

❧ **Enriching Faith** ❧

**LESSONS AND
ACTIVITIES ON
WHAT MAKES US
CATHOLIC**

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INTRODUCTION

As Catholics, we have a treasure chest of customs, traditions, rituals, and symbols, all of them reminding us who we are and how we live as disciples. This book explores just a few of them.

I hope the ideas here will lead children and youth to understand these treasures more deeply and to live them more faithfully—all in creative, engaging, enjoyable, and engrossing activities.

Many of these activities can be changed and adapted to explore other symbols, rituals, and customs of our faith. In choosing and working with activities, remember nine noteworthy necessities:

① Activities are theologically sound. All that we do needs to help learners delve deeper into and remember the meaning. Oftentimes, our choice of activities might concentrate on the details (not that details aren't important) but neglect the core meaning, the religious import.

In studying the creation story, for example, rather than drawing (or coloring) seven pictures of the seven days, making a room-length mural of all of creation, with the words "God saw that it was good," emphasizes the foundational meaning.

Rather than some type of project concentrating upon all the animals in the story of Noah's Ark (cute as it might be), a large rainbow filled with some of God's promises recorded in Scripture would depict the scriptural meaning of the story: God keeps promises.

② Activities are catechetically/educationally valuable. Activities are used to deepen the learner's understanding or appreciation of the theme by illuminating the truth, the personal implications of the belief, and the relevance of faith.

Rather than simply reviewing by inviting the children/youth to list/make a poster of the Corporal Works of Mercy, invite various pairs/groups of learners to draw a picture, or do a PowerPoint or video, of how each work is or can be lived by those their own age.

③ Activities belong to the learner. The essence of the activity is self-expression: how does what we have just learned apply to my life? Therefore, there is no need for patterns or samples to illustrate "what it has to look like." There are no rules proclaiming "it has to be *this way*."

Because the activity helps the learners interpret and deepen—not just repeat—what has been learned, it takes them beyond the presentation. After a study of the Psalms, rewriting a psalm in one's own words or writing a psalm for today, from the learners' everyday experiences/needs, will help to make the meaning of psalms more personal.

After a discussion on God: if you were to paint God, what color would you select?

After the Scripture story of Zacchaeus: if you were Zacchaeus, what would you say in a thank-you note?

④ Activities touch upon each person's creativity. The skilled catechist invites the children/youth, saying just enough to spark their thoughts but leaving them with freedom so that they can imagine, dream, think, and apply.

Rather than doing a puzzle, or a fill in the blanks, etc., about the call of the disciples, children/youth can be invited to imagine they were there; they were called by Jesus. They might write a letter to their family about what happened, their feelings about it, and what they will now do.

Rather than using a word game that only uses memory, create a newspaper about a Scripture event or a billboard that advertises God's love; this approach calls upon individual creativity and imagination and deepens learning and appreciation.

5 Activities take various expressions.

Activities are much more than crossword puzzles, drawing pictures, etc. Wouldn't it be wonderful if each new session invited the learners to respond through a new type of media, different materials, participative experiences, employing the various creative expressions of our heritage, of who we are as humans?

6 Everyone doesn't need to do the same thing. Children/youth will have different abilities and interests. Whenever possible, suggest options for any given session. Within a lesson on prayer, for example, give four options from which they can choose: using paint, show what you feel when praying alone or with others; rewrite the *Magnificat* in your own words; design gestures to accompany your favorite psalm; select a popular song that can be used as prayer accompanied by PowerPoint.

7 Activities aren't fillers. In lesson planning, catechists don't dream things up just to keep the learners busy. Activities/projects flow from the theme and reinforce the core teaching.

Neither do activities have to always take place at the end of the session, during the last ten minutes. At the very beginning, invite the learners to mold a sculpture from clay that expresses their idea of God's forgiveness. These

sculptures can then be referred to throughout the session and might be a focal point for a closing prayer service.

8 Activities relate to life outside the group session. Faith formation sessions, of course, are never an end in themselves. They send children/youth forth to a life of discipleship, a life of prayer and witness, a life of serving in their everyday lives. All learning answers the "so what?" question. What does this truth, doctrine, belief, or practice of our heritage have to do with my everyday life?

Invite the learners to interview someone, such as the owner of a store or the principal of a school, about respect for property and possessions. How do these real-life encounters deepen the discussion and learning that happened during the session?

9 Utilize the full potential of each activity. Even though the process (what happens within) is more important than the finished product, learners quickly figure out what is/what isn't busy work by the way catechists care for and take an interest in their work.

The more useful the better: with pictures of children living the Beatitudes, don't just post them. Compare, discuss, make an album, show and explain to another class; display in the church gathering space; publish.

The more prayerful the better: write a prayer to accompany a drawing or activity; bring written/drawn activities in procession to the prayer corner to use/to offer during prayer.

ADVENT

Objective

To prepare for the season of Advent by making Family Envelopes of Activities

Background for Catechists

The liturgical year begins four weeks before Christmas. Advent means “coming”; we celebrate the three comings of Jesus: into our world some two thousand years ago, the Second Coming in the future, and how Jesus comes each day into our lives. Advent calls us to slow down and reflect on the gift of Jesus in our lives. Yet, in many ways, with all the events and preparations surrounding us, this is probably the busiest, most rushed time of the year. The church invites us to take the slower time, to find ways to live in the present moment, deepening and understanding the gift we have been given.

Materials

- 24 (or so) envelopes for each child/youth
- Copies of the handout
- Blank slips of paper
- Scissors
- Pencils, markers

Lesson Starter

Ask: *What did your family do during the days before Christmas last year, the days of Advent?*

Acknowledge the busy schedules of the season; then share with your learners the church’s invitation to make Advent a slower time, a time of rituals that bring us closer to Jesus and to one another, including our family.

Share with the children/youth that many families have rituals during the Advent season to celebrate the meaning of the season and to spend time with each other. Ask: *What are some things that families might do during the Advent season?*

Activity

Invite the children/youth to think of and choose what they would like their family to do during this Advent season to remember Jesus. They can cut out ideas from the handout, or write down ideas that were suggested by the group or other ideas that come to them.

Place each one in a separate envelope, dating the outside of the envelope. A few of the activities are designed for a specific date; the others can be determined by the children/youth. They might want to decorate the envelopes.

Invite the children/youth to take the envelopes home. Suggest placing them on their family dinner table, opening one each evening and discussing as a family how they might do the suggested activity.

Prayer Together

Emmanuel, God with us in every moment, during this Advent season slow us down. As we celebrate the coming of your Son, Jesus, deepen our caring within our families and our reaching out to all in our human family.

Options

- Prior to this session communicate with the parents, asking for activities their families have done in the past and what they might like to do this year. Add these into your discussion with your learners.
- Instead of envelopes, these ideas might be placed on an Advent Chain. One of the advantages of the envelopes is the experience of waiting—an Advent theme—to discover what suggestion is in each envelope.

Make an Advent Chain to count the days throughout Advent to Christmas.

Make a family trip to the library and check out some books about Christmas.

Read the Christmas story from the gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Begin tonight to put up your nativity scene. Talk about the part that each person or animal had in the Christmas story.

Tonight is a no-television night. Spend time tonight reading those books you checked out of the library.

Today (Dec. 6), celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas. Exchange your gift certificates. Telephone a loved one long distance for a surprise.

Make a list of love and appreciation. Talk about what you love/appreciate about each person on your list. Be sure to have someone take notes; then give the notes to each person.

Tonight, make a family Christmas card for one of the special people on your list.

Whoever opens this envelope gets to choose what the family will do together this evening.

We are getting ready to remember the birth of Jesus. Take out your picture albums and remember the birth of each family member.

Give someone a simple gift and don't take credit for it. You could leave baked goods, candy, or an anonymous Advent greeting on a neighbor's doorstep.

Make cookies for a lonely neighbor, for a soup kitchen, etc.

Take all of your Christmas books, wrap them, and put them in a box. Each night—or once a week—take one, unwrap it, and read it together.

Pray the O Antiphons before dinner each evening (the week before Christmas).

First Sunday of Advent:
Set up your family Advent wreath.

Go shopping together to buy a new toy for a charitable organization.

Tonight, play Christmas music and make decorations for your tree.

Tonight, take a family walk in your neighborhood and look at Christmas decorations.

Tonight (Dec. 5), get ready for the feast of St. Nicholas by making gift certificates for everyone in the family.

Today (Dec. 8) is one of the feasts of Mary. As part of your family prayer together, pray the Hail Mary. How do you think Mary felt while she waited for Jesus to be born?

Pray together: Thank you, God, for the excitement we feel. It is very hard to wait to find out what will be under the tree. Help us to think more of you. Give us the peace of Christmas as we continue waiting.

Let everyone take a turn telling what she or he thinks was the best thing about last Christmas.

Write a prayer together that you can use when you place the Infant Jesus in the crib.

Have a wireless evening/day. Unplug everything and decide on a way to just enjoy/be together with your family.

Read about the Old Testament people that are featured on the Jesse Tree. Make one or two ornaments of Jesse Tree people.

Decorate a mini-Christmas tree and take it to someone in a nursing home.

As a family, record a Christmas voicemail message—in the spirit of the meaning of Christmas.

Offer to babysit for another family so the parents can go shopping.

THE ALTAR

Objective

To engage the imagination of the learners as they understand that the altar represents Christ and the body of Christ

Background for Catechists

In his general audience on February 5, 2014, Pope Francis, speaking about the Eucharist and the layout of Catholic churches, observed that in the “center...we find the altar,” which is “a table that has been prepared and that makes us think of a banquet...”

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (nos. 306–308) reminds us that only what is required for the celebration of Mass is placed on the altar. This includes the Book of the Gospels (at the beginning of Mass, before it is taken to the ambo), the *Roman Missal*, and the chalice with the paten. The candles and crucifix are placed near or on the altar (assuring that they do not interfere with the people’s clear view of the eucharistic action on the altar).

Catholic teaching articulates that the altar symbolizes both Jesus Christ and the body of Christ (all of us). The members of the church “are the living stones out of which the Lord Jesus builds the Church’s altar” (*Dedication of a Church and an Altar*, no. 2). The design of the altar, then, is an expression of the uniqueness of the community that gathers around it.

Materials

- Scissors
- Markers or crayons
- Copies of the handout

Lesson Starter

Ask: *What is one of your favorite places in your home? When relatives and friends gather in your home, where do they often end up?* (Hopefully, some children/youth will say the dinner/kitchen table.)

Lead the children/youth to realize that a family table, our altar, is in our church home too. Use the information above to describe what is placed on the altar.

Activity

Distribute copies of the handout, along with markers or crayons. Invite the children to draw a picture of the altar in their church. Remind them to include the required elements. Then ask them to draw the people who are present at the altar, along with other details that describe their parish church.

After the children finish, draw them together to share their pictures. Invite them to share about the altar and the celebration of the Mass in the parish.

Prayer Together

Nourishing God, we gather around many tables. At our family table, deepen our care for each other. As we celebrate at your altar, make us more aware of who we are, called to be the body of Christ in our world.

Options

- Engage the children in building an altar, using cardboard boxes or other materials.
- Children/youth might write an explanation of the design of their altar.

The Altar

TABLE OF THE EUCHARIST

Draw a picture of the altar in your parish. Include the important things that are used on the altar. Draw the people who celebrate the Eucharist together.



THE AMBO—TABLE OF THE WORD

Objective

To deepen learning about the importance of the word of God during liturgy, using imagination and creativity

Background for Catechists

The church (especially through the Second Vatican Council) reminds us of the many ways Jesus is present with us during the liturgy. We are fed and nourished through God's word and the Eucharist. The *General Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass* reminds us that there is a close relationship between the altar and the ambo, emphasizing the connection between word and Eucharist: the two tables, the table of the word and the table of the Eucharist.

The U.S. bishops' document *Built of Living Stones* gives further guidance on the use of the ambo: "Our reverence for the word of God is expressed not only in an attentive listening to and reflection upon the Scripture, but also by the way we handle and treat the Book of the Gospels. The ambo can be designed not only for reading and preaching, but also for displaying the open Book of the Gospels or a copy of the Scriptures before and after the liturgical celebration" (no. 62).

Materials

- Pencils, markers, crayons
- Copies of the handout

Lesson Starter

Ask: *When someone shares an important message* (college classes, the president's State of the Union speech, etc.), *where does the speaker often stand?*

As the learners explore the use of lecterns and podiums, help them to see that the church has a unique kind: an ambo. It's much more than a podium; it's a table from which we are

fed, since the message (the word of God) is so crucial to our lives: it leads us to Eucharist, and Eucharist leads us to live the word of God.

Discuss with your learners the uniqueness and reverence due the ambo and the use of the two liturgical books used at the ambo: the lectionary (the book of the readings for each Sunday and weekday Mass as well as for other liturgies: baptism, anointing of the sick, funerals, rites of blessings, etc.) and the Book of the Gospels (gospels for Sundays and feasts of our Lord and the saints). Invite them to imagine what the covers of these two books might look like.

Share with your learners that, at times, churches (following guidelines from *Built of Living Stones*, nos. 126–127) use a simple fabric hanging, a stole-like piece, conveying the color and a symbol or image of the liturgical season.

Activity

Divide your group in half. Invite half of the children/youth to design a front cover for the Book of the Gospels; invite the other half of the group to design a simple hanging for the front of the ambo.

Prayer Together

Word of God, as we gather around the table of the word, open our hearts to cherish your message.

Open our lips to share your message. Open our hands and feet to be your message to our world.

Options

- If there is time—or enough children/youth to divide into three groups—invite them to also design a cover for the Lectionary.
- They might design several hangings for the ambo—for each of the liturgical seasons and for celebrations of baptism, confirmation, marriage, etc.

The Ambo

TABLE OF THE WORD

Design a cover for the Book of the Gospels or
a simple hanging for the front of the ambo.



BAPTISMAL DAYS

Objective

To enable learners to learn more about the sacrament of baptism, especially their baptismal day, through interviews of people who celebrated the day

Background for Catechists

Baptism, the sacrament of the beginning of new life in Christ, is just that: a beginning. Baptism isn't a once-and-done sacrament. We live our baptism and our baptismal promises each and every day.

One of the ways to keep our focus on the centrality of our baptism is to remember and celebrate the anniversary of our baptism: remembering with our families, reminiscing over photos, bringing out our baptismal candle and baptismal white garment, having a special meal, and praying together, especially renewing our baptismal promises.

Materials

- Copies of the handout
- Blank paper
- Pencils or pens

Lesson Starter

Ask: *Do you remember the day of your baptism?* (Some might say yes because their family has talked about it with them, shown them the pictures, etc.) *Do you know the date of your baptism? Who was there with you? Why did your parents have you baptized?*

Talk with your children/youth about the importance of baptism in our lives: initiation into the Christian community, the bestowal of a name (our personal name and the name "Christian"), renunciation of sin, the celebration that God has chosen us, the gift of grace, and the beginning of a new life in Jesus Christ.

Activity

Invite your children/youth to interview some people who were present at their baptism (their parents, godparents, grandparents, other relatives and friends, etc.). (Interviewing is a helpful catechetical activity that involves family members/others in the community in the child's faith formation, helps the children/youth benefit from the wisdom of the larger community, and helps the learners to connect their classroom learning with the "real" world.)

Distribute copies of the handout and use it to help your learners prepare for the interview. Distribute blank paper and invite the children to write down some questions to ask for their interview. Then draw them together to discuss some of their questions. Encourage them to use the papers as they conduct their interview.

Provide time in subsequent sessions for the children/youth to share their findings with the rest of the group. Invite them too to share all that they found out with their parents.

Prayer Together

God of New Life, in baptism we were signed with the cross, immersed in the saving waters, and anointed with holy oil. You call us by name, calling us to grow in wisdom, age, and grace. We promise to walk with others in your love, to care for others, and to be peacemakers in our world.

Options

- Invite the learners to create something to help them remember all that they have discovered: a booklet, a PowerPoint, a poster, etc., about their baptism.
- Encourage families to celebrate the baptismal anniversaries of every family member.

Interviews about My Baptismal Day

A Few Interview Pointers

Make a list of the people you will interview. Your parents can help by telling you who was present.

What kinds of questions will help these people share their experiences with you?

Write your questions down and decide on a logical order for the interview.

Go to the interview prepared to jot down the answers. (You might want to ask the person if you could record them.)

Listen carefully to each answer. Sometimes the answer will tell you what your next question should be.

Look at the person when she or he is talking with you.

Even though you write down or record the answers, don't concentrate so much on getting the information that you don't really listen to what the person is saying.

At the end of the interview, thank the person for talking with you.

Afterward, let the persons you interviewed know how your report went with the group—how it helped them and you.

Some Suggested Questions to Ask

- 1 What was I like on the day of my baptism?
- 2 Is there one thing you especially remember about the celebration of the rite when I was baptized?
- 3 How did you feel during the celebration of my baptism? Did it remind you of anything?
- 4 Did you make the sign of the cross on my forehead? How did you feel when you did that?
- 5 Do you remember the message of the homily?
- 6 Was I baptized by immersion or by pouring of the water?
- 7 (Parents): Why did you have me baptized?
- 8 When and where were you baptized? Do you know who was there with you? Do you celebrate the anniversary of your baptism?
- 9 What does the sacrament of baptism mean to you?
- 10 How do you live your baptismal promises today?

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Objective

To gain a deeper understanding of Catholic Social Teaching, applying it to everyday situations

Background for Catechists

In reality, Catholic Social Teaching is very old. Throughout the church's history, the church has always talked about and acted on issues of our social life—our life with each other—following the teachings of Jesus. Often, however, the term “Catholic Social Teaching” refers to documents from the popes, the Second Vatican Council, and the bishops that have been written within the last 120 years.

These documents and exhortations address various areas of our life together, including the political, economic, social, and cultural. They talk about current realities in the lives of people and societies, highlighting the benefits and dangers in those realities that affect the dignity and rights of all people.

Several years ago, the U.S. bishops named seven key themes that are at the heart of our tradition of Catholic Social Teaching. (See the handout summarizing the themes in language that children/youth can understand.)

Materials

- Copies of handout
- Internet access
- Newspapers, magazines
- Sunday bulletins
- Pencils, paper

Lesson Starter

Ask: *Are there people in your life* (parents, teachers, grandparents, godparents, etc.) *who help you understand what is happening in your life, in the world around you? Who help you to*

understand the advantages and the pitfalls of your attitudes and actions?

As a church, we are fortunate because that happens for us too.

Explain in a simple fashion the body of Catholic Social Teaching within the church and the seven key themes.

Activity

Divide your learners into seven groups. Give each group one of the themes of Catholic Social Teaching. Invite them to search the Internet, magazines, newspapers, Sunday bulletins, etc., looking for articles, pictures, and words that illustrate their theme.

After they have collected a wide variety of words, pictures, and articles, invite them to design a television documentary about their theme. Encourage their creativity. In addition to the “script,” they might wish to use PowerPoint, posters, visuals, songs, interviews, etc.

Prayer Together

Jesus, Light of the World, help us to bring light to your world. Jesus, who sought out those who were hurting, help us to bring care to your world. Jesus, Prince of Peace, help us to be peacemakers in your world.

Options

- Invite your learners to write letters to TV stations, newspapers, legislators, and others about their theme of Catholic Social Teaching. Even small children can understand and write about many of the issues, such as peace, respect for creation, and caring for the needy.

The Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

The dignity of the human person

- All people are holy, made in the image of God.
- God made every one of us. We are called to treat others with great respect and fairness because God made them too.

We are called to live as family and community

- People are both holy and social; when one suffers, we all suffer.
- We, as humans, need to be around other people to be happy and healthy. Jesus wants us to live in families, have friends and neighbors, and also care for one another.

Rights and responsibilities

- Every person needs food, work, a home, school, and medical care in order to live. Every person has a right to have these.
- When some people don't have these things, it is our responsibility to help them obtain their rights.

An option for the poor and vulnerable

- The gospel test of a community (or society) is how it treats those in need.
- Some people do not have what is necessary to live: food, water, work, housing, school, and medical care. They are considered poor. Our church teaches that these brothers and sisters must be treated with extra respect and extra care and given what they need.

The dignity and rights of workers

- Money, work, and business exist to serve people, not the other way around.
- Work gives us the means to live, giving us a chance to use the talents God gives us. Through our work, we are helping God create our world. Because everyone is created by God, workers deserve to have safe conditions, reasonable hours, and fair wages.

Solidarity

- We are called to work for justice for all people.
- The people of the world need each other, and we must work together if we are to live. When we share our lives with others around the world, we become the best we can be. Despite differences, we are one family—the family of God.

We are called to stewardship

- The earth and all life on it is God's creation. When we use the earth's resources unwisely, many people suffer.
- Making wise choices is called "good stewardship."

THE CROSS

Objective

To deepen understanding of the symbol of the cross

Background for Catechists

The cross is one of the earliest and most widely used Christian symbols. It illuminates a core belief of the Christian faith: Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead. Even though it was the means of execution for criminals at the time of Jesus, it is now a sign of victory over death and suffering.

Throughout history, a great variety of crosses have developed, some with specific symbolic meaning and others that are associated with various groups or nationalities.

The cross has been used in paintings, statues, church decorations, and jewelry throughout the history of Christianity. We especially use the cross in physical gestures, as we make the sign of the cross in prayer, remembering our baptism and our following of Christ.

Materials

- Copies of handout
- Books with examples of various crosses
- Printed pages from the Internet for each cross *(You might ask parents or teens in your parish to prepare this information.)*
- Pencils, markers, and crayons
- Poster boards or large construction paper
- 5 x 8 cards
- Paint and clay

Lesson Starter

Ask: *Have you ever belonged to a club that had a symbol by which everyone knew who you were, the purpose of your group?*

We belong to the Christian family. Is there a sign or symbol that reminds us and others that we are Jesus' followers?

Explain that, throughout history, the cross has always pointed to the identity of Christians, but the symbol of the cross has been expressed in various ways —each telling us a little something about our beliefs.

Activity

Distribute copies of the handout. Invite each learner to choose one or more of the crosses. In the space next to the crosses, have them write what they think the cross symbolizes, based on its title or shape. Then invite them to design their own cross in the frame. This additional cross should be their original design. How would their cross illustrate something they believe about Jesus or about our faith? Gather the group together and invite them to share their responses and their own cross designs.

Options

- Invite students to research the various crosses on the handout and bring the results to the next session.
- Have them make a cross poster and display it by the prayer table.

Prayer Together

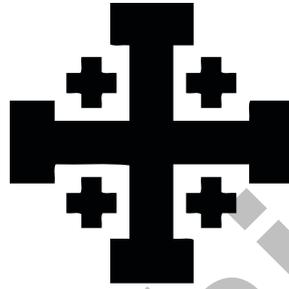
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Options

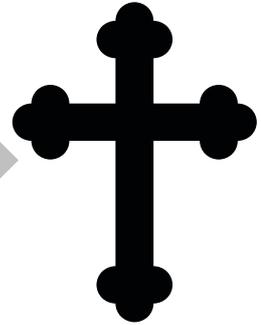
- The learners could be given only the names of the crosses; they would research the meaning and image.
- Invite your children/youth to create a cross that incorporates symbols of their community.



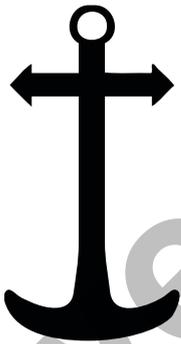
CELTIC CROSS



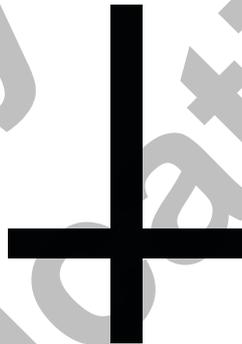
JERUSALEM CROSS



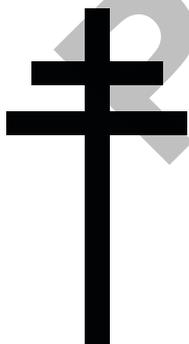
BUDED CROSS



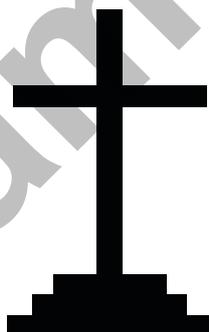
ANCHOR CROSS



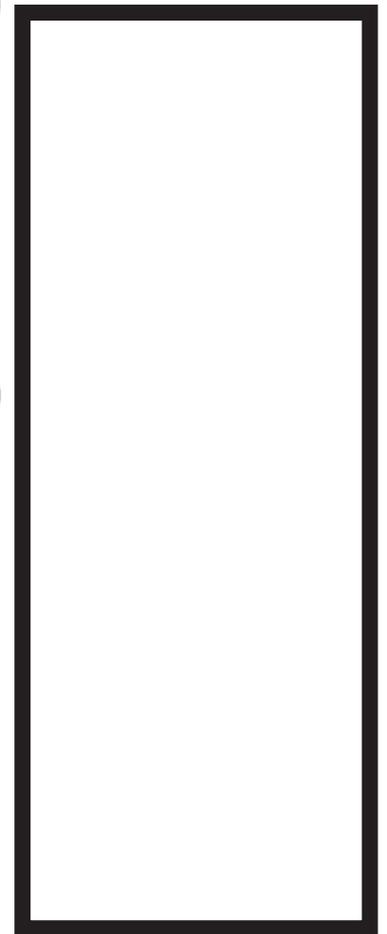
ST. PETER'S CROSS



PATRIARCHAL CROSS



CALVARY CROSS



FAITH SHARING

Objective

To participate in an enriching faith practice of the church: faith sharing

Background for Catechists

The *General Directory for Catechesis* underlines the importance of the group as one of the elements of catechetical methodology: “Groups are practically a vital necessity for personality formation...they promote a sense of dialogue and sharing as well as a sense of Christian co-responsibility” (no. 159).

Throughout our Catholic history, one of the helpful faith practices that has enabled people to grow is listening to and sharing faith experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Faith sharing broadens us, suggests fresh ways of thinking, and stretches us to consider things that we might have missed or never thought about. In our sharing with others, the verbalization of our experiences, thoughts, and feelings concretizes them for us; in the telling, we are often led to understand our experiences in new ways.

Materials

- The handout questions can be used by the catechist to suggest possible starters.

Lesson Starter

Ask: *What do you talk about with your friends? Does talking with and listening to friends help you understand things in a new way?*

This happens to us as Christians too. Our faith is not just between me and God. Faith is lived and shared. St. Paul says, “Faith comes from what is heard” (Romans 10:17). When we listen to others, when we listen to ourselves say something aloud, we see our faith in new ways, we might understand something from a different perspective, and we marvel at how God lives with us.

Activity

Often throughout your sessions, invite children/youth to faith sharing. Some guidelines:

- Faith sharing is often best done in small groups, usually two or three people.
- Sharing one’s faith with another is a great gift, and the one who receives is in the midst of an awe-filled experience. Therefore, what is shared within that small group stays within the small group.
- The small group needs some direction: a question or open-ended sentence that flows from Scripture, the theme of the session, etc. Catechists can phrase these according to the age and needs of the group.
- Faith sharing is not a time to give advice; it is a time for each person to listen to the experiences of the others.
- It’s perfectly acceptable not to share. The goal is to enable children/youth to become comfortable with faith sharing, but on a particular day or with a particular topic, someone might not be able to talk. That is perfectly all right.

The handout suggests some faith-sharing starters related to children’s/youth’s experiences of God. Similar questions and open-ended sentences can be designed for any theme/topic.

Prayer Together

Listening God, may our prayerful listening to each other help us to recognize you everywhere, sharing your story and your care with everyone we meet.

Option

Send the handout home with the children and suggest that families use it for sharing faith among themselves.

Faith-Sharing Starters about God

- What color reminds you of God?
- How does it make you feel when someone tells you that you are a child of God?
- Do you know any people who love God? How can you tell they love God?
- What does God sound like?
- What if God whispered to you right now? What would God say?
- What happened to you last week that reminded you of God?
- Do you ask God things? What things? Does God ask you things? What things?
- If you sang a song to God, what song would you sing?
- If God gave you a compliment, what would it be?
- If you asked God to teach you to pray, what would God say?
- Where do you pray best? Why?
- What advertising slogan would be a good description of God?
- Finish this sentence: "If my relationship with God was the basis for a TV show, I'd call it _____."
- What if you could ask God to solve one problem in the world?
- Finish this sentence: The person that most easily influences me to believe in God or at least to think about God is _____.

Faith-Sharing Starters about God for Families

- Gather the family together to read the newspaper. Which news stories show God's presence and care in the world?
- What's your favorite adjective for God?
- How has God blessed our family?
- I wonder what would make our family feel like shouting Alleluia.
- If God had one sentence to say to our family, I think it would be _____.
- I think God is _____.
- The Bible says we are created in the image of God. How do you image, look like, or act like God?
- The place where I like to pray to God is _____.
- Our home is God's home because _____.
- (Saying to each other family member) "I think the thing that God likes most about you is _____."
- Finish this sentence: "I think the thing God likes most about our family is _____."
- Finish this sentence: "I felt God was especially with our family when _____."
- What gifts does God give us that we can't touch or see?
- Go on a walk together and look for great and small things that God has made. Have everyone find one small thing that she or he can take home. Work together and make a table centerpiece out of small things God has made.