them since we were confirmed . . . haven't we?

- *Wisdom*: Do I seek wisdom in my life through the perspective of prayer? Do I think before I speak?
- *Understanding*: Do I set aside time for Scripture reading and other spiritual books? Do I take time to “stand under” a situation (looking at it from all sides) before acting?
- *Right judgment*: Do I seek counsel of appropriate persons when necessary? Do I ask the Holy Spirit to free my mind and heart of any prejudices (pre-judgments) when my opinion or decision is needed?

- *Courage (fortitude)*: Am I a “fair-weather Christian,” only praising God when things go well with me? Do I cope cheerfully with difficulties as best I can, or do I complain at every opportunity?
- *Knowledge*: See Wisdom and Understanding! Do I subscribe to the diocesan newspaper and a national Catholic magazine, or do I get information about my faith from hit-or-miss sound bites in other news media?
- *Reverence (piety)*: Am I aware of God’s presence all around me, within me and in others? How do I express my reverence in church? with my family and friends? in my speech? in my actions toward others?
- *Wonder and awe (fear of the Lord)*:
 “Happy are all who fear the LORD,
 who walk in the ways of God.” (Psalm 128:1, NAB)

Catechism references: 1830–1832

Teacher’s Prayer

Wondrous God, I am grateful for the gift of your grace in my life. You invite me to share in your life and to share your life with others. Be with me as I prepare for this session. Help me to see these young people as made in your image and on the adventure of being disciples of your Son, Jesus. May the gifts of the Holy Spirit be present in me today as I share your love. Amen.

Teacher’s Reflection

What gift of the Holy Spirit could be renewed in my life this week?

Preparing for the Activities

Materials

“Additional Activity: Holy Spirit Cards”

- 3-by-5-inch index cards, blank on one side
- markers or crayons

“Pray It! Liturgy Connection” (p. 181)

- pictures of Confirmation with local bishop

“Pray It! Liturgy Connection” (p. 183)

- your own baptismal pictures and mementos

“Closing Prayer”

- CD or tape of gentle music and a CD or tape player (*optional*)

“Media Connection” (*optional*)

- *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005, 135 minutes, rated A-II and PG)



Opening with Prayer

1. **Invite** the students to gather in the prayer corner. **Direct** them to quiet themselves for prayer.
 2. **Light** a candle, make the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God."
 3. **Invite** a volunteer to read John 13:34–35.
 4. **Pray** the following:
 - ▶ Lord, today we gather as disciples of your Son, Jesus. We thank you for loving us and for being present here with us. In our time together, help us to grow in our understanding of what your love and grace can do in our lives. Help us to love you and one another more completely. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.
- Close** with the Sign of the Cross.



Preview Activity

1. **Distribute** copies of activity master 16A, "Grace Under Pressure."
2. **Read aloud** the directions to the first part of the activity and invite the students to write their responses.
3. **Direct** the students to quietly read and respond to the final reflection question. When everyone has finished, **invite** volunteers to share their responses.

Introducing Chapter 16

1. **Have** the students turn to page 174 in their handbooks. Tell them that in this chapter they will learn about grace, about sanctifying grace, and about the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.
2. **Call attention** to the Key Words list on page 175. Tell the students to listen for the meanings of these words as they read them in the chapter.
3. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the chapter introduction on page 174. **Ask:**
 - ▶ What is grace? (*the gift of God's loving presence in our lives*)
 - ▶ When do we first receive the help of this grace? (*at Baptism*)
 - ▶ Who gives us this grace? (*the Holy Spirit*)
 - ▶ What does this grace do for us? (*It draws us into a close relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ and gives us the help we need to become God's adopted sons and daughters.*)

God Takes the First Step

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the text of "God Takes the First Step" on page 175. Review what has been read by asking the following questions:
 - ▶ Why did God make us? (*God made us to be with him.*)
 - ▶ How does God take the first step toward us? (*with grace*)

- What does God give us the freedom to do? (*to know him and love him*)
 - Does God force his love on us? (*No. How we respond is up to us.*)
2. **Emphasize** that grace is a free gift of God's love, a gift we can accept or refuse. However, we were made for God's truth and goodness, and his grace responds to this deep yearning of our human hearts.

Live It!

1. **Direct** the young people to read silently the "Live It!" sidebar on page 175.
2. **Have** them outline a simple chart on a piece of paper, putting the days of the week, beginning with today, on the left side of it and leaving space to the right of each day for recording some evidence of God's grace experienced that day.
3. **Ask** for examples of some evidence of God's grace they may have seen today. **Direct** the students to choose one example to fill in today's space in the chart.
4. **Remind** the students to bring this chart back to class with them for the next session.

Let God's Grace In

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the first paragraph of "Let God's Grace In" on page 176.
2. **Emphasize** that Jesus is telling us the way to find good people in our lives. We look to what people do, to what their actions are. If their actions are good, they are most likely good inside. These are the kind of people we want to know and be like. These are the people who are responding to God's grace.
3. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the rest of this page, beginning with the Scripture quote printed in green and continuing on page 177. **Engage** the students in a discussion using the following questions. **Allow** as many students to respond as are willing, and allow them to elaborate on their responses.
 - Do you know people who are friendly, willing to forgive, respectful of others?
 - Are you this kind of person? Are you compassionate and peaceful? Do you have a helpful spirit?**Explain** that if they can say yes to these questions, they are responding to God's grace!

Think About It!

1. **Direct** the students to silently read the "Think About It!" sidebar on page 176.
2. **Invite** them to reflect on the question. **Ask** volunteers to share their responses. You may want to start by offering a response of your own.

Give Love Away

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the text of "Give Love Away" on page 177.

2. **Explain** that because love is a gift of God, it never ends. There is always more. When we respond to God's grace, we need never worry that we will not have enough love to give to family, friends, or even people we do not know.
3. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the final paragraph of this section on page 178. **Ask:**
 - How can you be in-the-flesh grace for someone?
 - Think of a time when someone has been in-the-flesh grace for you. **Invite** volunteers to tell what that was like.
4. **Direct** the students to look at the illustration on page 178.
5. **Explain** that they do not need to apply for this job, because they already have this job. They got this job at Baptism. Ask them to take a quiet moment to self-evaluate their job performance!

Did You Know?

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the 'Did You Know?' sidebar about sanctifying grace on page 177. **Explain** that "to sanctify" means "to make holy."
2. **Ask** the students to give examples of what it means to be holy. They may identify stereotypes (praying all the time, walking around with hands folded). **Help them** to broaden their understanding by explaining that holiness is "living ordinary life in an extraordinary way," living fully for God, and loving self and others as God wants.
3. **Invite** volunteers to give examples of people they know or have heard of who might be considered truly holy.
4. **Explain** that there are types of grace in addition to sanctifying grace that we can receive. These include the following:
 - Actual grace, which is the help and support God gives us in the everyday moments of our lives
 - Sacramental graces, which are the gifts specific to each of the Seven Sacraments

Everything Is Possible with God's Grace

1. **Call on** a volunteer to read aloud the text of "Everything Is Possible with God's Grace" on pages 179 and 180. **Ask** whether the students have heard the phrase "Pay it forward." Explain that when someone does something good for us, we should pass that goodness along, or "pay it forward" to someone else. This is a good way to respond to God's grace in our lives.
2. **Invite** volunteers to give examples of goodness they have received and of good things they have done for others.

Did You Know?

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the "Did You Know?" sidebar on page 179.
2. **Remind** the students of what a branch of a plant looks like when it has broken off from the plant. It is no longer connected to the main stem. It gets no nourishment, no life from the plant. It shrivels and dies.
3. **Explain** that we can live and be happy as long as we are connected to the vine, Jesus. We want to be branches that do not fall off or shrivel! The grace of God keeps us connected to the vine.

Additional Activity

Holy Spirit Cards

1. Help the students remember the Gifts of the Holy Spirit by having them make a set of index cards to keep at home.
2. Give each student seven index cards, blank on one side. On the blank side, have the student write carefully the name of a gift of the Holy Spirit. Then ask the students to decorate around that name. Have them do this for all seven gifts.
3. When all have finished their set of decorated gift cards, ask the students to scramble the cards and put them face down on their desks. Ask them to pick a card from the stack—just one! Tell them this is their “gift for the day.” Ask each student to read his or her gift card aloud.
4. After all have shared their gifts, ask for a moment of silence to thank the Holy Spirit for giving that particular gift. Remind the students to scramble the cards again each day in the coming week and pick a new “gift for the day.” They might like to put their card in a special place for that day.
5. Explain that we have all the gifts all the time, but that picking one “gift for the day” helps us to focus on that gift and to thank the Holy Spirit for the grace of that gift.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

1. **Ask** for eight volunteers to read aloud one of the eight sections of “The Gifts of the Holy Spirit” (including the introductory section) on pages 180–182. Assign each one a section. Give the volunteers a few moments to read over their assigned section quietly in preparation.
2. **Ask** the volunteers to line up in reading order at the front of the room. **Encourage** the remaining students to read along quietly with each volunteer reader. **Begin** the reading. When the reading ends, **thank** the readers for their good reading.

Extending the Lesson

3. **Have** the students open their Bibles to Isaiah 11:1–3. **Direct** them to follow along with you as you read these verses. (To establish a wider context, you may want to continue through verse 7.)
4. **Ask** the students to find and name the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit in these verses. **Ask:**
 - Who is the prophet Isaiah describing in these verses? (*Emmanuel, or the Messiah*)
 - How does it feel to know that we receive the same Gifts of the Holy Spirit that the Messiah, or Emmanuel, Jesus Christ, received?
5. **Remind** the students that the grace of the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation enable us to use our gifts, just as Jesus did. We are called to be Christ-for-others in the world.



Activity

1. To help the students remember the meaning of each gift of the Holy Spirit, **have them complete** activity master 16B, “The Gifts of the Spirit.”
2. **Distribute** the activity master and **read aloud** the directions to the first activity.
3. **Arrange** the students in pairs to complete this activity. Partners may discuss their answers together. When everyone has finished, **invite** volunteers to share their answers.
4. **Read aloud** the two questions at the bottom of the page. **Have** the students respond to these questions independently. When everyone has finished, **invite** volunteers to share their answers.

Catholic Social Teaching

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are not given to us for ourselves alone. They are meant as gifts to the community as well. Our first community is the family. The family is meant to help discover and nurture the gifts of each member. Each member of the family is called upon, according to their abilities, to contribute to the common good. This expectation fosters self-esteem and personal dignity. Each member of the family is valued for his or her unique gifts.

This contribution extends toward the community. Through sharing their gifts of time, talent, and treasure with parish and neighborhood, town and city, and even across the world, family members extend their love to all, especially those in need. As Saint Paul wrote, “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving but the same Lord is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to all for their particular service. The Spirit’s presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all” (1 Corinthians 12:4–7).

Pray It! Liturgy Connection

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the “Pray It! Liturgy Connection” sidebar on page 181.
2. **Explain** that while priests and deacons can baptize (and laypeople can baptize in an emergency), the bishop is the ordinary (or usual) minister of Confirmation. A person who has received the Sacraments of Baptism, the Eucharist, and Confirmation is a full member of the Church.
3. **Show** pictures, if possible, of your bishop at a Confirmation liturgy. Your diocesan newspaper may be a source for these.

Pray It! Liturgy Connection

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the “Pray It! Liturgy Connection” sidebar on page 183.
2. **Explain** that Baptism began our life of grace. It was a very important day and was probably celebrated as such in their families.
3. **Show** baptismal pictures and mementos of your own or from your family.
4. **Ask** for volunteers to bring pictures, candles, books, or other mementos of their Baptisms. Give each volunteer an index card with “Baptism pictures, etc.” written on it as a reminder. Tell the volunteers to also gather information related to their Baptisms, such as who their godparents were, which parish it was held in, and so forth.
5. **Ask** all the students to know and remember the date of their own Baptism. (You may have this date in your records.) List the dates in the classroom and celebrate each one as you are able with a special prayer for that student on or near his or her baptismal date.
6. Later in the week, **allow time** for the students who have photos or mementos to share them with the class and to share information about their Baptisms.

Refer to the “For More Information” box later in this chapter to **share** more with the students about the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

Closing Activity

1. **Distribute** copies of activity master 16C, “Symbols of the Gifts of the Spirit.”
2. **Read aloud** the introduction and invite the students to think of an appropriate symbol for each gift. They might like to sketch with pencil on scrap paper first. Then ask them to use crayons or markers to draw and color their symbols.
3. **Invite** volunteers to share and explain their symbols. You may wish to display the students’ drawings on a bulletin board in your classroom or on the prayer table.



Closing Prayer

1. **Invite** the students to gather around the prayer table. **Direct** them to silence themselves for reflection and prayer.
2. **Play** a CD of gentle music for a few moments. (*optional*)
3. **Open** your handbook to page 180. **Ask** the students to listen carefully as you read aloud the prayer from the “Pray It!” sidebar, and to say “Amen” at the end of the prayer. **Read** the prayer quietly. After the “Amen,” play the music for a few more moments.
4. **Conclude** with the following:
 - Holy Spirit, thank you for all your gifts to us. Thank you especially for the gifts you have given to the young people in this room. May we always share your gifts with others. Amen.

Close with the Sign of the Cross.



Media Connection

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005, 135 minutes, rated A-II and PG) is full of wonderful examples of gifts of the Spirit at work through both the dialogue and the actions of the main characters. Discuss the gifts that Peter, Susan, and Lucy receive from Father Christmas and how they use their gifts in the battle against the White Witch. Discuss the significance of using the gifts we are given to make a difference for good in our world.

Note: For movies with a U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops rating of A-II, show only preselected scenes. Obtain parental permission for the participants who are under age thirteen to view an A-II rated movie, and use your best judgment regarding the appropriateness of the films and the advisability of viewing relevant excerpts.

Chapter Review

1. The chapter test will help the students recall what they have learned. The test covers the key points of the chapter.
2. **Distribute** copies of the chapter 16 test from the *Catholic Connections for Middle Schoolers Test Book*.
3. **Explain** to the students that completing the test exercises will help them remember the content of the chapter they have just completed. **Direct** them to work quietly to complete the test.
4. **Collect** and **grade** the test. Alternatively, you may wish to **review** the answers to the test as a group. **Review** with the students any items that were generally misunderstood.
5. **Refer** to the answer key at the back of the test book for the correct answers as well as a list of the pages on which the answers can be found.

Pray It! Liturgy Connection

1. Invite a volunteer to read the following prayer aloud to the class.
2. Distribute copies of the prayer to the students. Ask them to read the prayer aloud to the class.
3. Invite the students to share their own prayers with the class.

For More Information

The Sacraments of Initiation

In the early days of the Church, the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist (the Sacraments of Initiation, or reception into the Church) were celebrated together. A new convert, usually an adult, would be baptized, be confirmed, and receive the Eucharist, all at the same liturgy. These three sacraments *initiated* the convert into the Church. The full Christian life begins with the reception of these sacraments. Gradually, as the number of converts grew and the Church spread, the sacraments began to be separated. Confirmation was delayed until the bishop could visit. However, the Sacrament of Confirmation is still intimately connected with Baptism and the Eucharist. Today, at the Easter Vigil, an unbaptized convert to the Catholic Church receives all three Sacraments of Initiation together at the same liturgy, just as in the days of the early Church.