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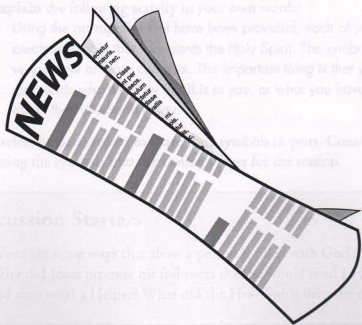
Session Time Frame

The sessions in this guide have been created to work in periods of 60 to 75 minutes. The session's core activities—listed at the beginning of the sessions under the "At a Glance" heading—will fill a 60-minute session. If you have more time, consider using the optional 15-minute session extensions. The session outlines include additional discussion questions and media suggestions that can be incorporated to create sessions that go beyond 75 minutes.

Spirit News Activity

The editor of *Spirit News*, a newspaper whose goal is to report how the Holy Spirit is active in the world, has asked for story ideas about how the Holy Spirit is at work in the world. You and your partner have been asked to do the following:

1. Brainstorm ways you and your partner have seen the Holy Spirit active in the lives of others or in your own lives.
2. After you have both had an opportunity to share, decide on three stories that the two of you feel are worthy of being covered in *Spirit News*. These stories should be actual examples of how you have seen the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of others, or in your own lives.
3. You and your partner will then come up with three headlines that describe the Spirit success stories. Each headline can have a subhead that further describes the story in one or two sentences.
4. Your next task is to prepare a presentation about each of the three headlines that will convince the editor that the stories are worthy of publication.
5. Finally, one of you will present to the large group your headlines and the reasons these stories need to be told.



Discussion Starters

- What did Jesus say about the Holy Spirit? How did the Holy Spirit help Jesus? Why did Jesus promise his followers the Holy Spirit? What did the Holy Spirit do for the apostles?

2 GRACE AND THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Session Overview

In this session the participants will explore the gift of God's grace by writing down "the best gift in the world" they could receive and by playing a game in which they unwrap a large gift box to find God's grace inside. After defining and discussing God's grace, the participants will examine the responsibilities of being a Christian and how the Gifts of the Holy Spirit help us participate in God's life. Finally, the young people will create their own *Gifts of the Holy Spirit Jeopardy* game and play it to reinforce what they have learned. In the optional session extension, the participants will brainstorm ways that they can fulfill their Christian responsibility to love God, others, and themselves.

Objectives

Enable the participants to do the following:

- 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

At a Glance

A. Quick-Start Activity	(5 minutes)
B. Welcome and Opening Prayer	(5 minutes)
C. Guess Whose Gift?	(5 minutes)
D. God's Grace: Let It In!	(10 minutes)
E. The Help We Need	(20 minutes)
F. Closing Prayer	(15 minutes)
Optional Session Extension: Fulfilling the Christian Job Description	(15 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

Materials Needed

Gather the following items, one for each participant:

- ☐ 3-by-5-inch cards
- ☐ small gift boxes with lids (boxes can be various sizes)
- ☐ various kinds of wrapping paper
- ☐ scissors
- ☐ spools of colored ribbon
- ☐ rolls of clear tape

Gather the following items, two for each of seven small groups:

- ☐ 3-by-5-inch cards

Gather the following additional items:

- ☐ a large box with lid, gift-wrapped
- ☐ an empty box or basket
- ☐ two sheets of newsprint
- ☐ a marker
- ☐ a roll of masking tape
- ☐ a card (4-by-6 or 5-by-8) labeled "God's grace"
- ☐ three buzzers or bells for *Gifts of the Holy Spirit Jeopardy* game

Preparation Tasks

- ☐ Place the large, gift-wrapped box (with a removable lid) on a table in front of the meeting space.
- ☐ Place the empty box or basket next to the gift box.
- ☐ Write this question on a sheet of newsprint and post it behind the gift box: "If this could be any gift in the world, just for you, what would you want it to be?"
- ☐ Write the following instructions for the quick-start activity on the board:
 1. Write your name on one side of the card and your answer to the question posted on the newsprint on the other side. Keep your answers confidential; do not share with anyone else.
 2. When you are finished, place your card in the box or basket at the front of the room.
- ☐ Have the blank 3-by-5-inch cards and pens or pencils available for the participants to pick up as they enter the meeting place.
- ☐ On seven 3-by-5-inch cards, write the gifts of the Holy Spirit [wisdom, understanding, right judgment (counsel), courage (fortitude), knowledge, reverence (piety), wonder and awe (fear of the Lord)], one gift on each card.

- ❑ If opting to use the longer closing prayer, write the following response on a sheet of newsprint: "God of all grace, we praise and thank you!"
- ❑ Option: Save materials you use in this session, such as the props for activities or things the participants create, or take digital photos of the session so that you can display them at the concluding session. (See the "Optional Session Extension" and the caution on digital photography on page 117 in chapter 10.)

Catechist 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.

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

Session Steps

A. Quick-Start Activity (5 minutes)

Greet the participants as they enter the meeting space and invite them to begin the quick-start activity. Point out the following instructions on the board, but also share them verbally if any participants need help referencing the board:

1. Write your name on one side of the card and your answer to the question posted on the newsprint on the other side. Keep your answers confidential; do not share with anyone else.
2. When you are finished, place your card in the box or basket at the front of the room.

Tell the young people to keep what they write confidential but that what they write will be shared in a later activity.

B. Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Welcome** everyone and make any announcements.
 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.
5. Briefly **explain** that the topic for the session is grace and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

C. Guess Whose Gift? (5 minutes)

1. **Play** a quick game using the information you gathered from the participants during the quick-start activity. **Draw** a card from the basket and read aloud the "best gift" written on the card. **Invite** volunteers to guess whose card it is. (Because you know who the person is from the name on the back of the card, you can give hints such as, "She has brown hair and glasses" or "He is wearing a red shirt.")
2. **Continue** until you have gone through a majority of the cards, as time permits.
3. **Pick up** the large gift-wrapped box at the front of the room. **Tell** the group that you are going to "switch the question" and that they are to think about the answer rather than shout it out. Write "Best Gift to Someone Else" on the board, and then **ask**:
 - ▶ If inside this box is the best gift in the world that you could give to somebody else, what would it be?

While the participants are reflecting, place the card labeled "God's grace" inside the box. Then ask volunteers to raise their hands and, one at a time, to share their responses.

4. **Begin** opening the lid to the gift box. **Ask** the participants what they think God would put in the box. **Listen** to their responses. **Invite** someone to come forward and remove the card from the box. **Have** him or her read the card aloud: "God's grace."

D. God's Grace: Let It In! (10 minutes)

1. **Write** on the board and repeat aloud the phrase "God's grace." **Ask** the participants for a show of hands of how many of them have heard the phrase before. **Invite** volunteers first to think about and then to offer words and phrases that define or describe God's grace. **Create** a mind map or word web by writing their responses around the phrase and connecting them to the main phrase by drawing lines. Use lines to connect any similar thoughts and ideas to one another as well. Repeat aloud each offering as you write it.
2. **Ask** the participants to take out their *Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers*. When all are ready, ask them to find and put their finger on the definition of *grace* on page 174. **Say** "participate in God's life" and **write** it on the board. **Tell** the young people that this is what God's grace allows us to do—actually participate in the life of God.

3. **Describe** the Catholic perspective on God's grace by sharing the following points in your own words:

- ▶ We receive God's grace from the Holy Spirit. At Baptism the Spirit breathes God's love into us.
- ▶ This gift draws us into a close relationship with God the Father, with Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ God wants us to let his love in! We cannot earn the gift of grace; God gives it to us. God doesn't force this gift on us. How we respond to it is up to us.

16 GRACE AND THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

FUN FACT

One of the most common forms of prayer is meal prayers, or grace. Prayers of thanksgiving for food are found in religious texts and cultures all over the world. Grace is the thanks-to-God acknowledgment for our food, which is a gift from God. When we say grace at mealtimes, we acknowledge God's presence among us.

Have you ever received a gift that was really amazing and unexpected? Maybe it wasn't a material thing that cost a lot of money. Maybe instead it was a kind gesture, help with a difficult task, or a thoughtful compliment from a friend. When you received this gift, maybe you thought to yourself, "Wow! That's really cool. I don't deserve it."

We actually could say the same thing about the gift of God's grace. We can't do anything by ourselves to deserve or earn this amazing gift. What is grace? **Grace** is the gift of God's loving presence in our lives. It is the help he gives us through the Holy Spirit to participate in God's life. God wants us to be with him. At Baptism, we receive the life of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit breathes love into us. This gift of grace draws us into close relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ and gives us the help we need to become God's adopted sons and daughters.



4. **Ask** if anyone is familiar with the folk song “Magic Penney.” If so, ask if they will sing it for the group. If not, read aloud the section “Give Love Away” on pages 177–178 in the handbook. **Comment:**

- ▶ When we participate in God’s life, we give love to one another freely.
- ▶ This is what God does. God gives his love to us freely, and because we are made in God’s image, this is what we do when God is a part of our lives.
- ▶ God’s grace, his love, transforms us from the inside out! We can bring God to others. This is the job description of a Christian.

B

5. **Invite** the participants to find and put their finger on the job description for being a Christian on page 178 in the handbook. For each of the job responsibilities, ask a volunteer to name a way he or she could fulfill that responsibility. If necessary, refer to the ideas listed on pages 179–180 under the heading “Everything Is Possible with God’s Grace.”

6. **Write** “HELP!” on the board and **ask** the young people:

- ▶ Where do we get the help to accomplish these things?

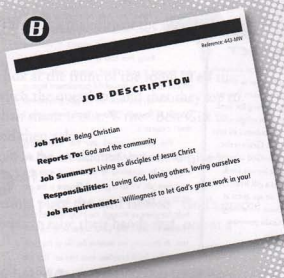
Comment in words similar to these:

- ▶ God gives us the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to help us love him.
- ▶ The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are special graces that help us respond to God’s love and live holy lives.
- ▶ We will explore these seven gifts in the next activity.

Part 3: The Holy Spirit and the Church

Jesus was filled with God’s love and gave it away to others. Jesus made God’s life real for us; he was incarnate grace, that is, in-the-flesh grace. We can be in-the-flesh grace too. We can bring God to others.

B



E. The Help We Need (20 minutes)

1. **Divide** the large group into seven smaller groups for a *Gifts of the Holy Spirit Jeopardy* game. Be flexible about allowing some young people to work in pairs or even solo if that is their preferred way of working. **Assign** one of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit to each small group, giving each small group a card with their gift written on it. **Distribute** two 3-by-5-inch cards and a pen or pencil to each small group. **Refer** the groups to pages 180–182 in the handbook.
2. **Deliver** the following instructions allowing the groups to complete each step before delivering the instructions for the next step:
 - ▶ Your first task as a group is to read aloud the description for each of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. When the room is quiet, I'll know you're ready to go on to the next step.
 - ▶ Now focus on the Gift of the Holy Spirit assigned to your group and develop a statement that defines the gift in your own words. You

may not use the actual word in your definition. Write your statement on one of the index cards. [Pause here to check for understanding, asking a few of the participants from different groups to repeat back to you what their task is.] You may begin.

Part 3: The Holy Spirit and the Church

his blessings. We can love God and love our neighbors as ourselves.

"As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know you are my disciples." (John 13:34–35)



The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

God gives us the **Gifts of the Holy Spirit** to help us love him. These are special graces that help us respond to God's call to live holy lives. The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, right judgment (or counsel), courage (or fortitude), knowledge, reverence (or piety), and wonder and awe (or fear of the Lord). These gifts help us follow Jesus Christ and live as his disciples. Let's take a closer look, as follows:

- **Wisdom.** Wisdom is to see as God sees. Imagine that. A person with the gift of wisdom looks at life through God's eyes, assesses the things going on in his or her life and in the world from God's point of view. A wise person recognizes where the Holy Spirit is at work in the world.

PRAY IT!

God of all grace,
I praise you and
thank you for shar-
ing your life with
me. Through Jesus,
your Son, I see how
your grace can change
the world. Help me ac-
cept your invitation to
participate in your life.
May the grace you offer
me through your Holy
Spirit put things right
between you and me. Heal
me and make me holy in
your sight. Amen



- ▶ The next step is to write on the other index card a sentence (or several sentences) describing how someone who is using this Gift of the Holy Spirit would act. [Wait for the groups to complete their task.] Finish by writing the name of your gift on the back of each of the cards. Be sure not to show your cards to those who are not in your group!

Collect the cards as the small groups finish, and shuffle them.

3. **Play** the game by inviting three volunteers (each from a different group) to the front of the room to join the *Gifts of the Holy Spirit Jeopardy* panel. **Write** the name of the game on the board as you say it. You will randomly choose a card and read aloud the statement on the card. **Share** the following instructions in your own words, and then check for understanding before beginning the game, to make sure everyone knows how to play:
 - ▶ The first person to hit the “buzzer” [or to raise his or her hand if you do not have a buzzer] has a chance to respond to the statement with a question, such as, “What is wisdom?”
 - ▶ If the person does not give the correct answer, the card will be put back into the stack where it might be used again. We have a total of fourteen statements, so we will rotate the players every two turns, or until players have responded correctly to all of the statements.

Note: You may want to rotate the players more or less often depending on the number of participants, or have two players rather than three on the panel at one time.



• Understanding.

Understanding is an important gift for finding the meaning of God's truths and their significance for our lives. Understanding helps us recognize how God wants us to live.

• Right judgment (Counsel).

This gift helps us make choices that will lead us closer to God rather than away from God. The gift of right judgment, also called counsel, helps us figure out what God wants. It helps us know the difference between right and wrong when we make decisions.

• Courage (Fortitude).

Life can be difficult. The gift of courage, also called fortitude, is the special help we need when faced with challenges or struggles. Those who have the gift of courage don't let life's obstacles pull them away from God.



PRAY IT! Liturgy Connection

During the liturgy for the Sacrament of Confirmation, the bishop recalls the grace of the Holy Spirit given to us at our Baptism. He extends his hands over the candidates and prays the following words:

All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their Helper and Guide. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.

4. **Conclude** by sharing the following in your own words:

- ▶ The Gifts of the Holy Spirit help us to live as disciples of Jesus. Through the Holy Spirit, God gives us everything we need to be his adopted sons and daughters, and to love him and one another.

F. Closing Prayer (15 minutes)

Post the sheet of newsprint you prepared earlier that says, "God of all grace, we praise and thank you!" **Invite** everyone to turn to page 180 in the hand-book and **lead** them in saying the short prayer in the "Pray It!" sidebar, or lead the following prayer service:

1. **Tell** the participants that they are going to wrap gifts. Set standards for the appropriate use of the supplies, and then distribute a small gift box to each participant. **Put** a variety of gift wrapping paper, colored ribbon, scissors, and tape on several tables in the room. **Tell** the participants

that they will have 3 minutes to wrap their gift boxes. As they are wrapping their boxes, tell them that the gift box represents the gift of grace God gives them through the Holy Spirit. **Instruct** the young people to place their finished gift boxes on the prayer table, around the large gift box used at the beginning of the session.

2. **Gather** the participants around the prayer space. **Suggest** that when we receive a gift, one of our first responses is to thank the giver of the gift. **Ask** everyone to reflect quietly on one thing for which he or she would like to thank God today.

Part 3: The Holy Spirit and the Church

his blessings. We can love God and love our neighbors as ourselves.

"As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know you are my disciples." (John 13:34-35)

E

PRAY IT!

God of all grace,
I praise you and
thank you for shar-
ing your life with
me. Through Jesus,
your Son, I see how
your grace can change
the world. Help me ac-
cept your invitation to
participate in your life.
May the grace you offer
me through your Holy
Spirit put things right
between you and me. Heal
me and make me holy in
your sight. Amen

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

God gives us the **Gifts of the Holy Spirit** to help us love him. These are special graces that help us respond to God's call to live holy lives.

The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, right judgment (or counsel), courage (or fortitude), knowledge, reverence (or piety), and wonder and awe (or fear of the Lord). These gifts help us follow Jesus Christ and live as his disciples. Let's take a closer look, as follows:

- **Wisdom.** Wisdom is to see as God sees. Imagine that. A person with the gift of wisdom looks at life through God's eyes, assesses the things going on in his or her life and in the world from God's point of view. A wise person recognizes where the Holy Spirit is at work in the world.

3. **Invite** the participants to come forward, one by one, to pick up their gift boxes and name one thing for which they thank God today. Direct the large group to say, after each person shares, the prayer response you have posted for all to see: "God of all grace, we praise and thank you!"
4. **Conclude** with the following:
 - ▶ God of all grace, you are present among us! Thank you for sharing your life with us. Through Jesus, your Son, we see how your grace can change the world. Help each of us accept your invitation to participate in your life. May the grace and gifts you offer us through the Holy Spirit unite us in love for one another. Amen.

Close with the Sign of the Cross.

5. **Invite** the young people to take home their gift boxes as a reminder of God's grace and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit active in their lives. Remind them as they go forth that God invites them to participate in his life as disciples of Jesus.

Optional Session Extension

Fulfilling the Christian Job Description (15 minutes)

This session extension works best just before part 6 of step D: "God's Grace: Let It In!"

Materials Needed

Gather the following items:

- ☐ three sheets of newsprint, each labeled with one of the following responsibilities from the job description for "Being Christian" on page 178 in the handbook: "Loving God," "Loving others," "Loving ourselves"
- ☐ a blank sheet of paper for each pair of participants
- ☐ a roll of masking tape

1. **Ask** the participants to form pairs. **Distribute** a blank sheet of paper and a pen or pencil to each pair. **Instruct** the pairs to divide their papers into three columns and label the columns "Loving God," "Loving others," and "Loving ourselves." **Ask** the pairs to brainstorm ways they can fulfill each of these three responsibilities. **Refer** the participants to the top of page 177 in the handbook for specific examples. **Allow** the pairs 5 minutes to create their lists.
2. **Ask** each pair to join with another pair to form a foursome. Instruct the new groups to share their lists and compile a composite list of concrete ways young people can fulfill their responsibilities as Christians. Give them 3 to 5 minutes for this.
3. **Post** the three sheets of newsprint you prepared. **Ask** for three volunteers to be the recorders. **Invite** the small groups to share their ideas for each of the three responsibilities while the volunteers record their answers on the appropriate newsprint.

F

2

Chapter 16: Grace and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Fiduciatists that God's grace is working in you and others: friendliness, willingness to forgive, respect for others, peacefulness, compassion, humility, thankfulness, and a helping spirit, just to name a few. All our actions that point others and ourselves to God are because of God's grace working in us.

Give Love Away

When we participate in God's life, we give love away. We have to. Why? Because God made us in his image and likeness, and that is what God loves. He gives his love away. All the good we do and all the love we have belongs to God. It is for God. Grace is never something we earn. But something amazing happens when we choose to love. We open ourselves more and more to the gifts God constantly offers us. The love and the grace just keep coming. We keep giving it away to others because God's love has transformed us from the inside out.

Did You Know?

Sanctifying Grace

God loves us. He wants to be part of our lives. He wants to be involved. God freely offers us the gift of his life. We call this gift **sanctifying grace**. We need God's help to be holy, to be right with God. The sin of turning away from God, which is what Adam and Eve chose to do, damages the relationship God wants to have with us, his creatures. The gift of his sanctifying grace repairs the damage of sin and enables us to experience God's love. Through the Holy Spirit, we are united to Christ's dying and rising. We die to sin and are given new life. Sanctifying grace heals our sins and makes us holy. God wants our relationship with him to be put right again.

4. **Review** the newsprint lists with the participants, pointing out the concrete ways that Christians love God. Continue with part 6 in "God's Grace: Let It In!"

(5 minutes)

(5 minutes)

(10 minutes)

(10 minutes)

(25 minutes)

(5 minutes)

(15 minutes)

Discussion Starters

- When have you shown love to another and felt like you received more love in return than you had given?
- What Gift of the Holy Spirit do you see at work in your life today? in the lives of others?

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 dialogue and action 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.