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Giving Thanks and Praise

CATECHIST RESOURCE CENTER

CHECK THE CATECHISM

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states in paragraph 2645 that "Because God blesses the human heart, it can in return bless him who is the source of every blessing." Paragraph 2649 continues, "Prayer of praise is entirely disinterested and rises to God, lauds him, and gives him glory for his own sake, quite beyond what he has done, but simply because HE IS."

Faith Formation

Gratitude

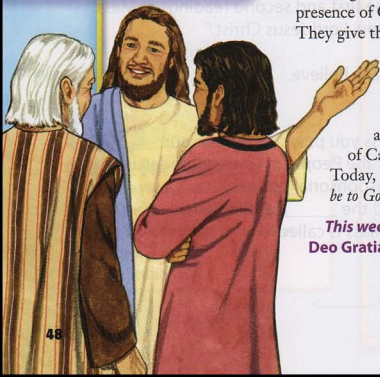
People whose hearts are filled with gratitude are often peaceful people. In spite of life situations that are often difficult or even tragic, grateful people know that God is with them in all they do, and they are at peace. They know that to be grateful is to acknowledge that without the presence of God in their lives, they cannot achieve or attain anything of worth, that it is only with the help of God that good things happen. They praise and thank God each day for the strength to respond to both the joys and the challenges of everyday life with serenity and patience. Rather than blaming God for the unfortunate things that may have happened, they thank God for the many blessings in their lives. Gratitude becomes a way of life for them.

When in your life have you felt especially grateful for God's goodness to you?

Deo Gratias: Thanks Be to God

The word *gratitude* is taken from the Latin word *gratia*, which means "grace." Grateful people are graced by the loving presence of God in their lives and are compelled to respond. They give thanks and praise to God for all that is good, and they return God's goodness by reaching out to others in loving service. Their prayers include not only petitions and repentance but also equal measures of praise and thanksgiving. The ancient Latin phrase *Deo Gratias* was a familiar part of Catholic liturgy and prayer for many generations. Today, people full of God's grace continue to echo *Thanks be to God* in prayer, service, and faithfulness.

This week, what experiences or situations led you to pray Deo Gratias?



Faith Summary

- God has given us many gifts.
- We are called to give thanks and praise to God.
- The Eucharist is our public celebration of thanks and praise to God through Christ.

Background

Ours Is an Awesome God

Words such as *awesome*, *terrific*, *incredible*, and *super* are some of the words of praise that young people are familiar with. Take time to look for opportunities to praise and thank God during each session. For example, you might praise God for bringing you and the young people back together this week by saying something like, *I just want to praise God for bringing us all here this week. God, you are terrific!* Another example might be, *Our God is an awesome God. He has blessed us with good health and the ability to play and laugh.*

Growth and Development

It is helpful to remember two characteristics of middle-grade young people as you teach this lesson:

- *Young people at this age have a need to know and understand “why.”* It’s important in each lesson to try to answer the group’s “why” questions. If you don’t know the answer, tell them that you will be happy to find out this week and explain it to them better at the next session.
- *Young people at this age can think abstractly.* Abstract thought can help them develop a deeper sense of their own spirituality, as well as of God, the Church, and the sacraments.

A CATECHIST’S PRAYER

God of power and might, it is always right to thank and praise you. May I find many reasons each day to give you glory and honor. Amen.

Vocabulary Preview

thanks

praise

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Eucharistic Prayer

Scripture

Psalm 30:5: Thank and praise God.

Matthew 6:25-33: God cares for all our needs.

Matthew 7:11: God gives good gifts to those who ask.

Psalm 65:7-8, 10, 12, 14; 138:1:

We should give thanks for God’s blessings.

Related Resources

Videos

Prayer with Young People

(St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1-800-488-0488, www.AmericanCatholic.org). The “Prayer of Praise” segment in this video explains the purpose of praying prayers of praise and thanksgiving. (*Children*)

Books

Schineller, Peter. *Praying in the*

Catholic Tradition (Liguori Publications, 1-800-325-9526 or

www.catholicbooksonline.com). This reference book on prayer explains the different kinds of prayer. (*Adults*)

CATECHIST ORGANIZER

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the young people should be able to

- identify God's blessings in their lives
- recognize the celebration of the Eucharist as a great prayer of thanks and praise
- relate their understanding of why the Church thanks and praises God

Materials Needed for the Basic Lesson Plan

Page 29	Gifts	
Pages 30–31	All Good Gifts	Let's Talk questions
Pages 32–33	Thanking God	Pencils
Page 34	Showing Thanks	Pencils
Page 35	A Prayer of Thanksgiving	Prayer
Page 36	Home and Family	

Materials Needed for Additional Activities

Catechist Edition		
Page 51	Gift-Giving	
Page 52	Compose a Cinquain	Writing paper, pencils
Page 53	Auditory Needs	Cassette player, headset
Page 54	Invite a Priest	
Page 55	A Little Catechism	Student Pages 72, 79–80
Page 56	Kinds of Gifts	
Page 57	Resource Master	Copies of page 59



Quick Check

I'll do this evaluation as soon as I finish this week's lesson.

Did I follow my session plan? Why or why not?

How can I tell that I met the learning objectives for the lesson?

What activities did the young people enjoy the most?

How could I improve this lesson?

Lesson Plan

1 Gifts

Talk with the young people about their experiences with giving and receiving gifts. Point out that not all gifts have to be purchased. Often the best gifts cost no money, such as a smile or kind word, but bring the most joy.

Present the story. Talk with the young people about the feelings Kelly was having about not receiving expensive gifts at Christmas like her classmates. Tell

them that it is okay to feel those feelings, but it is also important to name all the gifts God has given us and to be truly thankful for them.

Ask the questions and invite responses. Help the young people gain insight into God's incredible love for us and the many blessings he pours into our everyday lives.



Giving Thanks And Praise

*Sing praise to the Lord, you faithful.
Psalm 30:5*

Gifts

Kelly dreaded going back to school after Christmas break. Some of her classmates had great stories to tell about places they had been. Others boasted about the presents they had received.

Kelly knew her family couldn't afford such trips or expensive gifts. But it was still hard for her to be around students who seemed to have so much.

Kelly's mom knew she was feeling down.

As she gave Kelly a hug, she said, "Remember, we're well off in our own way. We've got one another, we're healthy, and we have many gifts from God. And what I enjoy most is that a lot of love and laughter fills this house."

Kelly smiled as she thought about her mom's words. She did have many real gifts that couldn't be bought, lost, stolen, or broken. And they were the best gifts of all.

- What gifts do you have that cannot be bought, lost, stolen, or broken?
- Why do you think God gave you these gifts?



OPTIONS

Gift-Giving

Point out that everyone has many ways to share gifts with others. Explain that we can give our time, treasure, or talents. Spend a few moments explaining each of these three ways of giving. Then challenge the young people to work together as a group to come up with an idea of giving something to people in need. Some ideas might be to rehearse and put on a simple play of one of the Gospel stories, such as the parable of the farmer sowing seeds or the Good Samaritan. Another idea might be to invite elderly parishioners to join them in a songfest.

Lesson Plan

1 All Good Gifts

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the first paragraph. Then present the first section of Matthew 6:25–33. Use much expression and excitement as you read it aloud or tell it in your own words. Then pause and allow the young people to reflect on the Scripture story. When the young people are ready, continue presenting Matthew 6:25–33 on the next page. Then allow the group to reflect on it for a few moments.

2 Let's Talk

Direct the young people's attention to the questions on page 31 of their books. As you present each question, ask volunteers to share their responses. Ask them how they feel knowing that God takes care of his children.

IDEAS THAT WORK

Compose a Cinquain

Encourage the young people to compose their own cinquain poems about our duty to give God thanks and praise. Explain that a cinquain poem has five lines: line 1 has one word that tells the subject of the poem; line 2 has two words that describe the subject; line 3 has three words of action about the subject; line 4 has four words that name feelings about the poem's subject; line 5 has one word that means almost the same as the subject. Distribute writing paper and pencils or pens. When the young people have had sufficient time, call on volunteers to share their poems with the group.

Word of God

If you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him.
Matthew 7:11

All Good Gifts

God has given you many gifts, including your life, your family, and all of creation. Everything we have, including God's love, is God's gift to us. God truly loves you and will always take care of you. You were made to be with God. One day Jesus explained to his disciples how great the Father's love really is.

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? Why are you anxious about clothes?"

Lesson Plan

3 Word of God

Ask the young people to locate and silently read the Scripture quote. Afterward invite them to share their ideas about this Scripture verse. Emphasize that our Father in heaven wants to give all his children every good gift.

Activity

Ask the young people to locate and silently read the text. Explain to them that we praise and worship Jesus, who is true God, and that we model ourselves after Jesus, who is true man.

This We Believe

Invite the young people to silently read the text. Explain to them that we praise and worship Jesus, who is true God, and that we model ourselves after Jesus, who is true man.

"Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides."

Matthew 6:25-33

Let's Talk

- What are some things you worry about?
- What is the message of Jesus about our worries?
- How has God taken care of you?

SPECIAL NEEDS

Auditory Needs

It might be helpful to record the Scripture story for this lesson beforehand and make it available to young people who are mildly hearing impaired. Allow these young people to use headsets to listen to the Gospel as you present it to the entire group.



Lesson Plan

1 Thanking God

Invite the group to read silently the first paragraph. Then ask volunteers to explain the difference between thanks and praise. Tell them that we often thank and praise God at the same time, as we do at Eucharist, which means “thanks and praise.”

As you read aloud the remainder of text, invite the young people to follow along silently and to read aloud the Mass responses when the assembly’s responses appear. Write on the board two of the vocabulary terms: *Liturgy of the Eucharist* and *Eucharistic Prayer*. Invite volunteers to explain the two terms in their own words.

OPTIONS

Invite a Priest

Invite your parish priest to speak to the group about the Liturgy of the Eucharist and its importance in thanking and praising God as a Church community. Ask the priest to bring a Sacramentary with him and to read important sections of one of the Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children. Allow the young people to ask appropriate questions.

Thanking God

At every Eucharist, we remember the gift of creation and all other gifts God the Father has given us. The word *Eucharist* means “thanks and praise.” **Thanks** means to be grateful for all the gifts God has given us. **Praise** means to give God glory for being so loving and generous.

The second main part of Mass is called **Liturgy of the Eucharist**.

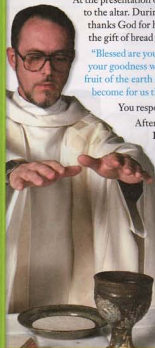
At the presentation of the gifts, bread and wine are brought to the altar. During this time in the liturgy, the Church thanks God for his abundant gifts. The priest prepares the gift of bread on the altar. He says,

“Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life.”

You respond, “Blessed be God for ever.”

After a similar prayer over the wine, the **Eucharistic Prayer** begins. It is the Church’s great prayer of thanksgiving.

The priest says, “Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.” You say, “It is right and just.” The Eucharistic Prayer is the prayer of the whole Church. It is the prayer of the assembly. It is your prayer, too. In it, you thank God for the gift of his Son, Jesus. You also thank God for many other special gifts:



Lesson Plan

2 We Celebrate

Invite the entire group to read aloud together the Mass response. Explain that we say this in response to the priest saying, *Pray, brethren (brothers and sisters), that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.* Encourage the young people to participate in this response the next time they attend Mass.

3 Activity

Ask a volunteer to read aloud the directions for the activity on this page. Then provide the young people with pencils or pens and invite them to write their own prayer of thanks for the one particular gift they have identified.

4 This We Believe

Invite the young people to silently read the text. Explain to them that we praise and worship Jesus, who is true God, and that we model ourselves after Jesus, who is true man.



We Celebrate

All: May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good, and the good of all his Church.

This We Believe

Jesus is true God and true man. For this reason he is the mediator between God and humankind.

- your own life and everything that helps you be happy
- all members of your parish and of the world Church
- church members who have died

The priest offers the gifts of our lives through the sacrifice of Christ's Passion which is re-presented at the Mass. He prays that everyone may be made one by the Holy Spirit. Together, we praise God and give him thanks.

Activity

Identify a gift for which you are particularly thankful to God.
Write a prayer of thanks to God.

A LITTLE CATECHISM

Invite the group to open their books to *A Little Catechism*. Choose one or more of the selections for reinforcement. In this Catechist Edition, you will find the catechism on pages 107–127.

1. Review the Mass responses that are recited during the Liturgy of the Eucharist, on pages 79–80.
2. Encourage them to memorize the answer to Important Question 5 on page 72.

Lesson Plan

1 Showing Thanks

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the opening paragraph. Point out that by sharing the gifts God gives us, we are sharing in God's generosity and loving kindness.

Discuss with the young people the meanings of the numbered words in the activity. Help them with any words they might not be familiar with. Then walk the group through the activity, eliciting matching actions for each gift.

2 Catholic Practices

Talk with the young people about unleavened bread and why it is used at Mass. Tell them that parishes use unleavened hosts. The bread used for Holy Communion is always made without yeast.

TEACHING TIP

Kinds of Gifts

The activity on this page asks the young people to consider the spiritual gifts God has given them. The young people may need some assistance to distinguish and name the various kinds of gifts God gives us: material, spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional. Give examples of each. Then ask the group to contribute ideas of their own to each list.

Showing Thanks

Catholic Practices

The bread used at Mass has no yeast in it. The flat bread, made from wheat, is usually shaped into circles called hosts. The wine used is made from grapes.

Blessed Pope John Paul II said, "Christ's riches are for every individual and are everybody's property." You are rich because God the Father has given you many spiritual gifts. One way to thank God for these gifts is to use them in good ways and to share them with others, as his son Jesus did.

Here are some spiritual gifts God gives you. Show how you can thank God for each gift by matching each gift with an appropriate action.



- | | |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Faith | _____ Offer to help. |
| 2 Friendship | _____ Pray. |
| 3 Compassion | _____ Apologize. |
| 4 Gratitude | _____ Forgive someone. |
| 5 Self-control | _____ Say "thank you." |
| 6 Hope | _____ Show courage. |
| 7 Peace | _____ Trust God. |
| 8 Forgiveness | _____ Be patient. |
| 9 Strength | _____ Listen to a lonely person. |

Lesson Plan

3 A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gather the young people for prayer. Divide the group into two smaller groups and assign the groups *Side 1* and *Side 2*. When the young people have had time to read their parts silently, invite them to quiet themselves for prayer.

Begin the prayer experience with the Sign of the Cross. Guide the groups to join in as their parts come up, and invite all of the young people to join you in praying aloud the parts labeled *All*. Conclude by singing "Malo Malo/ Thanks Be to God" from the Benziger Eucharist music CD.

A Prayer of Thanksgiving

All: I thank you, Lord, with all my heart.

Side 1: You are robed in power,
You set up the mountains by your might,

Side 2: You still the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples.

All: I thank you, Lord, with all my heart.

Side 1: You visit the Earth and water it,
Make it abundantly fertile.

Side 2: God's stream is filled with water;
With it you supply the world with grain.

All: I thank you, Lord, with all my heart.

Side 1: You adorn the year with your bounty;
Your paths drip with fruitful rain.

Side 2: The pastures are clothed with flocks,
The valleys blanketed with grain;
They cheer and sing for joy.

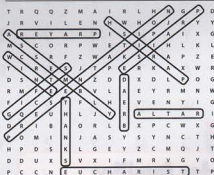
All: I thank you, Lord, with all my heart.

Psalm 65: 7-8, 10, 12, 14; Psalm 138:1

RESOURCE MASTER

Use the Resource Master on page 59 to reinforce the main objectives of this lesson.

ANSWER KEY



Lesson Plan

1 Introduce the Family Page

The activities on this page provide ways for the students to share their learning with their families. Go through the various activities and encourage the students to follow through on them. Answer any questions they may have.



Online for families

Remind the young people to check the Web site this week with their families. There is a section devoted to sacramental preparation.
www.RCLBenziger.com

**HOME
and
Family**



Family Note

Dear Family,

I have learned that all good gifts come from God. We thank God for these gifts at Mass. We do this especially during the Eucharistic Prayer. You can help me prepare for Holy Communion by sharing some of the reasons you give God thanks and praise at Mass.

ON YOUR OWN

Make a thank-you card for a family member or friend. Tell why he or she is God's gift to you.

Family Chat

Talk as a family about ways everyone can practice the virtue of gratitude.

WITH YOUR FAMILY

The next time you eat with your family, start the meal with everyone mentioning something he or she is grateful for. Say a prayer of thanks to God.

Name _____

Giving Thanks and Praise

Find the words in the puzzle and circle them. Remember that the words may appear backwards, vertically, horizontally, and diagonally.

Word Bank

altar

assembly

bread

Eucharist

gifts

parish

praise

prayer

presentation

thanks

wine

T	R	Q	Q	Z	M	A	I	R	L	H	N	G	P	D
J	R	V	I	L	E	N	H	W	H	O	J	R	Y	Y
A	R	E	Y	A	R	P	I	S	I	P	A	I	X	G
M	S	C	O	R	P	W	E	T	I	I	H	L	K	L
W	C	S	R	F	Z	W	A	K	S	R	A	P	Z	E
T	I	R	E	S	J	T	P	E	R	K	A	X	W	R
D	S	N	T	M	N	Z	D	D	X	D	L	P	O	G
R	M	F	E	E	B	V	L	A	E	Y	R	M	N	W
F	I	C	S	T	F	L	H	E	V	E	N	Y	I	G
G	Q	E	U	H	L	J	Y	R	A	L	T	A	R	I
D	R	I	B	A	O	R	L	B	X	P	C	W	X	G
P	O	M	I	N	J	A	S	Y	S	Y	N	C	T	H
H	P	D	S	K	L	G	E	Y	Z	C	M	Q	J	T
D	D	U	X	S	V	X	I	F	M	R	V	G	Y	O
P	C	C	N	E	U	C	H	A	R	I	S	T	T	P