

JOURNEY TO EMMAUS: A HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY CURRICULUM



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON
OFFICE OF YOUTH MINISTRY



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SETTING OUT ON A JOURNEY TO EMMAUS...

August 2010

Dear Coordinator of Youth Ministry,

I am proud to announce the release of the new *Journey to Emmaus: A High School Youth Ministry Curriculum* of the Catholic Diocese of Arlington's Office of Youth Ministry (OYM). For several years I have wanted to create a curriculum to assist Coordinators of Youth Ministry (CYM) in their ability to catechize young people through a more systematic and comprehensive approach. Thanks to the growing staff of the OYM, this goal is now becoming a reality.

The spark to initiate this project came in January 2010 when the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis released the document, *Adaptation of Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*. This document established the framework of catechesis that all youth ministry programs must cover. Using this document, and the Catholic Diocese of Arlington's *Secondary Religion Guidelines*, we set out to create a four-year curriculum that covers all of the required material that must be taught to young people during their high school years.

The goal of our new *Journey to Emmaus* curriculum is to put some flesh onto these frameworks, making practical and distinct youth ministry sessions out of them. Collaborative efforts within the OYM, youth ministers within and outside of the Diocese of Arlington, and other prominent catechists, have created a four-year, eighty session, curriculum that can be used weekly in meetings with young people. If you allow these sessions to guide your ministry over the next four years, then you can rest assured that you have provided your teens with the complete understanding of the faith that God has called you to bring to them.

Each session includes direct correlations to the *Secondary Religion Guidelines*, Scripture references, Catechism and Church document citations, opening and closing prayers, games and icebreakers, a sample talk, and related media links to music, movies, and websites. Additionally the curriculum will tie in each year to the OYM's annual theme.

The sessions are divided into two categories. The first category is 'catechetical nights' and the second category is 'issue nights'. The 'catechetical nights' teach specific doctrine while 'issue nights' address common cultural issues that teens may face. We have placed the 'catechetical nights' in the order that we think makes the most sense for the semester. The 'issues nights' are created to be inserted at any point into the curriculum. We attempted to make the curriculum as 'systematic' as possible, in that certain information should come before you address the next topic. However, we also understand that each year new students enter the program and learn alongside the teens from previous years. For this reason, the curriculum will cover some foundational topics on an annual basis.

It is our privilege to create this resource for you to use with your young people. We hope that this curriculum helps you in your ministry and provides you with fresh ideas to teach young people about Jesus Christ. Please contact us if you would like to assist in creating sessions for future semesters. We pray that God will work through this curriculum and through each of you as you take on the invaluable role of catechizing the young people of the Catholic Church.

In Christ,



Kevin Bohli
Director
Office of Youth Ministry

Journey to Emmaus: A High School Youth Ministry Curriculum
The Catholic Diocese of Arlington's Office of Youth Ministry

Doctrinal Elements	Year 1: Fall	Year 1: Spring	Year 2: Fall	Year 2: Spring	Year 3: Fall	Year 3: Spring	Year 4: Fall	Year 4: Spring
Person of Christ	Jesus as True God and True Man	Jesus: Second Person of the Trinity	Jesus Revealed in the Old Testament	Jesus Performs Miracles (Eucharist)	Jesus as Leader	Jesus as Messiah and Sacrifice	Jesus as Teacher	Jesus the Resurrection
Life in Christ	The Beatitudes	The Human Community and Solidarity	The Greatest Commandment: Love the Lord (Eucharist)	Life and Dignity of the Human Person (Abortion)	Authority and the Common Good	The Second Greatest Commandment: Love your neighbor (Abortion)	Love for the Poor and Vulnerable	Stewardship of Resources and Rights and Responsibilities (Abortion)
Morality	Truth, Freedom, and Responsibility	Sin & Forgiveness	Moral Law	The Commandments	Conscience	Poverty, Chastity, & Obedience	The Virtuous Life & Gifts of the Holy Spirit	The Church as Mother and Teacher
Christian Mystery	Sacraments & Grace (Eucharist)	The Church's Liturgy (Eucharist)	The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Sacraments	Sacraments of Healing	Universal Call to Holiness & Vocations	Participation in the Eternal Banquet (Eucharist)	Sacraments at the Service of Communion	Sacraments of Initiation (Eucharist)
Church	Evangelization: The Church's Mission	Tradition & Scripture	The Communion of Saints	The Pilgrim Church	Ecumenism	Mary, Mother of the Church	Images of the Church (Eucharist)	The Magisterium
Christian Prayer	The Universal Call to Prayer	Forms of Prayer	The Lord's Prayer	Liturgy of the Hours & The Psalms	The Mass (Eucharist)	Charisms and Spiritualities	Challenges in Prayer	Devotions
Sacred Scripture	Divine Revelation	Patriarchs & Prophets	The Gospels	Parallels and Typography between the OT & NT	Evolution of Scripture	Jesus as Fulfillment of Scripture	Accounts from the Early Church	Scripture & Prayer
Profession of Faith	Creation	The Resurrection	God the Son	Forgiveness of Sins	The Marks of the Church	God the Holy Spirit	God the Father	Eternal Life
Issue Night # 1	Politics	Abortion	Decision Making & Leadership	Friendship	Discernment & Vocations	Euthanasia & Death Penalty	Homo-sexuality	Suicide, Depression, & Mental Health
Issue Night # 2	Sexuality	Relativism	Drugs & Alcohol	Violence, Gangs, & Bullying	Dating & Modesty	Internet, Media, & Music	Just War	Islam

Key To Each Session

SESSION TITLE

DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

The eight doctrinal elements reflect the most important foundations of Catholic doctrine and faith. Each semester there will be eight sessions (“catechetical nights”) which cover the eight doctrinal elements. Additionally, there is a ninth element called an “issue night” which addresses common cultural issues that teens may face. All of these elements can be found on the Four-Year Curriculum Guide (pg 7).

TOPIC

The topic for the night is a lens or specific focus for the evening. This is the basis for the teaching. There are sixty-four different topics in the four-year curriculum.

GOAL

This gives an overview of the objective for the session. It expresses what you want teens to remember most when they walk away from this night.

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

These are the required doctrinal elements for High School aged youth compiled by the Catholic Diocese of Arlington in 1998. These elements are even more detailed and comprehensive than what the USCCB require in their 2010 document, *Adaptation of Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*. Therefore the *Journey to Emmaus* curriculum is structured around and cites each of the *Secondary Religion Guidelines* because it is what our local Church requires and fully encompasses what the USCCB has compiled. These guidelines can be found at:

http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/youth/documents/secondary_religion_guidelines.pdf

SCRIPTURE

Here you will find Scripture passages that relate to the topic of the session.

CATECHISM

Here you will find citations from the Catechism of the Catholic Church that relate to the topic of the session.

GOLDEN THREADS

These truths are the very basic tenets of our faith. Everything that we believe in some way relates back to this hierarchy of truths. For greater depth, read the additional insert called “The Hierarchy of Truths: The Golden Threads of Catechesis” (pg 11).

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

This is a short explanation as to how the topic relates to our annual theme. This year the theme is “Built on Christ” based upon Colossians 2:7, “Rooted and Built up in Jesus Christ, Firm in the Faith.” This theme was set by Pope Benedict XVI for World Youth Day 2011.

PROCLAMATION

These are the specific doctrinal points that the Coordinator of Youth Ministry and the rest of the team must be familiar with prior to leading the session. These are the key points to be communicated to the teens during the session.

Key to Curriculum

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS & OTHER RESOURCES

Here you will find suggestions of movies, internet videos, websites, music, books, and other resources that you can incorporate into the session to creatively communicate the Church's teaching.

GATHER

This section includes an icebreaker to get your session started and opening prayer suggestions related to the topic. This section might also include a description of the environment or setting for the session.

EXPLANATION

This is a suggested talk or talking points that you could give to communicate the catechetical points of the session. Teenagers do not typically learn the faith through a lecture format. Therefore, this is a suggested talk which you can fill with personal stories, testimonies, and other recommended media and activities to provide for a more lively and comprehensive approach to catechesis.

APPLICATION

This is the point in the session where the teenagers are invited to reflect upon or apply what they have learned in order to make it more concrete in their lives. Included are different examples of activities that can be used to drive home the catechesis of the evening. In general, at least one activity is a calm and reflective activity and another is an active, upbeat activity. This allows you to choose an activity based on the group of teens you intend to have or the type of activity you think best fits your group's needs. Some sessions have the activities incorporated directly into the explanation section which provides an easy flow for the session.

SEND

This section has two parts. The first part is answering the question, "What does this have to do with Jesus?" This is a reminder to both the catechists and the student to reflect upon how this Church teaching relates to Jesus Christ Himself. Everything that we teach should point the students to Jesus Christ. The second part is the closing prayer.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HISPANIC YOUTH MINISTRY

This section gives a few reflections on how the topic is viewed in light of the Hispanic culture and suggestions for working with Hispanic youth.

The Hierarchy of Truths: The Golden Threads of Catechesis

The hierarchy of truths, also commonly referred to as the golden threads of catechesis, is a helpful way to see how we can come to understand our faith. These truths are the very basic tenets of our faith. Every teaching of our faith in some way comes down to one of the five topics listed below. It is important to understand that this list is not meant to say that some teachings are less real or less true than others. It simply means that these truths are foundational to the understanding of our faith. They illuminate other truths of our faith. These truths connect doctrines to each other which helps us to see their unity.

The Hierarchy of Truths

1. **The Trinity:** This is the most essential truth of our faith. Without it, no other truths make sense. The Trinity **MUST** be taught in every doctrine.
2. **The Incarnation:** Christ is the center of the world. All catechesis should be Christocentric (*Catechesi Tradendae* 5). Everything we teach is connected to who Christ is and what Christ continues to do.
3. **The Paschal Mystery:** All that Christ is, culminates in the Paschal Mystery. The Paschal Mystery is the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. It is the saving act of Jesus for which He came into the world.
4. **The Church as the dispenser of mysteries (sacraments):** This teaches of the importance of the Church, most especially in light of the sacraments.
5. **The Church as the mystical body of Christ/Human Dignity:** Because God is a communion of persons, we too participate in the body of Christ. Human Dignity plays a role here in the fact that we image God and the Trinity is a communion of persons, so we as the Body of Christ image this community of persons.

When we catechize, we are teaching these basic truths of our faith, while at the same time, going deeper. Each of these truths is the basic building block to the doctrines we teach. They have to be taught in a progressive order and in a systematic way that connects a doctrine to this basic truth. For example, teens cannot understand why abortion is wrong if they first are not taught about human dignity. However, they cannot learn about human dignity until they understand the Trinity, etc.

Think of catechesis as a spiral. The very root of that spiral is these truths, but each year with our young people, we delve deeper into one of these truths. This is not to say that we simply teach these five things over and over again, but that everything that a Coordinator of Youth Ministry teaches is based on these concepts. For instance, if you were teaching young people and you wanted to explain the dangers of relativism, it should be rooted in the Trinity, although it might not be obviously directed to the Trinity. Everything that we believe in some way relates back to this hierarchy. We need to be making these connections for the teens that we work with.

Source: Abridged version taken from the *Youth Ministry Resource Manual of the Catholic Diocese of Arlington*, Chapter 3: Catechesis, pages 7-8, by Emily Anderson

Truly Man, Truly Divine

DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

Person of Christ

TOPIC

Jesus as True God and True Man

GOAL

The goal for this session is to introduce the concept of the Incarnation, specifically Jesus as both fully human and fully divine. The goal is also to introduce and give an overview of the importance of this concept to our faith as Catholics. The main question that should be answered at the end of the session is: Why is Jesus being true God and true man so important to our faith as Catholics? Teens should recognize that the Incarnation is a fundamental basis of our faith and salvation.

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

(II.I.A.3.b.i,ii) (II.II.A.5.a,b,c.i)

SCRIPTURE

True God and True Man- 1 Jn 4:2-3; 2 Jn 7; Jn 14:9-10; Lk 2:52; Mk 6:38; 8:27; Phil 2:7

Incarnation- 1 Jn 4:9, 10, 14; 1 Jn 3:5; Jn 3:13-16; Gal 4:4-5; Mt 11:29; Dt 6:4-5; 2 Pt 1:4; Jn 1:14; Heb 10:5-7; Ps 40:6-8

CATECHISM

True God and True Man- 464-469,479-483
Incarnation- 454, 456-463, 470-478

Mary's Role in the Incarnation- 486-487, 496, 501, 721-730

GOLDEN THREADS

The Incarnation: It is through Jesus who is perfectly human and perfectly divine that we, as sinful humans are saved.

The Paschal Mystery/The Church: Jesus freely chose to suffer and die in order to save us who are sinners so that we would become sons and daughters of God and be granted the gift of eternal life.

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

Built on Christ. Jesus is a perfect example of what we as humans, created in the image and likeness of God, can aspire to. He is the foundation of our faith and the one and only mediator between God and man.

PROCLAMATION

The Catechism paragraphs listed above and the Secondary Religion Guidelines should be reviewed by the team that is putting together this session. Key points are as follows:

The Incarnation

- The Incarnation is what the Church calls the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature (CCC 461).
- Belief in the Incarnation of the Son of God is the distinctive sign of Christian faith (CCC 463).

True God and True Man

- Jesus Christ is true God and true man. This mystery is called the Hypostatic Union (CCC 464-469).

Truly Man, Truly Divine

- Jesus was conceived and born of the Virgin Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus Christ possesses two natures, one divine and the other human, not confused, but united in the one person of God's Son (CCC 464).
- Jesus is inseparably true God and true man. He is truly the Son of God who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became a man and our brother (CCC 469)
- "The Son of God...worked with human hands; he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved (GS 22)."

Sacrifice and Salvation

- The Word became flesh:
 1. in order to save us by reconciling us with God
 2. so that we might know God's love
 3. to be our model of holiness
 4. to make us partakers of the divine nature (CCC 457-460).
- Jesus, the Word made flesh, came into the world, fully human and fully divine; to bring salvation to us and bridge the gap we create through sin (CCC 430).
- Jesus freely gave his life, in obedience to the Father, to atone for the sins of all people. By giving up His life, Jesus manifests (makes visible) the redeeming love of God (CCC 605).
- Jesus Christ is true God and true man, in the unity of his divine person; for this reason He is the one and only mediator between God and men.

Gaudium Et Spes, 22: He Who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), (21) is Himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature as He assumed it was not annulled, (22) by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too. For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands; He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice (23) and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin (24).

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

Songs and/or Music Videos:

- "Jesus My Everything" by Matt Maher
- "Mighty is the Power of the Cross" by Chris Tomlin
- "This Man" by Jeremy Camp

Websites for Images for Activity 1:

Search on the Louvre website (<http://www.louvre.fr>) using the title of the work and the name of the author.

- *The Presentation in the Temple* by Simon Vouet, c. 1640-1641

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- *The Carrying of the Cross* by Simone Martini (known in Sienna in 1315 –Avignon, 1344), c. 1335
- *The Entombment of Christ* by Tiziano Vecellio, known as TITIAN (Pieve di Cadore, 1488/1490 - Venice, 1576), c. 1520
- *Crucifixion* by Giovanni Bellini (known in Venice in 1459 - Venice, 1516), c. 1465
- *Christ at the Column* by Antonello Da Messina (born in Messina, known in Reggio Calabria in 1457 - Messina, 1479), c. 1476-78
- *Allegory of the Trinity* by Frans Floris, c.1562
- *The Trinity*:
http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=4429

Search on the National Gallery of Art website (<http://www.nga.gov/>) using the title of the work and the name of the author.

- *The Small Cowper Madonna* by Raphael, c. 1505
- *The Crucifixion* by Master of Saint Veronica, c. 1400/1410
- *Madonna and Child* by Florentine 15th Century c. 1425

OTHER RESOURCES

- Second Council of Constantinople, Canon 7
- *Gaudium Et Spes: 22 (Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)*
- Council of Calcedon: DS 301-302
- Council of Nicea I: DS 130, 126
- St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. Catech.* 15

GATHER

(There are a couple of directions you can go with this session, it can be a great opportunity to use classical artwork or short skits depending on which you are more comfortable with.)

Environment 1: An artwork environment can be set up similar to an art gallery. You could possibly blow up a few of the suggested works in the resource and have them on easels and lit like gallery pieces. Supporting this you could have snacks and a viewing booklet printed with questions on each page that would highlight the humanity or divinity of Christ on each. (The focus here is how Jesus is both perfectly human and fully divine.)

Environment 2: For the skit activity you could possibly set up a stage with rows of seats like a theater. Decorate as you would for an opera or big production skit. The teens are players on the stage of life. They are acting out everyday life scenes. (The focus here is how Jesus is like us in everyday life.)

Icebreaker: *The Answer Is...*

Break the group into smaller discussion groups (about 4-5 teens). Give each discussion group 2 minutes to introduce themselves and say who their favorite saint is. Then hand out a sheet of paper that has the answer “Jesus” on it. Give the group 5 minutes to come up with as many questions with the answer Jesus. (i.e., Who is the Christ? Who was here before anything was made? Who is the second person of the Trinity?) When time is up have each group read off their list. The group with the most accurate questions gets a prize.

Truly Man, Truly Divine

Opening Prayer

Meditation: “Christ came to earth to be our model.”

Prayer: Lord, help us to follow Your perfect example daily in our lives.

Meditation: “The Word became Incarnate, not only to bring us the gospel of salvation and to accomplish our redemption, but also to serve as a pattern for our spiritual lives.”

Prayer: Lord, by your example of perfect obedience and service, help us to humbly follow Your example by serving others and being open to the Father’s will in our lives.

Meditation: “Each of Christ’s mysteries is a revelation of His virtues. The humility of the crib, the retirement of His hidden life, the zeal of His public life the self-sacrifice of His Sacrifice, the glory of His triumph, all these disclose virtues which we must imitate; they are mysteries in which we should participate.”

Prayer: Lord, You have given us a perfect example of Christian virtue through Your life and death. Help us to understand how the grace of Your Incarnation, Example and Sacrifice affect our daily lives.

(Meditations are excerpts from *Imitation of Christ* by Dom Columba Marmion, O.S.B., Abbot of Maredsous.)

OR

Read John 1:1-3, 14

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through Him, and without Him nothing came to be. What came to be through Him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (Jn 1:1-3). And the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us, and we saw His glory, the glory of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth (Jn 1:14).”

Lord Jesus, You came among us to teach, guide and save us. Being born in human flesh you save us from our sins and lead us to the Father. Please give us the grace to more deeply understand the mystery of your incarnation, life and death and the importance of this mystery in our lives. Amen.

EXPLANATION

Notes to the Youth Minister:

The flow of this session moves from what the teens currently know of Jesus (from the icebreaker), to a combination of brief discussions to increase their knowledge of and history around the Mystery of the Incarnation and what it means for Jesus to be truly God and truly man. Finally, an activity is done that will help bring the Mystery into a more practical application of everyday life.)

The following questions are the basis for the discussion or the talk with the teens. 1) *What is the Mystery of the Incarnation?* 2) *What does it mean to be truly God and truly human?* 3) *Why is this Mystery important to us as Catholics?* The following talk is meant to help guide you through your discussion. Check-in questions are also provided at key junctures to make sure the teens keep up. **!!!This is important!!!** If they do not understand each section in the discussion they will be lost in later sections. After you know they are following move on to the next section.

Truly Man, Truly Divine

Talk/Discussion begins here –

What is the Mystery of the Incarnation?

What does Incarnation mean? This means that God, the divine being became man. The Mystery of the Incarnation is also known as the Hypostatic Union (two natures, God and man, in one person). This means that Jesus is inseparably both fully human and fully divine; but how? Well, as humans, we can't fully understand, that's why it's called a mystery. We can, however, look at certain attributes that give us an idea of what this mystery means. The Bible, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the writings of Early Church Fathers are great places to start.

(At this point ask a couple of questions to make sure they are following you, like: What is the Hypostatic Union? What does the Incarnation mean to you? Why do you think God would want to become man? Allow some time for answers or clarifications.)

What does it mean to be truly God and truly human?

The Gospels tell us that Jesus, as the Son of God, was with God from the beginning as the Word. In John's Gospel he writes that: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God (Jn 1:1)." Later John writes that: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14)." This is Jesus in His divinity. He has existed with the Father and the Holy Spirit from the beginning of all things.

Wow!

We also know from the Gospels that through the course of Jesus' life He showed us that He was **one** with the Father and held a unique relationship with the Father, calling God "Abba" (my own dear Father). This had never been done before. By calling God the Father, "Abba" Jesus is personalizing His relationship with the Father. This is similar to you calling your father "Dad." It is personal and intimate. Here is a thought provoking question we will use later... What is the relationship that you have with the other people that call your father, "Dad?"

(Again, stop and ask a couple of questions to make sure they are following you, such as: Who is the Word? When did Jesus become divine? When, during Jesus' life, does He show us He is divine? What does Abba mean? What do you call the other people that call your father, "Dad?" [A: Brothers and Sisters] Allow some time for answers or clarifications.)

O.K., so Jesus was divine. How does Jesus in His divinity become man? The Church teaches us that this was made possible through His birth from the Virgin Mary. As we profess in the Apostles Creed, "He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the Virgin Mary." Through this human birth and life, Jesus assumed the likeness of man, becoming fully human while retaining His divine nature. In other words, He was born, He had a Mom and a Dad, He grew in wisdom (learned) and stature (grew up). He loved and respected His parents. He also had friends, attended church (Sabbath) and weddings, mourned the loss of friends and got angry once in while. Again, Jesus was like us in all things but sin. This means all things in right order, everything He did was appropriate and never out of selfishness.

Truly Man, Truly Divine

(Stop here and ask a couple of questions to make sure the teens are following you, such as: When did the Incarnation happen? [A: the Annunciation] How does Jesus show us His humanity? How is Jesus like us, give me some specific examples? Allow some time for answers or clarifications.)

That's great, Jesus is both human and divine... so, what does this have to do with me?

Why is this Mystery important to us as Catholics?

There are several reasons why Jesus being truly God and truly man should be important to us, both spiritually and in our everyday life. Here are just a few:

1) Jesus has to be perfectly human and perfectly divine in order to reconcile us and our sinful nature with God. This means that you have the possibility of choosing to go to heaven. Yes, I said choose. God does not force us to love Him. However, without the Incarnation, it would not even be a possibility for us to get to heaven.

Imagine, not having the possibility or hope of going to heaven. It just wasn't an option. Jesus actually bridges the gap between God and us.

(Pause here and see if they understood that! If not ask: What do you all think your life would be like without knowing that going to heaven is a possibility? Can we get to heaven on our own? Allow some time for answers or clarifications.)

2) God loved us, His creation, so much that He sent His only Son, to become one of us to show us exactly *how much*. In other words, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, loved us so much he became one of us.

Isn't that an awesome thought! God the Son, the Creator of everything, loves us, one of His creations, so much that He would become one of us.

(Pause again and ask: What do you think your spiritual or personal life would be like if God stayed in heaven, separate from us? Give an example. Allow some time for answers or clarifications.)

3) Jesus has to be both human and divine in order to be a perfect example of the way we should live in holiness.

How can we live like Jesus? I know it seems like a lot to ask, but this is exactly what Jesus is challenging us to do. We are all challenged, with the help of His grace, to turn our lives over to God, let go of our own desires and live according to the potential God has put in each one of us. Jesus obeyed the will of His Father to such a degree that He suffered death on a cross to fulfill His purpose among us.

(Pause and ask: Why couldn't Jesus be just a man and still be a perfect example? Do you think we actually need an example of how we are supposed to live? Could we figure out how to live a virtuous life on our own? Why or why not? Allow some time for answers or clarifications.)

Truly Man, Truly Divine

4) Jesus has to be both fully human and fully divine in order to make us (humanity), sharers in His divinity. Think about this for a second: God loved us, humanity, so much that He sent His only Son to become one of us.

But God didn't stop there!

Jesus, being fully God and fully human, elevated our human nature to the divine. This means that we, through communion with the Son of God have become children of God. Not just a creation, but children. As I said earlier, Jesus became our brother so that we have the ability to call God our Father. This also means that greater significance has been given to everything we do in our lives. Everything can be holy when done in Union with Him.

(Pause and ask a couple more questions: What do you think it means to be a child of God? Have you opened yourself to the relationship with God that Jesus gave us the opportunity for? Allow some time for answers or clarifications.)

Wrapping it up.

What do you all think? How important is it to you that Jesus is really fully man and fully divine? *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* has a good summary of our understanding of Jesus in His humanity and divinity, it says:

“Jesus is inseparably true God and true man. He is truly the Son of God who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became a man and our brother:

‘What he was, he remained and what he was not, he assumed,' sings the Roman Liturgy. And the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom proclaims and sings: "O only-begotten Son and Word of God, immortal being, you who deigned for our salvation to become incarnate of the holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, you who without change became man and were crucified, O Christ our God, you who by your death have crushed death, you who are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us!" (CCC 469)”

(Have everyone gather into their small groups again and do one of the two activities below.)

APPLICATION

Activity Option # 1: Finding Jesus in Art

Find images of Christ on the web or in prints that demonstrate Jesus' humanity and divinity (a few sources have been provided). Have a few of these on display for the teens to look at, either on a big screen or hung on the walls. Have a “gallery book” available with the name of the artwork, the artist and some space to write their own impressions of the artwork. Give a short talk on the humanity and divinity of Christ and how you see the humanity and divinity in your favorite art work. Allow some time to have the teens take a close look at all of the pictures with their “gallery book”; you may want to play some contemplative music in the background or have snacks available at this time. (The atmosphere should be like a small art gallery.) Gather everybody back together in small groups and ask a few questions.

For example: Which picture was your favorite? How did you see the humanity of Christ in your favorite? How did your favorite show the divinity of Christ? Is it possible not to see one or the other in this artwork? How? Do you think the artist focused on one over the other?

Activity Option # 2: Skits on “How is Jesus like me?”

Truly Man, Truly Divine

Post some human attributes of Jesus on big banners or posters around the room (i.e. loved, walked, got angry, taught, had a mother and father, had family, got in trouble, learned, etc.). Place a large image of Jesus on a projector and/or handout prints for each teen (holy card or something similar). Divide teens into small groups using these various attributes that could be printed on the back of the prayer cards. Leaders should ask how these attributes are similar to us and how Jesus demonstrated this during His life. Have teens come up with short skits that demonstrate the various characteristics. Those not giving the skit guess what the attribute is from those listed on the walls and if it is the way Jesus would have done it or you.

SEND

Summary: What does this have to do with Jesus?

Jesus Christ who was both God and Man is the perfect example of humanity. God sent us His son to save us both through his paschal sacrifice and his example. "Born of the Virgin, He is like us in all things but sin." In this way we are called to imitate Christ and conform ourselves to his likeness and image. Jesus is the bridge, in His perfect humanity and divinity, to God and everlasting life.

Closing Prayer

"O only-begotten Son and Word of God, immortal being, you who deigned for our salvation to become incarnate of the holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, you who without change became man and were crucified, O Christ our God, you who by your death have crushed death, you who are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, guide us and save us!" Amen.

Biography

Terry Simons has been working for the Office of Youth Ministry since May 2010 as the Assistant WorkCamp Projects Coordinator. He is originally from Boise, Idaho and comes from a long line of wood workers and carpenters. His favorite book, other than the Bible, is The Lord of the Rings.

An Attitude for the Beatitudes

DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

Life in Christ

TOPIC

The Beatitudes

GOAL

The goal of this session is to help teens recognize the Beatitudes as the foundational principles behind all moral teachings of the Church and the social dimension of God's unconditional love for His people. Teens should also know that it is through the Beatitudes that we find true joy.

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

(II.I.A.3.c.iii)

SCRIPTURE

The Beatitudes- Mt 5:1-12;

Prayer of Jesus- Jn 17:1-3, 1

Jesus before Pilate- Jn 8:37-38

One Body, Many Parts- Rm 12:4-5

Perseverance- Js 1:2-5

Christian Suffering- 1 Pt 3:13-15

CATECHISM

The Beatitudes- 1716-1729

Freedom of Will- 1934

GOLDEN THREADS

The Incarnation: Jesus is true God and true man, he took on human flesh and blood and entered the world through the Virgin Mary and He lived among us. The very fact that God took on human flesh is a testimony to the dignity of the human being!

The Church: The truth of the Church is that all who believe in Christ are part of the family and the Church of Christ. The Church is comprised of those both living and dead and will be in full communion at the second coming of Jesus. The Church was created for the salvation of *all men*, not just a chosen few. This again highlights the message of the Beatitudes and the dignity of every human being.

The Dignity of the Human Person: God created us in his image and likeness. The Beatitudes teach us to live a life of charity and help us to always show respect and dignity towards all human persons.

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

Built on Christ. The Beatitudes were given to us by Christ to teach us about charity and the dignity of every human being. They show the faithful how to live and shed light on the actions and attitudes that are characteristic of a Christian life. Given to us by Christ, the Beatitudes are truly a significant building block with which Catholics can build their faith.

PROCLAMATION

The solemn blessings or beatitudes which mark the opening of the Sermon on the Mount, the very first of Our Lord's sermons in the Gospel of Matthew.

- Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.
- Blessed are they who mourn; for they shall be comforted.
- Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall be satisfied.
- Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

An Attitude for the Beatitudes

- Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.
- Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus' preaching. They take up the promises made to the chosen people since Abraham. They fulfill the promises by ordering them no longer merely to the possession of a territory, but to the Kingdom of heaven... (CCC 1716)

These Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity. They express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of His Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ's disciples; they have begun in the lives of the Blessed Mother Mary and all the saints. (CCC 1717)

The Beatitudes mark the opening of the Sermon on the Mount, the very first of our Lord's sermons in the Gospel of St. Matthew (5:3-10). Four of them occur again in a slightly different form in the Gospel of St. Luke (6:22), likewise at the beginning of a sermon, and running parallel to Matthew.

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

Music

- "Your Grace is Enough" by Chris Tomlin
- "Go Make a Difference" by Steve Angrisano
- "Every Move I Make" by David Crowder Band
- "Hands and Feet" by Audio Adrenaline

YouTube Videos

- The Beatitudes by Matthew Five
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MeH8YyLIDE&feature=related>
 - This presents the Beatitudes in scripture though a visually stimulating animation. This would work well in place of simply reading scripture because it grabs the attention of the teens and gets them interested in what is about to be said.

Websites

- <http://gardenofpraise.com/bibl42s.htm>
 - This is a good source that helps explain how to implement the beatitudes into our daily life. It also uses Biblical examples to create parallels between the beatitudes and stories that we all know. It's a little simplistic and is aimed at children, but the examples are good and can be adapted easily to the given age group.
- <http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/s9.htm>
 - This site is an excellent resource for the speaker in that it explains Matthew 5:2-10 verse by verse. This reinforces the significance of the wording that is used and the significance of the order in which the beatitudes were spoken. It's a little wordy but there is great information in it.

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- <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02371a.htm>
 - This is a good resource for finding explanations on each of the beatitudes. It also offers the Aramaic translations which allows for the meaning to be better understood.
- The Beatitudes: A Blueprint for Holiness
 - <http://www.zenit.org/article-27376?l>
- A heroic Christian: A man of the beatitudes: Pier Giorgio Frassati : A Review
 - http://catholicinsight.com/online/saints/article_269.shtml

Other Resources

- OYM Resource Manual, Chapter 6
- *Group's Blockbuster Movie Illustrations (The Return)*:
 - "Shark Tale" (pg. 32) {Phillipians 4:10-13} ; Contentment (drawing contentment from relationship with Jesus Christ)
 - "The Hours" (pg. 63), {Matthew 5:1-12}; Happiness (You can't steal the wonderful gift of Christ-like happiness)
 - "Hotel Rwanda" (pg. 69) {Isaiah 10:1-3}; Injustice (No flinching allowed when it comes to injustice)
- *Encountering Jesus in the New Testament* by Michael Pennock
 - Page 147: This activity gives a feeling of what the Beatitudes mean in everyday language as well as helping the reader to gauge where they are in the development of that aspect of their life. This might make a good activity for the teens to work on after the talk. It would also be a good meditation to read through and think about with quiet music in the background.
- *How to Be Happy* by Kevin Perrotta
 - A Bible study on Matthew 5-7: outlines a great series of small group Bible study readings for the entire "Sermon on the Mount"; specifics for the Beatitudes can be referenced for this session with your teens.
- *Veritatis Splendor* by Pope John Paul II, 1993
 - From this writing: "The specific purpose of the present Encyclical is this: to set forth, with regard to the problems being discussed, the principles of a moral teaching based upon Sacred Scripture and the living Apostolic Tradition, and at the same time to shed light on the presuppositions and consequences of the dissent which that teaching has met"

GATHER

Environment

Have upbeat music playing as the teens enter the room; tape four large sheets of paper on the wall or in sight of the teens. Display a crucifix at the center of these sheets. Use the sheets:

- One will be blank (to be written on later; this will be used to illustrate the Beatitudes as you review them with your teens; see outline below).
- One will list the Ten Commandments in a large, visible way.
- One will illustrate an outline of the "Sermon on the Mount" (see below); this outline will be completed before the meeting.
- The last sheet will cover the "Sermon on the Mount" outline so that the outline can be "unveiled" at the right moment (you do not want to influence the conversation before the moment is right!).

An Attitude for the Beatitudes

Icebreaker: *Beatitude Telephone Charades*

Before starting, review the Beatitudes with your teens. Divide your teens into two single-file lines of equal length, with at least five feet between the lines. Teens should be facing away from the first player, each teen looking at the back of the head of the teen in front of them. The leader should have the teens at the ends of the lines read (not speak out loud) one of the Beatitudes printed on a piece of paper. They then return to their lines, tap the next person in line on the shoulder, this person turns around, the first teen has 20 seconds to act out the Beatitude without using words. Then the next teen who watched is the new actor, who taps the next person on the shoulder, they turn around and the second teen gets 20 seconds to act out the Beatitude for the next teen in line. After the last teen as the front of the line has seen the charade, they have to guess which Beatitude it is. Whichever team guesses correctly wins. Teens can rotate to different spots in line and play multiple rounds, with the team scoring the most correct answers winning the game. You could play up to 8 rounds, one for each Beatitude. (Source: http://www.ehow.com/list_6154757_beatitude-games.html#ixzz0qxBs8hDS)

Opening Prayer

Prayer to follow Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati

"O Father, you gave to the young Pier Giorgio Frassati the joy of meeting Christ and of living his faith in the service of the poor and the sick; through his intercession may we, too, walk the path of the beatitudes and follow the example of his generosity, spreading the spirit of the Gospel in society... through Christ our Lord, Amen."

(By +Cardinal Giovanni Saldarini, Archbishop of Turin)

EXPLANATION

Conversation

Begin by showing a video clip from the movie "Jesus of Nazareth" when he proclaimed the eight Beatitudes.

(this can be viewed on You Tube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgIyhM9FP00>)

Tonight we'll talk about the Beatitudes... I know, I know, many of you have heard of this before, but how much do you know about them? Do you know where they lie in the series of Jesus' story in the Gospels?

Allow for some time to get some feedback from the teens

How were the Beatitudes presented? Were they in the context of a greater talk, or were they kind of an independent teaching?

Allow for some more time to get some feedback from the teens

Great! Basically, the Beatitudes are at the very beginning of the "Sermon on the Mount", which I am sure many of you have heard about. But why is this significant? According to the Gospel of Matthew, this is the first teaching of Jesus, which gives it particular significance! Then, on top of it, the Beatitudes are at the very beginning of this Sermon!

Let's talk about the "Sermon on the Mount" as a whole for a brief moment... this is Jesus' "break out speech", as we have said. What does the Sermon talk about in general?

Allow for some more time to get some feedback from the teens

Okay, great. Here is one way that we can summarize the Sermon (from Perrotta, pg. 9) ("unveil" the outline for the teens so that you have a visual as you walk them through this):

An Attitude for the Beatitudes

Introduction	Mt 5:3-16	Who will be happy? (these are the Beatitudes!)
Beginning	Mt 5:17-20	God's Law and Righteousness
Section 1	Mt 5:21-48	How to Interpret God's Law
Section 2: Part 1	Mt 6:1-4	Merciful Deeds
Part 2	Mt 6:5-15	Prayer
<i>Right at the center</i>	Mt 6:9-13	<i>The Lord's Prayer</i>
Part 3	Mt 6:16-18	Fasting
Section 3	Mt 6:19-7:11	On wealth and criticism
End	Mt 7:12	God's law is love of neighbor
Conclusion	Mt 7:13-27	Choose well!

To give this some more context, check this out: the Sermon on the Mount is seen by many as Jesus' general outline on how we are to live our lives. Jesus outlines how He is living His life and how he expects us to follow his behavior and attitudes:

- He teaches us how to act toward other people – *all others*, not just some...
- He teaches us how to interpret God's Law (this is an important point- Jesus is not *throwing out* the Ten Commandments as some people suggest, He is just showing us how they should be interpreted).
- He teaches us how to react when criticized, and what our attitude toward "worldly wealth" should be.
- He teaches us to be merciful.
- Right in the center, the very climax of the sermon, Jesus teaches us how to pray... the Lord's Prayer... also demonstrating that prayer should be at the center of our lives. This is the central point, and suggests that without living a prayer- and God-centered life we will have little hope in living out the rest of Jesus' instructions given here...
- He teaches us who will be happy – this is where the Beatitudes come in!
- The Beatitudes are first *descriptive* of Christ, and then secondarily *prescriptive*.
- The Beatitudes tell us not as much about what to do (prescriptive) but about *what God can do in us* if we are open to Him.

A great way to summarize the "Sermon on the Mount": Pope John Paul II refers to the sermon as the "the *magna charta* of Gospel morality"! (from *Veritas Splendor, par 15*)

Pope John Paul II also says the following about the Beatitudes (*Veritas Splendor, par 16*):

The Beatitudes ... are above all promises, from which there also indirectly flow normative indications for the moral life. In their originality and profundity they are a sort of self- portrait of Christ, and for this very reason are invitations to discipleship and to communion of life with Christ.

In other words, the Pope was saying – in a very cool way – that Jesus is giving us a simple outline for how to follow Him, how to be like Him. The Beatitudes are a "self-portrait" that "invites us to discipleship AND communion with" Him!

What, wait a minute... let's take a step back for a moment. But this is the fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel... so what is going on? How can this be his first sermon you may ask?

Well, Matthew has up to this point told the story of Jesus' birth, Baptism, His retreat to the desert – prayer and fasting in preparation for his ministry – and then Matthew talks about a few of Jesus' miracles/healings. All of this sets up Jesus as one who "deserves to be believed

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when he begins to announce that a new phase in God's saving activity is underway" (Mt 4:17; Perotta pg. 7).

Okay, back to the Beatitudes... so, what are they? Let's get a volunteer up here –to help me... okay, you will write down each of the Beatitudes as we list them out... so all, what are the Beatitudes?

Allow for some time to get feedback from the teens... write down each one as they are listed, but guide your "assistant" to write each one in the "right spot"; in other words, if they first offer "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted", then make sure your assistant lists that in the #2 spot (and so on). After each Beatitude is listed, have a brief conversation with the teens about it (before moving on to the next one) guided by the following reference:

A quick reference for a conversation on the Beatitudes...

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

With this phrase, "poor in spirit," most likely Jesus was speaking of our spiritual condition of poverty—the recognition of our need for God. "The kingdom of heaven" refers to people who acknowledge God as their King.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

"Those who mourn" speaks of those who express deep sorrow over sin, or those who repent from their sins. The freedom found in the forgiveness of sins and the joy of eternal salvation is the "comfort" of those who repent.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Similar to "the poor," "the meek" are those who submit to God's authority, making him Lord. Revelation 21:7 says God's children will "inherit all things."

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

"Hunger and thirst" speaks of a deep need and a driving passion. This "righteousness" refers to the Lord, Jesus Christ, our righteousness. To "be filled" is the satisfaction of the soul's desire.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Simply put, we reap what we sow. Those who demonstrate mercy will receive mercy. Likewise, those who know great mercy will show great mercy. This mercy is shown through forgiveness and also by offering kindness and compassion toward others.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

The "pure in heart" are those who have been cleansed from within. This is not talking about outward righteousness seen by men, but inward holiness that only God can see. The Bible says in Hebrews 12:14 that without holiness, no man will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

The Bible says we have peace with God through Jesus Christ. Reconciliation through Jesus Christ brings restored fellowship (peace) with God. 2 Corinthians 5:19-20 says God entrusts us with this same message of reconciliation to take to others.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Just as Jesus faced persecution, so he promised his followers persecution. Those who endure because of their faith rather than hiding their righteousness to avoid persecution are genuine followers of Christ.

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In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us a window into what “beatitude” can look like here on earth. These are Jesus’ guidelines on how to approach our everyday life, a stepping stone towards how we can attain happiness, joy and everlasting life with God.

St. Augustine said, “We all want to live happily.” He also said “For what other end do we have, if not to reach the kingdom which does not end?” The Beatitudes is a model on how to live on this Earth and attain true happiness and joy. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, “God alone satisfies.”

We are in this world to know, love and serve God, so we can enter into Christ’s glory with the Father and the Spirit. This gift is “supernatural,” going far beyond our intellect and being freely given by God. St. Irenaeus said “He goes so far as to grant those who love him the privilege of seeing him. For what is impossible for man is possible for God.”

These promised blessings confront us with decisive moral choices and invite us to purify ourselves. They teach us that true riches cannot be found in any human achievement. “All bow down before wealth and measure happiness by wealth. Wealth is one idol of the day and notoriety is a second. Notoriety may be called newspaper fame.” (John Cardinal Newman)

So, bringing this back full-circle, if the Beatitudes are instructions on how to live our lives... and so are the Ten Commandments... I guess that is why some people feel as though they *supersede* the Commandments. But this is not so. A final point to make is said best by Pope John Paul II (again from *Veritatis Splendor*, par 16):

The Beatitudes are not specifically concerned with certain particular rules of behaviour. Rather, they speak of basic attitudes and dispositions in life and therefore they *do not coincide exactly with the commandments*. On the other hand, *there is no separation or opposition* between the Beatitudes and the commandments: both refer to the good, to eternal life. The Sermon on the Mount begins with the proclamation of the Beatitudes, but also refers to the commandments (cf. Mt 5:20-48). At the same time, the Sermon on the Mount demonstrates the openness of the commandments and their orientation towards the horizon of the perfection proper to the Beatitudes.

Let’s run through the Ten Commandments here quickly and see how they relate to the Beatitudes (use your visual and illustrate how each of the Commandments ties and relates to the eight Beatitudes... ensure that the teens understand that Jesus is re-explaining how we should live our lives here... but he is NOT redefining it!) He is challenging us as well!

We have to understand how radical this teaching was in the time that Jesus taught it! We may think “oh yah, be humble... be merciful... wow, enlightening! Everyone says that... nothing new there. So insightful.” But, remember when Jesus was saying this... in a time where those that bragged the most attained the most – on earth. Those that were merciful were viewed as weak – you should be able to cut off your enemy’s hand if he stole from you!

But Jesus was challenging us... we used to just say “don’t steal”, and then those who did were “dealt with” accordingly. But now we are not only being told “don’t steal”, but being challenged with “if someone steals from you, show them mercy”. Wow!

Another way to think about it is that if you just don’t do something... you technically are okay because you are following the rule. But in many cases if you just don’t do something, you are getting by on the bare minimum. An example: Jesus tells us now that it is no longer good enough to “not cheat on your wife” (cf. Ex 20:14)... but now Jesus says: “But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his

An Attitude for the Beatitudes

heart” (Mt 5:28)... now we cannot even think about it! So Jesus truly presents us with a bigger challenge in this sermon... and the Beatitudes can be seen in a similar manner in the context of this sermon.

Something else to think about... you may have been thinking “this is not anything new”, but is that not a good thing? A great thing? The fact is, it WAS new when Jesus was teaching it... so that means, at least to some degree, the teaching has made it into our everyday lives. I am not saying that everyone follows this... not at all. But it can be seen as hopeful that most people in today’s society at least RECOGNIZE that being humble, being merciful and so on are something to strive for! This is a result of this teaching... the Beatitudes.

Closing points: Jesus gave us the Beatitudes to help us further understand how we are to live our lives every day. He is giving us very personal instructions, be like me. John Paul calls it a “self-portrait”. Jesus also viewed this as so important that he outlined the Beatitudes at the very beginning of His very first sermon... and most of His teaching from here can be tied back to the principles that He outlined here. The Sermon as a whole is (Perrotta, pg. 7):

...mainly an invitation to personal transformation. Jesus summons us to make a determined, lifelong effort to model ourselves on the goodwill, kindness, and justice of God. He call us to reshape our behavior, our speech, and our thinking according to the highest standards of what is right and good.

Personal Illustration

Ask the teens to share a few quick moments when they have seen people acting out the Beatitudes in their everyday life... have they seen people show mercy, like a friend that steps up to defend someone at school? Have they seen someone become a peacemaker (hopefully this one is easy)? Have they seen someone truly demonstrate humility or meekness, and how? Have a few of your own to share with them to help jumpstart the conversation, if need be...

APPLICATION

Activity: Small Group Discussions

Divide your large group into eight smaller groups and each group will reflect upon one Beatitude; if you have a smaller number, divide into four smaller groups and reflect upon two Beatitudes. Some possible discussion questions: (just a “starter list”, but again go with the flow of the night; each group is different; some questions are from Perrotta, pg. 22-23):

1. Where in your life – or in the lives of people that you know – has the lack of material blessings prepared the way for receiving greater blessings?
2. Who do you know that you would describe as “poor in spirit”? Why? Is that a good thing?
3. What suggestions or cautions can you offer with regard to using the Beatitudes to console or encourage someone? Focus on the Beatitude that you are considering.
4. In your life right now, are you practicing the above Beatitude? How?

Presentation

- Each small group(s) will come forward as their Beatitude is called. A representative from each group will share concrete ways that their Beatitude can be lived out... or
- Discuss: Go through each of the beatitudes and have the teens explain how it connects to a current event, or a well known figure. Then have the teens explain how God delivers on his half of the promise. (e.g. The people in Haiti are mourning. How will God give them comfort? Are we meant to comfort them?) ... and

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- Visual Example: Stack jenga blocks on top of one another so who how each Beatitude builds on the foundation of the previous one; have the blocks pre-labeled with each of the eight Beatitudes. Lean on the stack of blocks and illustrate that this is a solid foundation; have one of the teens lean on it, too. Then pull one away (not at the top) and have the teen lean on the stack again... and keep going a few more times. Demonstrate that as you pull a few away – much like we may choose to follow a few of the Beatitudes but not others – the foundation for our faith begins to crumble.

Final Discussion

1. What in your life are you hungering or thirsting for? Is it from God or from the world?
2. How have you shown mercy? Who is one person in your life that has shown you mercy?
3. What does it mean for a teen to be pure in heart? Is it possible?
4. What situations or people in your life are blurring your vision of who God is calling you to be?
5. What areas of your life are you being called to be a peacemaker? What are the challenges?
6. How can we express love and care for people in a way that allows them to see our good works and also helps them recognize that the source of our good works is our Father in heaven?

SEND

Wrap-up Activity

Blessed Meditation – Invite teens to stand around the front of the Sanctuary in the Church where the lights are dim and some soft meditative music is playing. The leader will begin the time of prayer by wrapping up the night and emphasizing God’s desire for us to be truly joyful. This will be followed by a meditation on each of the promises given by Christ in the Beatitudes that will explain what God is offering to those who are willing to follow. Share briefly what it means to be blessed. (blessed: a state of happiness; to have God’s favor called down upon you)

Beatitude Cards – Pass out a wallet-size card with the Beatitudes on it to each teen.

Summary: What does this have to do with Jesus?

Jesus Christ exemplified these prayers in his teachings to his disciples and how these Beatitudes will show us a path toward true joy and the ultimate goal of joy in Him.

Closing Prayer

Daily Prayer of Mother Teresa

Dear Jesus, help me to spread Thy fragrance everywhere I go. Flood my soul with Thy spirit and love. Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may only be a radiance of Thine. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel Thy presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus. Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as you shine, so to shine as to be a light to others. Amen.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HISPANIC YOUTH MINISTRY

Just like mainstream youth, Hispanic youth are tempted by the same cultural pressures such as materialism, drugs and alcohol, sexual behaviors, etc. Hispanic youth, however, might be more vulnerable to these pressures than their Anglo peers since they are also attempting to integrate more fully into mainstream culture. The Beatitudes or “Las Bienaventuranzas” are comforting promises for the Hispanic culture that often faces many struggles with poverty,

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immigration, and education. Hispanic young people frequently hear stories from their parents and grandparents about the hardships of their native countries and their experiences of immigration. Some Hispanic youth might even have had these experiences themselves firsthand. Therefore, the beatitudes “Blessed are the poor in spirit” or “Blessed are those who are persecuted” might be actual realities Hispanic youth and their families face in a very different way than their Anglo peers. The promises of the Beatitudes can bring great hope. In the Hispanic culture there is a very common phrase that says, “If God wills it,” or “Si Dios quiere.” This phrase often shows a faith and trust in God in light of the beatitude “Blessed are the meek.” It is a trust in God’s authority and providence throughout the various struggles and hardships that often characterizes Hispanic Catholicism.

Biography

Kevin Flores is the Assistant Director for the Office of Youth Ministry in the Diocese of Arlington. He has been involved in youth ministry for over 25 years as a volunteer, core member and youth minister at several parishes both in California and Virginia.

Paul C. Bevins is the WorkCamp Coordinator for the Catholic Diocese of Arlington’s Office of Youth Ministry. He has been in this position since February of 2008 and has been involved in high school youth ministry since November of 2000. He was introduced to youth ministry at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Parish in Arlington, VA and he is currently pursuing a Masters degree in Theology and Christian Ministry at the Franciscan University at Steubenville. Paul and his wife Melissa also enjoy hanging out at the dog park with their lab/beagle Liam.

The Truth about Love and Happiness

DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

Morality

TOPIC

Truth, Freedom, and Responsibility

GOAL

The goal for this session is to introduce the teens to Jesus who is the Truth, to free will and our choice to love and follow Jesus, and our responsibility as Catholic Christians to love and respect our brothers and sisters. Teens should recognize that true freedom is being able to love as God loves and do his will.

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

(II.I.C.2.b, 4, 8)

SCRIPTURE

Truth- Eph 4:15; Jn 14:6; Prv 3:5; Jn 8:31-32; Jn 18:37; Jn 17:17; 2 Tm 2:15

Freedom- Sir 15:11-20; 2 Cor 3:17; 1 Cor 8:9; 1 Pt 2:15-16; Jas 1:25

Responsibility- 1 Cor 10:23; Lk 17:1; Lk 17:10

Other- Mt 5

CATECHISM

Perfect Communion with God- 45, 1693-1695

Jesus is the Way, Truth and Life- 1698

Man: The Image of God-1700-1706, 1711

Man's Freedom and Responsibility- 1731, 1733-1735, 1739-1742

The Old and New Law- 1962-1963, 1968

Free Will- 2002

GOLDEN THREADS

The Incarnation: Jesus is the Word incarnate. Jesus is the Truth. The Truth came to live among us through his Incarnation and that is how we can know and believe that he is God. "In the truth, charity reflects the personal yet public dimension of faith in the God of the Bible, who is both *Agápe* and *Lógos*: Charity and Truth, Love and Word" (*Caritas in Veritate*, 3).

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

Built on Christ. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." If we are to be "Built on Christ," we must believe He is the Truth. We must use our freedom to choose good and to choose life in Him. If we are "Built on Christ," our foundation for our life is His teachings.

PROCLAMATION

Absolute Truth & God's Will

- God governs all things. God is Absolute Truth. Jesus Christ is the Word of Truth.
- With the grace of God we can determine the path of our lives through the decisions we make.
- Morality is so much more than choosing right from wrong, but choosing to love God and desire His will in our life.
- The Old Law from the Old Testament was the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. God gave the commandments to his people, not as rules to impose in order to control them or to limit their lives, but to help guide them to live lives filled with justice, peace, and joy.
- It is God's Will in our lives that will bring us the most peace and joy.
- The New Law in the New Testament which is summed up in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7). This is a law of love, of grace, and of freedom. Also known as the

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Beatitudes, these laws given to us are meant for us to obtain pure joy in abiding by God's Will.

Reason and Free Will

- God created us with an intellect and with freedom and power to know Him and love Him. He has placed within us a longing for truth and goodness that only He can satisfy.
- It is our reason and our free will that sets us apart for other creatures on earth.
- The verses in Sirach 15: 14-17 talk about how God created us with our own free will. We can choose to follow God's Will or our own Will. It really emphasizes how the choice of Life or Death is in our own hands and we have to choose where we want to end up!

Freedom & Responsibility

- "Responsibility" can be broken into "ability" to "respond." As Catholics we have the freedom to and ability to respond to God and our neighbors in a way that demonstrates His love for us. Freedom makes us responsible for the choices we make, good or evil.
- Freedom and responsibility are agents for choosing to love as Christ loves.
- The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. (CCC 1733)
- Freedom is intrinsically connected to Truth. We are only free when we know Jesus who is the Truth and when we seek God's Will for our life. In the document Caritas in Veritate (1) it says, "Each person finds his good by adherence to God's plan for him, in order to realize it fully: in this plan, he finds his truth, and through adherence to this truth he becomes free."
- "Charity is at the heart of the Church's social doctrine. Every responsibility and every commitment spelt out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law." Caritas in Veritate, (2)

Caritas in Veritate, 17: "A vocation is a call that requires a free and responsible answer. *Integral human development presupposes the responsible freedom of the individual and of peoples.*"

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

Movies

- "Chasing Liberty" 2004- Truth
- "Bruce Almighty" 2003- Free Will
- "The Passion of the Christ" 2004- Absolute Truth, Responsibility
- "Holes" 2003- Responsibility for actions
- "The Rundown" 2003- Choices
- "Juno" and/or "Bella"- How teens choices affect their lives and the need to take responsibility for and accept the consequences of their choices. Making decisions based on morals.
- "The Blind Side"- Responsibility to love and respect our brothers and sisters and our call to love and responsibility through service.
- "Slum dog Millionaire"- Moral judgment and responsibility for those living in dire poverty. Primacy of spiritual values.

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Songs and Music Videos:

- “Your Grace is Enough” by Matt Mahar (Since it is grace that allows us to make good choices and to choose Christ.)
 - Search youtube.com for “Your Grace is Enough by Matt Mahar” or “Your Grace is Enough by Chris Tomlin”
- “Voice of Truth” by Casting Crowns (Song talks about Truth calling out to him)
 - Search youtube.com for “Voice of Truth Lyrics- Casting Crowns”
- “Times” by Tenth Avenue North
- “By Your Side”- Tenth Avenue North
- “One Love”- U2
- “Redemption Song”- Bob Marley
- “All Good Reasons” [acoustic] - Barefoot Truth (about freedom, change, healing and love).

Websites

- Absolute Truth- <http://www.absolute--truth.com>
- Patron Saint of Freedom: Infant Jesus of Prague
 - <http://saints.sqpn.com/infant-jesus-of-prague/>
- Godtube Video discussing Jesus’ Love and Truth
 - <http://www.godtube.com/featured/video/tamara-lowes-amazing-jesus-rap>
 - Message contrasting popular culture and the way of Christ focusing on Jesus’ Love and Truth and the responsibility we hold to chose a life according to Christ.
- Pope Benedict XVI's April 16, 2008 address at the White House
 - <http://www.studentnewsdaily.com/daily-news-article/pope-freedom-carries-responsibility/>
 - The official text of Pope Benedict XVI's address April 16 at the White House, where he was received by President Bush on the first full day of his six-day visit to the United States.
 - Good message of the connection between freedom and responsibility.
- *Grace in Freedom* by Karl Rahner, (Section 8 of the book)
 - <http://www.religion-online.org/showbook.asp?title=2079>
 - Chapter of a book about true freedom, theology of freedom, freedom in history, freedom towards God (with the idea it is only possible through God), the paradox of human freedom, freedom and grace, freedom and salvation, freedom and self realization, love, moral judgment and freedom and its origins
- *The Adventure of Freedom* (online video)
 - <http://www.josemariaescriva.info/article/the-question-of-freedom>
 - This is a great video interview of a lay person explaining how she combines freedom with responsibility, real love, and respect for others, in bringing up children, in politics, and in daily living.

OTHER RESOURCES

- *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth) Encyclical by Pope Benedict XVI (Section 4 talks about truth.)
- *Veritatis Splendor* (The Splendor of Truth) Encyclical by Pope John Paul II
- *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis, (Book I, Chapter 1: The Law of Human Nature)

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GATHER

Icebreaker: *Take it Away* by Les Christie

Supplies: tissue paper, drinking straws

Divide your group into teams of equal number (about six to eight students sitting in chairs). The first player in each team picks up a piece of tissue paper by sucking through the straw. This student then presents it to the next player (still on the end of the straw), who has to take it away and pass it on in a similar manner.

When the paper reaches the last player, this student must hurry (still carrying it on his straw) to the other end of the line while everyone is moving down to make room for this student. As soon as the last student occupies the first chair, he or she passes on the paper as before. This continues until the original last player occupies the chair he started on and the paper has reached him. If at any time the paper falls to the ground it must be picked up, with the straw, by the person who dropped it.

OR

Two Facts and a Fiction- Split the teens into small groups and have them sit in a circle. One teen starts by telling the group three statements, two being facts and a one being something fiction and the rest of the group (one by one) guesses what is fiction. This is a good 'get to know you game.'

Opening Prayer

Prayer for God's Guidance

Father in Heaven,

You made me Your child and called me to walk in the Light of Christ.

Free me from darkness and keep me in the Light of Your Truth.

The Light of Jesus has scattered the darkness of hatred and sin.

Called to that Light, I ask for Your guidance.

Form my life in Your Truth, my heart in Your Love.

Through the Holy Eucharist, give me the power of Your Grace that I may walk in the Light of Jesus and serve Him faithfully. Amen.

(Source: <http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=852>)

EXPLANATION

Truth. So what is Truth? Is there such a thing as absolute truth and if so what is it? Well the basis for absolute truth itself is quite simple. Have you had anyone say to you, "Truth is relative?" By stating that, this person is already relying on the fact that his statement is absolute and that truth cannot be anything but relative. If truth is relative, than even his statement cannot be claimed to be absolute. Absolute truth cannot be argued without using itself and therefore is a sure existence regardless of many atheistic or humanistic philosophies that will claim that absolute truth is not logical. It in fact is quite logical. It is so logical that it is written onto our hearts from the beginning of creation.

And beyond truth, what is freedom? How do we get it? What does responsibility have to do with truth and freedom? Does love have any part in all of these?

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Here is a good place to do **Activity # 1: Discussing famous quotes**. Once they have had time to think about these concepts then you can move into the next part on what the Church teaches.

All these are actually quite dependent on one another. As it says in the Catechism, “The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just” (1733). The freer one becomes through choosing what is right or the Truth, the more happiness and love they will experience. Why is this? Well, as the Catechism says, “God is the source of every good and of all love. True happiness can only be found in God Alone (1723).” If we want to find love and happiness, we must be free to choose them and seek them out. The way we are free to find love and happiness is by following the Truth, who is Jesus Christ. Once we know the Truth we have the responsibility to always choose what is good and not what is evil. St. Peter writes in 1 Pt 3:15-16 “For it is the will of God that by doing good you may silence the ignorance of foolish people. Be free, yet without using freedom as a pretext for evil, but as slaves of God.” The gift of truth is powerful and with our free will we are held to a great responsibility, but one that is well rewarded by love and happiness only found in Jesus Christ, the Truth. Are you still not convinced?

As intelligent human beings we inherently follow a code of conduct called “natural law.” This law is what governs the material universe and causes us to make decisions on what is right and what is wrong. It can be called natural because it is a concrete law found in our very nature as human beings and it is manifested to us by reason alone. A person does not have to be religious to recognize there are things that they ought to do and shouldn’t do. As C.S. Lewis says in *Mere Christianity*, “ Human beings, after all, have some sense; they see that you cannot have real safety or happiness except in a society where everyone plays fair, and it is because they see this that they try to behave decently.” When we follow these inherent, natural truths, such as caring for our bodies, following practices of honesty and integrity, and not harming others, we as natural creatures find a sense of peace and happiness. When we do not follow these natural laws, we inevitably do not feel good about who we are and what we have done. This confirms that choosing right brings a peace that is not found when wrong is chosen instead.

Has anyone heard of St. Augustine of Hippo? He was quite an unbelieving, self-centered, hedonist for quite a long time during his youth until he had a profound conversion and found God. One of St. Augustine’s most famous quotes is: “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” If you stop for a moment and think about his words, you cannot help but admit to yourself that there are times when you are not fulfilled, cannot find anyone or anything materially that gives you a full peace or happiness. This is totally normal! That’s what it means to be in our human state and it is also what gives us a very clear indication that there is a God out there that is Absolute Truth and that God became Word Incarnate and is Jesus Christ. St. Augustine’s claim show us that we cannot find true love and happiness apart from the Truth of Jesus Christ and the freedom found in following his way.

So we know that God is Truth, and Jesus said in John 14:6 that he is “The Way, The Truth, and the Life.” He says before Pilate, “The reason I came into the world, is to testify to the truth” (Jn. 18:37). But what does that have to do with our freedom and our responsibilities in life? Can we get by with just believing God is Truth without acting on anything that he has taught us throughout the history of the bible? Can we believe God is Truth but ignore the Ten Commandments or choose not to live out the Beatitudes? The reality is that to be a

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Catholic Christian we cannot live separated from God and Jesus' teachings which are Truth, and still find the peace and happiness we are looking for in this life on earth. As it says in Ephesians 4:15, "Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ."

Have you ever had that sinking feeling when you know that you let someone down? Or when you know that you clearly went against what someone you cared about asked you to do? Or have you ever thought about why if you are speeding when driving or breaking another rule like cutting class, you can never seem to shake that sense that you might get caught?

What is that feeling? That is a feeling of fear and guilt. Fear and guilt are not feelings that God wants for us to live with. God is much greater than that. God wants us to feel good about who we are and the decisions we make in our life. Fear, guilt, and anxiety are feelings that he created to help tip us off when we are not living the way he would like us to be living or not placing enough trust in His Will in our lives.

Ever since we were little we've joked about the Devil and the Angel that sit on our shoulders and inform our conscience about what we should and should not do. The analogy is not far-off in the idea that we always have a choice. We have been given free will by God, which sets us apart from the animals, and we can decide to follow something that is good and pleasing to God or we can choose a path that is not pleasing to God and focuses only on ourselves. It says in John 8:31 "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." The key to being free is to know what Jesus asks of us. When we follow his word and teachings we will love like he loved and we will know a happiness that is greater than ourselves.

Every decision we make is really a choice of "Truth" or "non-truth." Consider what the famous Russian writer Leo Tolstoy said about truth, "Truth, like gold, is to be obtained not by its growth, but by washing away from it all that is not gold." When we think about this in a spiritual context we realize that real freedom is discerning what is truth and what is non-truth and then discarding, avoiding, seeking forgiveness, for the non-truths we've lived or acted upon in our lives and making new choices that embrace and seek out Truth, which like gold is always pure and not self-seeking. Picture this: Each time you make a choice in truth you are shining a light, you are a candle lit for someone else to hope on. Likewise, each time you make a choice for non-truth, you turn off your light, and leave others standing in the dark, wondering if there is something greater out there, if there really is an Absolute Truth, a God that loves them so much he wants to spend eternity with them. We can find a peace in what James 1:25 says, "One who peers into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres, and is not a hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, such a one shall be blessed in what he does."

(Time permitting you could show the clip from the movie "The Blind Side," when Sandra Bullock's character chooses to pick up the homeless young man from the side of the street.)

With freedom comes responsibility. Have you seen the movie "The Blind Side," where the mother who is the main character decides of her own free will to take in the poor, lonely, and homeless young man? She had the free choice to ignore him or to take him in. Even upon making the right decision and taking him in the first night from the cold and rain, she then found herself with a responsibility. Would she let him stay one night, two nights, or forever? Sometimes the freedom that we act on will cause us to lose friends, as did the mother in the movie. But when we follow God's Truth and teachings, when we act on our free will, and

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take responsibility for our actions, we have the potential to radically live out the gospel. We can be lights in the dark world of non-truth, we can be the lamp on the hill. This is the power of freedom and responsibility. Can't it also been seen that both the homeless young man, the mother, and the family all reaped the great benefits of joy, love, and happiness that came from her decision to follow the Truth presented to her, accept it freely, and take full responsibility to follow through?! The point is that when we choose what is good, act on our own free will, and then follow through responsibly no matter how difficult it may be at times, it is then that we will truly know God's love and happiness as he intended it for us!!

As we pondered at the beginning, can we simply believe God is Truth without taking seriously the freedom and responsibility that he has given us to live according to his Will? No, we cannot. Truth and love are intricately connected. If we are to love as Christ loves, we must live in Truth and by living in Truth we will know God's love greater than if we did not live in it. As St. Paul says to James, "Look closely into the perfect law that sets people free, and keep on paying attention to it and do not simply listen and then forget it, but put it into practice---you will be blessed by God in what you do" (Js 1:25). We must continually remind ourselves and each other of the Ten Commandments, of the Beatitudes, and of the graces given through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. If we do this, and stop and think before each of our decisions, asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten us, then we will surely be on the path to making free choices that bring us peace, joy and happiness.

At the close of your talk, time permitting, **Activity # 2: Role Play Skit**, would be a good way to have teens show what they learned while keeping it light and funny.

APPLICATION

Activity Option # 1: Discuss famous quotes

Divide students into small groups of 4 or 5 students. Give each student a set of the following quotes. Have one group choose a leader to read the quotes and start the discussion. Have another student take notes on what the group thinks about each quote. Give them 20-30 minutes. Gather the group together at large. Have a spokes person from each group reveal their findings about what their group thought the quotes were about. Adult leader can answer questions and clarify statements as necessary. You can use as many or as few of the quotes as you want.

Truth Quotes

"Everything can be taken from man except the last of the human freedoms, his ability to choose his own attitude in any given set of circumstances---to choose his own way." ~Viktor Frankl, who was a survivor of the Nazi death camps.

"The greatest enemy of any one of our truths may be the rest of our truths." ~William James

"When I tell any truth, it is not for the sake of convincing those who do not know it, but for the sake of defending those that do." ~William Blake

"Truth is rarely written in ink; it lives in nature." ~Martin H. Fischer

"Truth, like gold, is to be obtained not by its growth, but by washing away from it all that is not gold." ~Leo Tolstoy

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“I tore myself away from the safe comfort of certainties through my love for truth - and truth rewarded me.” ~Simone de Beauvoir

“Man has always sacrificed truth to his vanity, comfort and advantage. He lives... by make-believe.” ~W. Somerset Maugham, *The Summing Up*, 1938

“We do not err because truth is difficult to see. It is visible at a glance. We err because this is more comfortable.” ~Alexander Solzhenitsyn

“The truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable.” ~Attributed to James A. Garfield

“Every truth passes through three stages before it is recognized. In the first, it is ridiculed, in the second it is opposed, in the third it is regarded as self-evident.” ~Arthur Schopenhauer

“The high-minded man must care more for the truth than for what people think.” ~Aristotle

Freedom Quotes

“I know but one freedom and that is the freedom of the mind.” ~Antoine de Saint-Exupery

“Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes.” ~Mahatma Gandhi

“While we are free to choose our actions, we are not free to choose the consequences of our actions.” ~Stephen R. Covey quotes

“Conformity is the jailer of freedom and the enemy of growth.” ~John F. Kennedy

“Real freedom is having nothing. I was freer when I didn't have a cent.” ~Mike Tyson

Responsibility Quotes

“You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. That is something you have charge of.” ~Jim Rohn

“You are not only responsible for what you say, but also for what you do not say” ~Martin Luther

“I am free because I know that I alone am morally responsible for everything I do.” ~ Robert A. Heinlein

Activity Option # 2: Role Play Skit

Supplies: Brown paper lunch bags, small pieces of paper, random clothes items for male and female that can be used as props

Split teens into groups of six people or less (at least three per group). Have each teen in each group pull out a piece of paper from a basket or brown paper bag. Groups are categorized; ideas of groups include a family, a sports team, a music band, an office etc. Each

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piece of paper has an individual's name and biography on it. That teen has to act as that person within their group and the group as a whole with their new personalities has to create a skit tying in what they have learned about love, truth, freedom and responsibility.

Example:

- Group A= Family (6 people in the group), How does a family live out freedom and responsibility in their daily life?
- Each teen in the Group A pulls a piece of paper from the bag. The six pieces of paper each have a title and description of the character. (i.e. mom, dad, cat, oldest sister, middle brother, baby brother.)
- Each paper should include a name, age, and personality traits and situations within the family.
 - (i.e.: Mother, Name: Paulette, Age: 37, She is a stay at home mom and has to take care of her 5 kids. She believes it is her responsibility to teach her kids good morals but she is seen as 'the nagging' parent and especially nags on Chris, the youngest for always having his room a mess.
- A teen cannot switch roles with anyone, even if a guy gets a role of the 'oldest sister.' This will add humor.
- Provide random "costumes" or props for groups to share and use during their skits.

SEND

Summary: What does this have to do with Jesus?

Jesus is the Truth. We have free will to choose to love him or not to love him. We have the responsibility to love God and others as God first loved us.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

I thank you for the gift of my intellect and my will. I want to know you, love you, and serve you the best I can. Help me to live my life according to your Truth. Allow me to be free from sin and temptation so that I can live in grace and peace. Help me to fulfill my responsibilities to my family, friends, and to you Lord, faithfully and joyfully. I choose you Jesus. Thank you for loving me. Amen.

Biography

Elizabeth Sánchez has worked in the Office of Youth Ministry as the Coordinator for Hispanic Youth Ministry since 2008. She enjoys rock climbing. She and her husband are expecting their first child in November 2010.

CELEBRATION!

DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

Christian Mystery

TOPIC

Sacraments & Grace

GOAL

The goal of this evening is to introduce teens to the ‘Sacramental economy’ of the Church. Most can name the seven sacraments, but few really ever contemplate why we have the sacraments. There will first be a reflection on the idea of celebration and why we as humans celebrate. This will then be applied to the idea of celebration within the Church...why Christ instituted the seven sacraments, and the Grace that is received through them. Lastly, there will be an emphasis upon the Eucharist as the ‘source and summit’ of our entire faith.

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

(II.I.B.1) (II.I.B.2.a) (II.I.C.8.a,b.9.d.ii) (II.II.C.4)

SCRIPTURE

Grace- Mt 22: 1-14

Sacraments- Jn 3:3,5; Mt 9:1-8

Eucharist- Jn 6

CATECHISM

The Sacramental Economy- 1076

Christ is present in the Sacraments- 1088-1090

Grace of the Sacraments- 1127, 1131

Sacramental Grace and salvation- 1129

Liturgy and Sacramental celebration- 1187, 2047

Grace- 1996-2005, 2017-2024

Eucharist- 1406-1419

GOLDEN THREADS

The Paschal Mystery: It is through Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension that we are saved. The sacraments allow us to enter into Christ, to become members of the body of Christ, to free us from our sins, and to receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life.

The Church: The Church is the dispenser of mysteries (sacraments) but is also the mystical body of Christ. Through the sacraments, we are initiated into the Church and become members of the mystical body of Christ.

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

Built on Christ. The Church began when the Holy Spirit came down upon the apostles at Pentecost. This new era in the age of the Church is ‘Built upon Christ’ who brings about his work of salvation through the sacraments until he comes again. By our participation in the Church and the Sacraments, we are building our lives upon the rock solid foundation of Jesus Christ. (Mt 7:24-27)

PROCLAMATION

An important point for teens to memorize (from the Baltimore Catechism):

Q: What is a Sacrament?

A: A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace.

This simple statement should be able to roll off the tongue of any Catholic.

CELEBRATION!

Sacraments

The Catechism paragraphs listed above and the Secondary Religion Guidelines should be reviewed by the team that is putting together this Catechetical night. Key points being:

- God calls all people to an ever-deeper sharing in His life which begins in Baptism and continues to grow through many channels of grace, including the sacraments, prayer, and good works.
- The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments (CCC 1113).
- Each sacrament is an efficacious (definition: capable of creating the desired effect) sign made up of actions and words which signify and effect the particular grace conferred through it. Sacraments confer their grace through the power of God and are limited in their effectiveness only by the disposition of those who receive them (CCC 1127-1128). The sacramental sign is included within a rite which contains other symbols related to the meaning of the sacrament as well.
- A sacramental celebration is woven from signs and symbols. Their meaning is rooted in the work of creation and in human culture, specified by the events of the Old Covenant and fully revealed in the person and work of Christ. (CCC 1145)
- A sacramental celebration is a meeting of God's children with their Father, in Christ and the Holy Spirit; this meeting takes the form of a dialogue, through actions and words. (CCC 1153)

The Church as Sacrament

- A sacrament is a visible sign of God's saving presence through which He communicates His divine life. The Church is a sign of union between God and His people, and at the same time brings about this union. The unity of the human family is restored in Christ and the Church. (CCC 774-775)
- We become sharers in Christ's life through our participation in His Paschal Mystery. The seven sacraments of the Church are the means through which we enter into and participate in the Paschal Mystery. (CCC 1085, 1067)

Grace as Gift

- Grace is first and foremost the gift of the Holy Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us. (CCC 2003) Grace is a free gift, a participation in the life of God, who invites us to share in His divine life.
- God's free initiative demands our free response. (CCC 2002)

The Eucharist

- "Source and Summit of the Christian Life" (CCC 1324)
- The bread and wine are truly transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ (CCC 1333)

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

Songs

- "Celebration" by Kool and the Gang (seriously...what a great song to play as the night is beginning!)
- "Here is Our King" by David Crowder Band (frankly any high energy Christian music song to keep the feeling of celebration during the intro to the evening).

CELEBRATION!

Movies

- “Babette's Feast” (A 1987 Danish Film that won a “Best Foreign Language Film” from the Academy Awards. A great movie to stimulate discussion about celebration with strong Eucharistic undertones. 100 minutes long...perhaps a good movie to show on a more relaxing “movie night” and then discuss later)
- “Most” A short film (30 minutes) about a father who sacrifices his son for the benefit of many strangers. Clear Christian message of the grace and love of God for us.
<http://www.mostthemovie.com/> (can also be viewed on Youtube in 4 parts...
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F876Jg-cnmk>)

OTHER RESOURCES

Quotes to reflect upon :

“Ubi caritas gaudet, ibi est festivitas.”- St. John Chrysostom . (Which translated to English would be, “Where love rejoices, there is festivity.”)

“Grace does not illuminate point by point. It irradiates like the sun. The man upon whom God lavishes himself ought to be seized by vertigo in such a way that he sees only the light of God and no longer his own limits, his own weakness. We are to become a simple receiver with arms spread wide yet unable to grasp, because the light runs through everything and remains untouchable, representing much more than our own effort could receive.” – Adrienne von Speyr

GATHER

The environment is set to be a party atmosphere. Perhaps celebrate somebody’s birthday or any other creative celebration idea...anniversary of something at the parish, celebration of a holiday, or saint feast day. The environment should be complete with decorations, cake, balloons, streamers, banners, party favors, etc... Perhaps use this one night to celebrate everybody’s birthday at once for the whole year?

Icebreaker

As people are arriving, let the party begin! Cut the cake, have festive music playing perhaps sing “Happy Birthday”, open any gifts, and perhaps play a typical party game... pin the tail on the donkey, piñata, musical chairs, whatever. The party should move along quickly and take no more than 15 minutes.

Opening Prayer

Once the party is complete, have everybody gather for the opening prayer. Begin with a teen reading Psalm 100...a psalm of Thanksgiving, then allow teens to add intentions that they are thankful for and would like to celebrate.

EXPLANATION

(The flow of this evening is from a discussion about ‘celebration’ to a discussion about how the Church celebrates (sacraments). These sacraments produce grace. All of the sacraments are oriented toward the Eucharist.)

What does it mean to celebrate something? Why do we celebrate anniversaries or birthdays? Why does a player celebrate a soccer goal? What celebrations are unique to our culture? (Christmas, Quincenearas, National holidays) This is an important discussion to have with teens. The following points and quotes can help you to guide the discussion for the evening:

CELEBRATION!

What is celebration?

“Ubi caritas gaudet, ibi est festivitas.”- St. John Chrysostom . Which translated to English would be, “Where love rejoices, there is festivity.”

(Ask the teens to give their thoughts on this quote.)

Josef Pieper (German Catholic philosopher) says in his document, *In Tune With The World*, that this quote from Chrysostom is the basis of real celebration. He is saying that a festival becomes truly festive only when the participants affirm the goodness of their existence. They affirm this goodness by being filled with joy. This festivity may range from the mere trivial (baby’s first tooth) to the transcendent (conversion to the Catholic faith), as long as the celebration is recognizing God’s role in this event and the goodness of God’s role in this event. Pieper makes the following points, attempt to convey them to the teens (perhaps put them up on a screen for them to read at their own pace):

1. At the heart of every celebration there is a recognition of the basic goodness of ‘be’ing. The world is a place where it is good to ‘be’ and it is always better to ‘be’, than not to ‘be’. Therefore, when we celebrate, we are celebrating that it is good to ‘be’ here in God’s creation and on God’s creation.
2. There is no better way to praise our world or another person than to give praise and worship to the God who created them. We are not thanking God for something that he does for us, or something that he gives us. We simply love and praise God unconditionally because God is God and it is very good that God ‘is’.
3. The most festive form of celebration is ritual celebration. Through ritual praise of God, we are giving the most intense expression of praise. We give great praise to God through ceremonial, formal, solemn, customary beliefs that we hold dear. It is in the ‘smells and bells’ of Mass, in the sign of cross before prayer, in the little gestures of respect like bowing and genuflecting that we are most festive.

(Do teens agree with these three points? How do we recognize God’s role in celebrating a birthday? A touchdown? A funeral Mass? Are these things that we keep in mind during a celebration? Knowing this about celebration, and knowing that the sacraments are how the Church celebrates, what does this reveal about the purpose of each of the seven sacraments? (to recognize and celebrate God in our lives!))

What is grace?

As a child, many of us were taught an acronym to understand the meaning of grace. Grace is “God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense”, G-R-A-C-E. While this may be elementary and does not begin to explain the differences between sanctifying grace, habitual grace, or sacramental grace, etc... it has stood as a simple method to explain the gifts that God has given to us. God has bestowed his gifts on us, but in order to do so, He sent his Son who instituted the sacraments as a means of dispensing that grace.

Put the following quote in the hands of the teens or up on a screen and ask them to reflect upon its meaning for a minute or two. (Adrienne von Speyr was a Catholic woman and mystic who was under the spiritual direction of the famous theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar).

CELEBRATION!

“Grace does not illuminate point by point. It irradiates like the sun. The man upon whom God lavishes himself ought to be seized by vertigo in such a way that he sees only the light of God and no longer his own limits, his own weakness. We are to become a simple receiver with arms spread wide yet unable to grasp, because the light runs through everything and remains untouchable, representing much more than our own effort could receive.” – Adrienne von Speyr

For starters, grace is meant to overwhelm us. It is not something that we only call upon at single moments in our life where we need an extra boost of support or faith. It “irradiates like the sun” and bathes us constantly in love and support from the Lord to assist us in our life (when we are open to his love and support). “Grace is a participation in the life of God” (CCC 1997). We should be lifted to such great heights by our openness to God’s graces that we experience “vertigo” and an inability to see our own limitations. God’s graces should always give us hope.

One of the most important aspects of grace is to remember that it is always undeserved. Grace is nothing that we have earned, and it is pure gift from God. As von Speyr says, it is something that we are unable to grasp, yet should receive with “arms spread wide.” It is a true mystery of our faith, and remains untouchable, beyond our comprehension. The Catechism states, “Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God” (CCC 1996). Everything that we have is a gift from God.

While there are seven concrete vessels of grace (sacraments), they represent much more than we could ever comprehend. We must try to learn about the sacrament which we are about to receive, yet the grace imparted is always far more than we could even imagine.

It is through grace that we are able to go through conversion and enter a deep relationship with God. Yet, once again, this is beyond our own abilities, and is only another gift of God.

(If there were time, watch the short film (30 min) “Most” and then have a discussion on grace. When do we recognize grace in our lives? What is our response to that grace?)

Which brings us to ... The Eucharist

The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life." (either explain this in your own words or have the teens reflect upon this statement):

Our entire Catholic faith is rooted in the Eucharist, takes on many layers of understanding in our lives and in our Church communities, and always points us right back towards it. "The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself." (CCC 1324)

The following quote from the EWTN website presents the vital doctrine that all Catholics must be taught and attempt to comprehend (as best we can). (once again, explain this in your own words or have the teens reflect upon this statement):

CELEBRATION!

“The greatest of the seven sacraments is the Holy Eucharist. The Catholic Church teaches that in the Eucharist, Our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is really present under the appearances of bread and wine. Our Lord is not merely symbolized by the bread and wine; nor is he present only through the faith of those present. Rather, the two material things, bread and wine, are completely changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, leaving behind only their sensible appearances. Thus, through the words of consecration spoken by the priest, Jesus, without ceasing to be present in a natural way in heaven, is also present sacramentally, body, blood, soul and divinity, in many places throughout the world.

The Eucharist is not only a sacrament but also a sacrifice. In it Jesus, acting through the priest, makes present again in an unbloody manner the sacrifice which he offered once for all by shedding his blood on Calvary. In Holy Communion, by obeying Jesus' command to eat his flesh and drink his blood, the faithful are also united spiritually with Jesus himself, and they unite their own prayers, works and sufferings to his perfect sacrifice.” -(<http://www.ewtn.org/faith/teachings/euchsum.htm>)

A beautiful point to make to teenagers is that they enter into the Paschal Mystery/ Sacrifice of Christ each time that they go to Mass and every time that they visit the Blessed Sacrament. This is an active celebration, not something static or simply a reminder of a celebration that happened 2000 years ago.

The Church therefore ‘celebrates’ the Eucharist. The Church ‘celebrates’ the sacraments. As already stated, this ritual ‘celebration’ is the most festive form of celebration! What would it take for us to ‘celebrate’ the Eucharist with the same excitement or appreciation (at least internally) as we celebrate our favorite sports team winning the World Championship?

Wrapping it up

Jesus instituted the seven sacraments to provide us with grace. Jesus was fully human and understood the importance of celebration and the importance of tangible items for humans. This is beautiful part of our Catholic faith! Grace comes not just through a mental exercise or entering into a higher state of being. Grace comes to us through tangible, basic matter...blood, water, wine, bread. Jesus healed through saliva, dirt, mud, breath. We can see, feel, taste, and smell the sacraments through all of our senses. What a privilege to be Catholic and to be able to see and touch our faith. It is not just a faith in the recesses of our minds!

Every time that we participate in the ‘celebration’ of the sacraments, we are receiving unfathomable graces that bring us closer to Christ. These graces bring us healing and are the source of hope in our lives today and in the eternal life to come. They bring us true joy, and help us to celebrate even the trivial moments of our lives with a greater appreciation for the source of all of gifts...Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION

Activity Option # 1: Analyzing Celebrations

Have teens break up into small groups and each be assigned a type of celebration (birthday, Super Bowl, New Year’s eve, etc...) Have the group list all of the components of the celebration and how this celebration gives praise to God. Who is involved? What tangible items are needed for a celebration? Is there a typical meal as a part of the celebration? Decorations? Rituals? Songs? Next assign one of the seven sacraments to this same group and ask them to repeat this exercise. Each sacrament consists of a visible external rite, which

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is composed of matter and form, the matter being the action, such as the pouring of water, and the form being the words spoken by the minister. How does each sacrament give praise to God? Why would Christ use ordinary things (water, wine, bread, oil) to do supernatural things? (Because He was fully human and understood that humans are very tangible and benefit from being able to see, feel, and taste. We do not just live the faith is not just in our minds.)

Activity Option # 2: Looking into Art

The Catechism has an art image just prior to paragraph 1066 which can also be found online at: <http://www.olp-parish.org/files/images/4/40sacraments.jpg> (Image not printed here due to copyright concerns)

The image depicts the encounter of Jesus with the woman with the hemorrhage. (Mk 5:25-34) Have the teens discuss how this image points towards the purpose of the sacraments. (The sacraments of the Church now continue the works which Christ performed during his earthly life. The sacraments are “powers that go forth” from Christ to heal the wounds of sin and give us new life in Christ.)

SEND

Summary: What does this have to do with Jesus?

Jesus instituted the seven sacraments to provide us with grace. Jesus was fully human and understood the importance of celebration and the importance of tangible items for humans. This is beautiful part of our Catholic faith! Grace comes not just through a mental exercise or entering into a higher state of being. Grace comes to us through tangible, basic matter... blood, water, wine, bread. Jesus healed through saliva, dirt, mud, breath. We can see, feel, taste, and smell the sacraments through all of our senses. What a privilege to be Catholic and to be able to see and touch our faith. It is not just a faith in the recess of our minds!

Closing Prayer

If there is time, end the night in the chapel or in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Ask the teens to reflect upon Christ in the Eucharist and in each of the sacraments that they have been through up to this point in their life...giving thanks to the Lord for his many graces, too abundant for us to ever fathom.

If there is not time, you could hand out copies of the **Anima Christi** prayer to recite together. Explain that this is traditional prayer that people have recited after receiving the Eucharist since the 14th century:

Soul of Christ, sanctify me
Body of Christ, save me
Blood of Christ, inebriate me
Water from Christ's side, wash me
Passion of Christ, strengthen me
O good Jesus, hear me
Within Thy wounds hide me
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee

From the malicious enemy defend me
In the hour of my death call me
And bid me come unto Thee
That I may praise Thee with Thy saints
and with Thy angels
Forever and ever
Amen

CELEBRATION!

Biography

Kevin Bohli is the Director of the Office of Youth Ministry for the Catholic Diocese of Arlington. He has held this position since 2001 and has been in active youth ministry since 1995. He is a full member of the Youth Apostles Institute (www.YouthApostles.org) and a founding member of the Fellowship for the New Evangelization (www.F4NE.org). He loves camping and all sports that involve getting outdoors with his wife and kids and as far away from civilization as possible.

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DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

The Church

TOPIC

Evangelization: The Church’s Mission

GOAL

The goal for this session is to introduce young people to the fundamental mission of the Catholic Church and to show how every single one of them are uniquely called to share and participate in that mission.

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

(II.I.A.4.b,c.v.e) (II.I.B.2.e)

SCRIPTURE

Great Commission- Mt 28:18-20

Evangelization- Mt 16:15-16; 2 Cor 5:20; Mt 10:7; Rm 10:14-15

Witness- Acts 1:8; Rm 10:9-10; 2 Tm 2:2

CATECHISM

Evangelization- 905, 935, 2472

The Church/Mission- 760, 849-857, 860-861

Witness- 2472, 1816

Christian Life- 2087, 2044, 2028

GOLDEN THREADS

The Incarnation: At the heart of all evangelization is the person of Christ. The task of evangelization is to make one a disciple of Christ

The Trinity: The Lord’s missionary mandate is grounded ultimately in the eternal love of the Trinity (CCC, 850). It is this love that God desires to draw each and everyone of us into.

The Dignity of the Human Person: God has created each of us out of His incredible love, for the purpose of “sharing in His own life” (CCC, 1). He desires that ALL would share in His life and be in communion with Him. You can’t love God, and not be drawn into this desire to share His life and love with others. By virtue of their dignity as a human person, each and every individual deserves to hear this Good news and have the opportunity to personally respond to it.

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

Built on Christ. All evangelization is built on Christ, and on His own witness to the truth. His witness was even punctuated by the sacrifice of his own life. We are witnesses to Him, first and foremost, and to the effect He has had on our life.

PROCLAMATION

- Just as God's will is creation and is called "the world," so his intention is the salvation of men, and it is called "the Church." - *CCC 760*
- God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth . . . Salvation is found in the truth . . . the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. - *CCC 851*
- The whole Church is apostolic . . . she is "sent out" into the whole world. All members of the Church share in this mission. - *CCC 863*

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- Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, "that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life." - CCC 905
- In order that the message of salvation can show the power of its truth and radiance before men, it must be authenticated by the witness of the life of Christians. "The witness of a Christian life and good works done in a supernatural spirit have great power to draw men to the faith and to God." - CCC 2044
- The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it. - CCC 1816
- “The task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church... It is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize.” - *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

- Evangelism Linebacker
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvYFvvhx1dcY>
- St. Paul Rap (*Beware: Highly corny, but has a good message, and the corny-ness could work with the right group of teens*)
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEKn1ulc750&NR=1>
- Lifehouse: Everything Skit (*Can be used as a tool to evangelize*)
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyheJ480LYA&feature=related>

OTHER RESOURCES

- *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (*On Evangelization in the Modern World*)
- *Redemptoris Missio* (*Mission of the Redeemer*)
- *Redemptor hominis* (*Redeemer of Man*)
- Cultivation Ministries – a number of resources on evangelization and sharing your faith, including the book “Positively Dangerous” and “I am E3 Cards”
 - <http://www.cultivationministries.com/home/resources/>

GATHER

Icebreaker- *Get Lost* (see appendix at the end of the session)

This activity can be used in a fun way to start the meeting, but can also be used to transition into the topic for the night. Imagine if the Church started out by telling people to “get lost” like we just did in this activity! Yet, as we see in the game, many times in groups people can be rejected, for one reason or another. The Church itself is a “group”, but the Church would have never grown if she rejected people. In fact, the Church has had as one of its primary reasons to exist inviting more and more people to join her!

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit, and fill the hearts of your faithful,
and kindle in them the fire of Your Divine Love.

Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created,
and You shall renew the face of the earth.

Oh God, Who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructed the hearts of the faithful,

Grant that, by the same Spirit,

we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

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OR

Mary, Star of the New Evangelization

Holy Mary, star of the new evangelization,
make us the light of the world.

We receive Christ in the Eucharist;
help us build the Kingdom in the world.

Teach us whatever He tells us.
May our study of His life lead us to love Him,
and our love for Him lead us to imitate Him.

If we are what we should be,
we will set the world ablaze and affect the culture.

We ask your intercession to make this so,
through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

EXPLANATION

(a PowerPoint presentation would be helpful to display quotes for all teens to read)

When you hear the word “Evangelism” what do you think of? (some responses may be good, some may be bad...televangelists, people on the corner screaming to repent, etc...)

Is Evangelism something that Catholics are supposed to participate in?

Have the teens read and reflect upon Romans 10:13-15, “For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring (the) Good News!"”

Next have the teens read Mt. 28:18-20, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

The deepest identity of the Church is to evangelize. That is why the Church exists...she exists in order to evangelize.

The Church, an expression of God’s plan, is the instrument of His desire to save all men.

In order to be saved, we must find the truth. God has entrusted that truth to the Church. Outside of the Church there is no salvation (CCC 846).

Because the Church has been entrusted with the truth, she has the duty, the “apostolic mission” to share it with all men.

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EVERY lay member of the Church shares in this mission; by keeping the faith, by living the faith, and by boldly professing it to others.

This is our Church and her mission – this is her deepest identity. And because we are members of her, it is OUR identity and mission too.

What can you do to Evangelize?

1. Walk the walk

What does it mean to walk the walk? How do we both evangelize and prepare to evangelize to those we encounter in our day-to-day lives. Hopefully the answer is somewhat obvious; we live as Christians and walk with Christ in our lives. This means specifically; praying, fasting, regularly participating in the sacraments, leading a moral lifestyle and digging ever deeper into our faith and scripture.

Prayer, both personal and communal, is key to any Christian life. Have you ever been on a long trip? What happened as the day or days went on? Did you get hungry? Did you run low on fuel? Obviously you did. You had to stop driving and take time to refuel. This is prayer! It is essential that we pray; that we take time to sit before our Creator, the focus of our life as Christians and refuel. Whether our prayer is offering up intentions, thanksgiving, asking for help through struggles or simply to focus on Christ, we are refueled to begin the journey again.

The Sacraments are another source of fuel for us on our journey. Sacraments are those outward signs instituted by Christ, to give us grace and strength for the road ahead. The most important source of fuel is daily or weekly Mass. The Church professes that the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life (LG 11).” As the source and summit of Christian life, all the other sacraments and ministries (including evangelization) are bound together and found in the Eucharist.

We should all be trying our best to lead a moral life with Christ as our ultimate example. This doesn’t mean we have to be perfect. We are human after all and therefore make mistakes. The important thing is to admit that you have made a mistake, confess that mistake, and move forward trying your best not to repeat it.

Living our lives with Christ as our ultimate example means that we live as He lived. Did Christ live one way with His family and another with his disciples? Do you? One question to ask yourself is, “If Christians were on trial, would you be convicted?” In other words, is your faith so much a part of your daily life that your friends and others know that you are a Christian?

How easy is it to remember the lyrics or tune to your favorite song? Now, can you remember the chapter and verse of your favorite scripture passage? One of the best ways we can prepare to talk to others about our faith and evangelize is to learn our faith inside and out; know what the Church teaches and why. This means continually learning a little more about the Bible as well. Make it fun and help each other learn why we do what we do and believe what we believe as Catholics. Ask me or Father _____ about a question you might have. Just continue to ask questions and learn about our faith.

2. Live your faith joyfully

-Ghandi, "I like your Christ...I do not like your Christians"

Do we live in joy because of our faith or is our faith just a bunch a rules or things that we can’t do? Are we an example of Christ to others? It is important for us to live joyfully in our faith and show that to others. This shows that we live in freedom and joy (a product living by the virtues of Faith, Hope and Love); the Gospel really is the “Good News.” How do our

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everyday actions or the way we approach our “celebrations” invite others to be interested or excited about our faith?

3. "Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words." - Francis of Assisi

This quote is sometimes used as a cop-out, meaning that simply living your life in a good manner is enough to witness to the Gospel. However, there are many times that we need to use words to proclaim that Jesus Christ is the reason for our joy and our way of life.

We all know really “nice” people who are not the least bit religious. When we make decisions, do we explain the reason for our decision (Jesus Christ), or do we just let people make their own assumptions?

"There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 22)...we need to USE WORDS!

4. Evangelize your friends

Do you talk to your friends about faith? Do you talk to them about your priorities and why you go to Church? Have you ever invited a friend to go to Church with you? It is amazing the positive impact we can have on each other when we simply talk about positive influences in our own lives. For example, like talking about what a great time you had at a youth gathering or retreat. Get your friends involved and invite them.

Pray for and with your friends. Saint Monica (mother of St. Agustin) is a great example of the impact that prayer can have on the lives of those we care about. Saying grace at meals before you eat and talking to your friends about why you do it. These are all great examples, but not easy examples, of what we can do to evangelize our friends. Honest, it doesn't have to be anything sinister or sneaky; we just live our lives, pray for God's grace and spread the joy that God gives to us to others.

5. Evangelize your parents/family

You may ask what on heaven or earth can I do to evangelize at home? Believe it or not, you can do a great deal. All it takes is suggesting to your family that you pray before you eat or spend some quality time together without the television on. Maybe your family would go for praying a rosary together once a week or reading a book of the Bible together.

Another form of evangelization at home is simply doing things for others without being asked or showing your appreciation for your siblings and parents. Life and the gospel happen around the small things in life that we do; the gospel is not just contained in the big events (baptisms, confirmations, first communions, marriages) but in joyfully saying, “I love you” and “good morning” to your family.

6. Witness in public

Similar to witnessing and evangelizing at home, it is important that we witness to the world that we are Christians. As an old hymn goes, “They will know we are Christians by our love...” As I said before, it doesn't always have to be big things that are the strongest witness to people around us. You can evangelize better by helping somebody in need at your school or inviting “the new kid” to join you and your friends the next time you hang out. Again, it can be just as simple as saying a prayer before you eat a meal out or holding the door for an elderly person to go through first.

The key to evangelization is learning about your faith, talking about what you learn and then putting it into practice in your life to be an example to others.

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APPLICATION

Finish the night with the Mission Game (*see appendix at the end of the session*)

Optional Additional Activity: Hot Seat

This is best done in smaller groups. If you have a large group of teens, divide them up into groups of 6-8 teens. Each group will pick one person in the group to be in the “hot seat”. This person will have to answer questions from the rest of the students. The questions can be about any aspect of the faith, or about witnessing to their faith. (e.g. Do you really believe Jesus walked on water?, Do you believe He rose from the dead? Why?) The questions are meant to be the kind of questions they may actually get from friends. Can they handle being in the “hot seat”?

SEND

Summary: What does this have to do with Jesus?

At the heart of the Church is Jesus, and the Church has the mission she has because it was the mission of Jesus. The desire to save all men was the desire of Jesus, the desire of the Trinity. And Jesus established the Church to carry on this mission that he started. Every single person shares in this mission, and is caught up into it as they live out their life of faith. We are ALL called to be witnesses to it!

Closing Prayer

Prayer for Evangelization

Loving God,
You called us each by name
And gave your only Son to redeem us
In your faithfulness
You sent the Holy Spirit
To complete the mission of Jesus
Among us

Open our hearts to Jesus
Give us the courage to speak his name
To those who are close to us
And the generosity to share his love
With those who are far away

We pray that every person
Throughout the world
Be invited to know and love Jesus
As Savior and Redeemer
May they come to know his all-surpassing love
May that love transform every element of our society

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord
Amen!

HISPANIC VIEWPOINT

In order to effectively evangelize a person, it is essential to have an understanding of the culture that the person is a part of. “Inculturation of the Gospel is a process that brings the

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transforming power of the Gospel to touch each person in their hearts and cultures at their deepest levels (NDC p. 82).” Hispanic youth are a completely unique “culture” in themselves and require special attention. It is very common for Hispanic youth to feel a great tension or “choque” between their family life and the dominant culture they participate in outside the home. If we want to evangelize Hispanic youth, we need to try to enter into their reality of uncertainty, of fear, of feelings of being different and the struggles of being immigrants or children of immigrants. If we want Hispanic youth to evangelize their family and peers, we must first help them to feel comfortable and confident with who they are in Jesus. We must build them up in God’s promises and love if they are to go out and share the Gospel with others.

Biography

Jim Beckman has been involved with youth ministry and evangelization of teens for more than 20 years. He graduated from the Franciscan University and has been in various roles of leadership of national youth ministry ever since. Jim has served as a host of the Steubenville summer Youth Conferences for more than 20 years. He has built solid and thriving youth ministry programs in several parishes over the years. Jim is the Executive Director of ImpactCenter, a Youth Minister mentoring and consulting ministry, and is the Director of Outreach for the Augustine Institute in Denver. He and his wife, Meg, and their family live in Highlands Ranch, CO.

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Appendix 1

“Get Lost”

From the “Creative Youth Ideas” web page –

http://www.creativeyouthideas.com/blog/icebreakers/get_lost_2.html#more

Description

This game provides an opportunity to mix the group up and for them to share information about themselves in a non-threatening way while having fun. In this elimination game, people are grouped into groups of three and then one person in every group which meets a certain characteristic is asked to “Get Lost.” Everyone who had to leave must quickly find another group and form groups of three again. The last group to form is eliminated.

Resources

None

Preparation

Prepare a list of criteria. You can choose from the list below or create your own:

- Name closest to letter "A"
- Name closest to letter "Z"
- Neither the youngest nor the oldest in a group.
- Oldest
- Youngest
- Has the most colorful socks
- Has the oldest living grandparent
- Has the most cousins
- Has the least number of pets
- Has the most pets
- Has the largest pet.
- Is the tallest
- Is the shortest
- Has the longest hair
- Has the shortest hair
- Has the most traffic tickets
- Has been a member of this group for the longest time
- Newest member of this group
- Has been to the most foreign countries
- Longest fingernail
- Spent the most money today
- Has played on the most sports teams
- Can do the most one-armed push-ups
- Tallest Person
- Longest eyelashes
- Smallest belt
- Highest numbered Street Address
- Biggest Purse / or wallet
- Highest Serial Number on currency

- Has the shortest fingernails
- Has the biggest foot.
- Has the smallest foot.
- Has the longest finger
- Has the darkest skin tone.
- Has the smallest nose
- Lives farthest from this meeting place
- Lives on the highest floor
- Born the Farthest away
- Longest last name
- Biggest shoe size
- Lives the closest to this place
- has been on the most vacations in the past year
- Has the most siblings
- Birthday closest to today
- Shortest Person
- Youngest Baby brother/ sister

- Most jewelry
- Least jewelry
- Longest earrings
- Wearing the most blue
- Oldest
- Neatest handwriting
- Messiest handwriting
- Loudest
- Most quiet
- Has darkest color notebook
- Most rings
- Biggest hands
- Has most books
- Whistles the loudest
- Longest Paper Airplane Throw

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What to Do

1. Form groups of 3-7 people. It's ok if groups are not equal as long as there is a minimum of three in each group and they are balanced as closely as possible.
2. Based upon different criteria, at a given signal, one person in each group will be told to "get lost."
3. Ask them to introduce themselves to each person in the group and then determine which person in their group meets the specified characteristic.
4. Allow time for the groups to introduce themselves and determine who best fits the given criteria. You might want to ask the groups to raise their hands when they have identified the person so that you know when everyone is ready.
5. Explain to the groups that on your signal the identified person must move to another group. You will say “One, Two, Three!!!” and then all the groups will say “Get Lost!!!”
6. Then every group must get ONE new member to replace the one they lost.
7. The last group to reform is eliminated.
8. Continue to play with new criteria for getting lost until only group survives. Then you tell this trio that for being so competitive that they must all "Get Lost!"

Variation

Give them an additional question to share while introducing themselves such as a favorite ice cream, a discussion thought, etc.

Taking It to the Next Level

In each round of this game there were a lot of people who were rejected. Among them some were even eliminated. Whenever people form groups this will always be the case. There will also be those group members that are very popular and those that no one seems to want. There will always be selection and rejection when groups are formed. It's part of life. It's of great benefit to be around like minded people. It's good to be surrounded by people that inspire you and challenge you to grow and become your best. Yet it is also good to have people who are different, people with a different perspective, people with skills and gifts you don't possess. The question is what is the best way to handle the selection process?

- Have you even seen someone get rejected from a group? On what basis were they rejected?
- What are some of the reasons that people get rejected from a group?
- Have you ever been told to “get lost”? Been rejected from a group?
- Why? What was the basis for your rejection?
- How did it make you feel? Did it seem fair? How did you respond?
- Is it wrong to want to choose your friends? Why or why not?
- Does bad company always corrupt good character?
- If everyone were exactly like you, what would the world be like? Would there be anything missing in the world?
- Are there ever legitimate reasons to be selective about a group? When? If so, how can you be selective yet also seek the best for everyone?
- How can you find a balance of putting together the best group for a situation, task, or specific purpose, yet also making sure that no one is rejected? Can it be done? How should it be done?

“Be A Witness!”

Action Points

- What is one way that you can become more accepting of others?
- Identify several specific people that you need around you to help you to achieve your goals and dreams in life? What can you offer to them in return? Commit yourself to be that kind of person.
- Find someone in the group whom you don't know very well, but whom you would like to know and make an effort to reach out to them. You never know what undiscovered gifts you might find in others.
- What is one way you can personally bring out the best in others, even when they may not be part of your chosen group?

Possible Applications / jump off points to spiritual discussions

Tell youth they are all "LOST", but in God's grace, we are all found! Grace is actually an "undeserved gift." In the book of Romans we discover that all men are "lost" because of our sinful nature (Romans 3:23, 6:23). Like some of the characteristics in the game, part of our sinful nature we have no control over... it was passed down as a result of Adam and Eve's fall. But other aspects of our sinful nature are due to choices we made so that we are without excuse. But through Grace, God forgives our sin so that we are no longer lost, but saved! Instead of getting lost, let's "get saved" through God's grace.

“Be A Witness!”

Appendix 2 The Mission Game

[Begin this activity with the following explanation]

“Thanks for joining us for the two-year mission to this Island _____
(call it whatever you want).

Your mission is to take this island for Christ and you have two years to see what you can accomplish. We do not know too much about the inhabitants of this island except for a few small, but very important details.”

“There are basically three types of people who are on this island and can be classified as the following:

1. There are people who are friendly and speak your language they love outsiders.
2. There are people who do not care either way about outsiders – some speak your language and some do not.
3. There are people who hate us, who hate what you stand for, do not like outsiders and do not speak your language.

Knowing these things about the people of this island – you are now to come up with a two year strategic plan to take this island for Christ. What are you going to do and how are you going to do it? What are the reasons behind the various things you have decided to do?”

[Give them 20 min. or so to come up with their strategic plan]

[Process with each group what they have decided to do and why. Then have someone write down on a dry erase board all of their ideas of all the groups. You will refer to this at the end of the activity.]

“Now that you have your plan and have enacted it for your first year – you have made some real progress. By God’s grace many have converted to Christ. But the king or representative of the people who hate us have come to us saying that unless you leave now we are going to torture you and kill you. Who do you think you are coming here with your ideas of religion and imposing this on us? Who do you think you are? Unless you leave we will begin killing you!”

“Now you have been at this one year and you still have one year to go. So you must have a consensus in answering this question as a group: Do you stay or do you go - knowing there is a death threat hanging over you?”

[Give them some time to process this question – telling them that there is no wrong answer except not having a reason for their decision. Then ask each group what they have decided and why.]

[Finally tell them:] “OK – now you have been at this two years and great progress has been made many have come to know and experience the Living Jesus Christ in their lives. You have started to make disciples. Disciples who are now not just living like Christ but are also now just beginning to evangelize. The people who do not care – many of them now care!

“Be A Witness!”

There are fewer on the fence – but some have come to hate us as well. The King of the people who hate us put a death sentence on all of us and has made good on his threat. _____(pick someone from your group) has just been martyred because he converted the Kings daughter and they were engaged to marry. He was beheaded in the most cruel way possible.”

“Now the big question is this: You have been there two years, your missionary commitment is over, many have been converted, disciples are beginning to carry out the work of evangelization – but there is still much more that needs to be accomplished. There are many who still have not heard the Good News. Your disciples are still in need of your experience and know how. And you have this very real death threat over you. In light of this scripture: *[Read Mark 8:34 – 38 out loud]*

Do you stay or do you go? This is an individual question. Not a group question. I want you to come up here to the board and put yourself on the island or on the boat telling us all if you personally are going to stay or going to go. There is no right or wrong answer except you must be able to articulate why you have decided to do what you have chosen to do.”

[Give them a marker to have them put a stick figure on the board – then to articulate why they are going to stay or go]

[Listen to their answers – many will stay having a martyr’ attitude – which is great. Others will go mostly because they feel their commitment is over and God will now call them to another work. Both ideas are fine and all show a determination to serve our Lord. Mention that is remarkable that so many would give their lives for giving away the Gospel]

“BUT, Let’s look at this island – not as some game or scenario! Let’s look at this as your high school campus, your family or your work place. On this campus of _____there are people that are friendly to you and your message. Many could care less who you are. And you will also find those who hate you – asking you where you get off imposing your beliefs on them. In the activity with the Island, some of you said that you would be willing to give your own life for this – shedding your blood for the Gospel. But, are you willing to do the same thing for your school campus? Sometimes it’s easier to shed our blood for Christ than it is to shed our reputation. What will it cost you?”

“When we talk about evangelization on this campus – you came up with great ideas to do just that. Look at this list of ideas you came up with in your strategic plans on how to take the island for Christ. There are some real similarities to how you can take your campus for Christ. How can you implement those things?”

“You can learn the language, learn the culture, invite people over for meals or serve people in ways they have a need to be served. You can build relationships with them – so that they will listen to you when you share about Christ and how to live your life for Him!”

To Pray or Not to Pray?

DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

Christian Prayer

TOPIC

The Universal Call to Prayer

GOAL

The goal of this session is to introduce teens to both the concept and essential nature of prayer within our faith life and consequently our personal relationship with God. Teens should walk away from this session with the knowledge of God's unrelenting longing for a relationship with us and that this desire is due to His unyielding love for us; this "reaching out" by God is reciprocated by man's desire – known or yet-to-be-known – for a relationship with God. The primary means by which Man can more fully enter into this relationship with God is by establishing open and honest communication with Him, not "entering into" but instead becoming aware of our being in His presence, through a regular and rich prayer life, especially through the Mass.

A note: This night is meant to be the first in a series of eight on prayer (see the full eight-semester calendar). Be attentive to what your teens respond to and how they respond – everyone relates to God differently – and use those cues to set up those future events.

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

(II.II.D.1.a.2)

SCRIPTURE

Adoration- Ps 24; Ps 95

Petition- Mt 7:7; Lk 18:13

Thanksgiving- Ps 107; Rm 1:21 (when you do not give thanks); 1 Thess 5:18

How to pray- Mt 5:14-16; Mt 6:6-13; Mk 1:35; 1 Thess 5:17

Intercession- Ps 122; Lk 23:34

Praise- Ps 145; Ps 148; Ps 150; Eph 5:19

CATECHISM

(CCC 2558-2567, 2598-2616, 2650, 2724, 2726-2728, 2735-2736, 2745)

Prayer as Covenant- 2562-2564

Prayer as Communion- 2565-2567

Jesus Prays- 2598-2616

Source of Prayer- Creation- 2569, 2590, 2596, 2597, 2650, 2656, 2659, 2660, 2663

Favorable Prayer Locations- 2691

Vocal Prayer- 2700-2704

Meditative Prayer- 2705-2708; 2712-2717

Difficulties & Temptations in Prayer- 2729-2733

Trust: Does Prayer Work?- 2734-2741

Perseverance in Prayer- 2742-2745

GOLDEN THREADS

The Paschal Mystery: The truth and mysteries that are present in Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven are remembered and celebrated particularly through the prayer of the Mass, the Eucharistic Celebration. This prayer allows us the opportunity to fully participate with him in his holy sacrifice. Prayers of Adoration and Thanksgiving (which flows from the Eucharist) tie in well to this thread.

The Church: The Church is the entity that Christ instituted to carry on his Great Commission, and it is comprised of those both living and dead, all those that will be in full communion with Christ. Prayer is the means by which the Church communicates with God and supports one another in its universal call toward holiness and unity with God. Prayers of Petition and Intercession tie in well to this thread.

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The Dignity of the Human Person: It is an unbelievable, mind-blowing and humbling concept to think that God created each one of us in his image and likeness and were subsequently given the ability to freely choose Him. It follows that a God that created each of us and loved us enough to give us freedom would also pursue a relationship with us, a relationship that is rooted in prayer. If we choose to believe in Him, we must also choose to love and grow close to Him, and prayer is the means by which we do so. Prayers of Praise, Adoration and Thanksgiving tie in well to this thread.

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

Built on Christ. Jesus is both the one to whom we pray and the one that taught us how to pray. He gave us the Our Father saying, “This is how you are to pray.” He provided us with the example for how to communicate with God, and also pointed to Scripture as a means for doing so. Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises of Scripture and the one that teaches us how to continue its fulfillment... by pursuing and maintaining a true, personal relationship with our Lord. As such, he provides the foundation for our personal relationship with God: prayer. It is upon this foundation that we can build our relationship and deepen our faith life.

PROCLAMATION

CCC 2558: The Church asks that we believe, celebrate and develop a personal relationship with our “living and true God”... and notes that **this relationship is prayer**.

CCC 2559: Prayer is raising one’s mind and heart to God, humbly, “out of the depths” of a “contrite heart” ... and that Man must acknowledge that he does not “know how to pary as [he] ought” and that he “is a beggar before God.”

CCC 2560: God first thirsts for a relationship with Man, and “prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with our” for Him. “God thirsts that we may thirst for Him.

CCC 2745: Prayer and *Christian life* are *inseparable*.

Prayer Types (from “*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*”, pgs. 473-474):

- **Vocal**: Since we are body as well as spirit, we need to express ourselves orally. Spoken and sung prayers arise from our souls; they can be complemented by bodily gestures such as the Sign of the Cross, genuflection, kneeling and bowing. When we become inwardly aware of God, to whom we speak, our vocal prayer can become an initial step toward contemplative prayer. Ref: CCC 2701.
- **Meditative**: In meditative prayer we use our minds to ponder the will of God in his plan for our lives. What does God ask of us? The Church provides many aids for meditation: “the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual fathers...” Ref: CCC 2705, 2707, 2708.
- **Contemplative**: This is a gift to which we dispose ourselves by resting attentively before Christ. It involves hearing and obeying God’s Word. It is a time of silent listening and love. This requires a regular time each day. Ref CCC: 2724.

Basic Ways of Praying (from “*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*”, pgs. 467-468):

- **Adoration**: This form of prayer flows from an attitude that acknowledges that we are creature in the presence of our Creator. It is an act by which we glorify the God who made us. We adore God from whom all blessings flow.
- **Petition**: This is a prayer that takes many forms: to ask, to implore, to plead, to cry out. In each case, it acknowledges how much we depend on God for our needs, including forgiveness and persistence in seeking Him. We need to practice the prayer of petition, remembering Christ’s call to ask in order to receive, to seek in order to find, and to knock in order that the door may be opened (Mt 7:7). The first movement of the prayer of petition is asking forgiveness of our sins as did the tax collector in the parable where

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he was compared to the Pharisee whose prayer lacked humility. The tax collector begins his prayer with the words, “O God, be merciful to me a sinner” (Lk 18:13). Humility and repentance characterize a prayer that returns us to communion with Christ.

- **Intercession:** This is the prayer that we make on behalf of the needs of others. Jesus Christ himself, our great High Priest, incessantly intercedes for us. God calls us also to intercede for each other and even for our enemies. Intercessions for others’ needs are part of the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours.
- **Thanksgiving:** This form of prayer flows from the Church’s greatest prayer, the celebration of the Eucharist. Every moment or event can become a thanksgiving offering. We are called to thank God for all of the gifts we have received, including our joys and sorrows, all of which, through love, work towards our benefit.
- **Praise:** “Praise is the form of prayer which recognizes most immediately that God is God. ... It shares in the blessed happiness of the pure of heart who love God in faith before seeing him in glory” (CCC no. 2639). Scripture is filled with outpourings of praise for God. When we exult in him with simplicity and an open heart, we obtain a glimpse of the joy of the angels and saints who glory in the ways of God.

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

Movies

- “Bruce Almighty”
 - DVD clip: chapter 18
 - End Cue: *Bruce and God say, “It’s good”*.
 - Overview: Bruce delivers a rote prayer for world peace. God challenges him to pray for what he really cares about. Bruce sincerely asks that Grace would meet someone who would love her completely- someone who would have God’s “eyesight” when he looks at her. God proclaims his second prayer “good”.
 - From: *Blockbuster Movie Illustrations* by Bryan Belkamp

Songs

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “The Heart of Worship” by M. Redman• “Open the Eyes of My Heart” by M. Smith• “Can Anybody Hear Me?” by M. Andrews• “I want to Know You More” by A. Park• “Blessed Be Your Name” by M. Redman | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Enough” by C. Tomlin• “Here I am, Lord” by D. Schutte• “The Summons” by J. Bell• “Adoration” by M. Maher• “Unanswered Prayer” by G. Brooks |
|---|---|

Books

- “In the Heart of the World” by Mother Theresa
- “Prayer Primer: Igniting a Fire Within” by Thomas DuBay, S.M.

GATHER

Environment

- You will want to have some “take home” items set out (prepared ahead of time) that can include a booklet with prayers from the evening (Opening Prayer, Closing Prayer, words to any praise and worship songs that you select, “Tantum Ergo” and “O Salutaris”, “Hail, Holy Queen”, etc.).
- You will need two distinct “spaces” this evening: one for the “talk/small group discussion” time, and the other for Eucharistic Adoration (Chapel, etc.).
- Be sure that a crucifix and Bible are displayed in a prominent location, and use this Bible when quoting Scripture.

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Welcome

- Allow teens to filter in and chat with them, talk about their week, how their events at school went, etc.
- “Break bread” with the teens, encourage them to share in the food and drinks.
- Encourage your volunteer team to “get in there” and “mingle” as well.
- This is completely informal with little structure, but essential to relational ministry.

Icebreaker: *You’re One of a Kind*

- Every youth is handed a playing card from a typical deck of 52 playing cards.
- Have five prepared “icebreaker questions” ready:
 - What were two names of pets that you had growing up?
 - If you started a law firm, what would the name of it be?
 - What is your favorite U.S. State, and why?
 - Would you rather eat noodles with chop sticks or your bare hands? Why?
 - My typical Tues. night includes these 3 activities: _____, _____ & _____.
- At random, call out a “poker hand” (example: “three of a kind”, “one pair”, “Full House”, “two pair”, etc.)
- All participants must form that “hand” by finding others to complete the hand.
- Ask the first “icebreaker question” and give 30 seconds per person in the current groups (time will vary based upon the “hand” that was called).
- Call out the next random card “hand” and repeat the previous two steps; try to mix-up the number of people in a group for each question by choosing the “random” hands well (some hands have 3 people, others 4, some 5, and one hand has 2 people).
- Continue for all five questions.
- Note: if you do not have a lot of teens, give each participant two cards and allow them to use one or both cards to complete the hands (unless it is “one pair”).

Opening Prayer: Praise & Worship

Arrange to have a musician come in to lead the teens in two or three praise and worship songs. Open this part of the night with a brief explanation that song is another form of prayer - many of the Psalms were more easily memorized and handed down by our ancestors because they were in song form (and continue to be in most Sunday Mass celebrations). You can also note that song is sometimes considered to be a way of “praying twice” as music engages both sides of the human brain. Remind the teens that song can be easily any form of prayer... though it is most often praise and thanksgiving.

EXPLANATION

Conversation

Ask teens to think about their relationships with... anyone! Friends, family... is it essential that we communicate with those important people in our lives to continue or deepen our relationships? Allow them to share the ways that they communicate (sit-down, phone, text, email, whatever)... but allow them to get to the point where it becomes obvious that yes, they do communicate with these people... and that it is essential to the relationships.

So, the most essential relationship that we have in our lives is with...

Allow for some time to get some feedback from the teens

To Pray or Not to Pray?

It's the one that we have with God, of course. Why?

Allow for some time to get some feedback from the teens

Okay, great... now let's go to Scripture; flip to John 4:9-14:

The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

(The woman) said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?"

Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

And later in John, Chapter 6:35, 56-58:

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst." "...Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever."

The Catechism says it this way, CCC 2557:

"I want to see God" expresses the true desire of man. Thirst for God is quenched by the water of eternal life.

We are called to a personal relationship with the living and true God. If we can at least begin to acknowledge that God is our most essential relationship... and we have already concluded earlier that a vital component to maintaining, building and deepening any relationship in our lives is based upon communication... why would this be any different in our relationship with God?

Okay, great... we have to communicate with God. But how?

Allow for some time to get some feedback from the teens

How can we do this: prayer. Going back to the Catechism, CCC 2558:

This mystery [of the faith and Church], then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer.

Going further, the Church, through the Catechism, seeks to further explain what prayer is... it is communion, meaning it brings us into association or fellowship with God; "communion" is also defined as "an interchange or sharing of thoughts or emotions; intimate communication".

Back to the Catechism, CCC 2565:

In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit. The grace of the Kingdom is "the union of the entire holy and royal Trinity . . . with the whole human spirit." Thus, the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him. This communion of life is always possible because, through Baptism, we have already been united with

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Christ. Prayer is *Christian* insofar as it is communion with Christ and extends throughout the Church, which is his Body. Its dimensions are those of Christ's love.

In other words, no matter how far away or distant from God you may feel that you are, He is *always* calling you back to Him. It says that prayer's limits are "those of Christ's love", which is boundless and eternal! So we are always invited back to communion with Christ, and we can enter into that communion through prayer.

So, what do you think? Does this make sense?

Response here may produce some good additional "ad lib" small group questions for later in the evening; take note of this response...

This brings us to an essential point... (CCC 2566-2567)

Man is in search of God. In the act of creation, God calls every being from nothingness into existence. "Crowned with glory and honor," man is, after the angels, capable of acknowledging "how majestic is the name of the Lord in all the earth." Even after losing through his sin his likeness to God, man remains an image of his Creator, and retains the desire for the one who calls him into existence. All religions bear witness to men's essential search for God.

God calls man first. Man may forget his Creator or hide far from his face; he may run after idols or accuse the deity of having abandoned him; yet the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer. In prayer, the faithful God's initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is always a response. As God gradually reveals himself and reveals man to himself, prayer appears as a reciprocal call, a covenant drama. Through words and actions, this drama engages the heart. It unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation.

Bottom-line: God created us...and ever since we first sinned we have been longing to repair the connection, that communion, with God. At times Man has drifted from God, but God has always remained consistently reaching out to us. This is the "Universal Call to Prayer": *Man is in search of God and His love for us!*

We have to remember that the over-arching, history-long relationship between God and Man has been a constant struggle... one where we see, over and over again, God reaching out to Man, offering him forgiveness and grace, man coming back... getting comfortable, forgets God and sins again. The important thing to focus on here is that God continues to reach out to Man and that the relationship is only strained when Man chooses to move away from God.

Part of what leads to "drifting" in any relationship is a lack of communication... just take a moment to think about it: old friends that may have moved away, that cousin that you have not heard from in years... our relationship with God is very much the same. We need to stay in communication with Him to maintain our relationship! Why? The less we stay in touch with God, the further we move from Him... and the further that we move away from Him the more likely we are to fall prey to sin – as we will be less likely to hear God's will for us if we are less likely to be listening! – and this sin moves us ever further-away from God...

It is important to understand that prayer is a conversation with God, but not just a chance for you to list all of the woes in your life and needs that you want fulfilled. Communication with God, as it is with any friend or parent, is first and foremost a TWO WAY STREET. This means that we have to take some time to listen as well. This is probably the toughest part for most of us... because listening to God requires both that we stop thinking and doing and just listen, but also that we look inward when God asks us to, look inward and perhaps see our

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shortcomings and failures. Now our strengths and successes will be affirmed as well, but most of us despise acknowledging that we are... human. And part of being human is failing. But the fruit that can come of this realization, this conversation with God (read: prayer) is that you can learn something from the failure, adopt your new knowledge, and in turn grow closer to God.

The other part that we must understand is that praying to God is not like shopping on ebay. We cannot just run though and say “I want this, that and that other thing... great, thanks. See you next Sunday!” Many people struggle with “unanswered prayer” because they assume that God is either ignoring them or just does not know they exist. Nothing can be further from the truth! We can think about prayer in this way: as a parent, you can give a very sick five year old the option to take some gross-tasting medicine that will make them 100% better or a candy bar... and the five year old will choose the candy bar every time! But a good parent will still give the child the medicine because they love and care for them and want them to get well. Take a look back at the Catechism (CCC 2559):

“Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.” But when we pray, do we speak from the height of our pride and will, or “out of the depths” of a humble and contrite heart? He who humbles himself will be exalted; *humility* is the foundation of prayer. Only when we humbly acknowledge that “we do not know how to pray as we ought,” are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. “Man is a beggar before God”.

If we are humble enough, we can acknowledge that we are often similar to that five year old. Our prayer is perhaps for that candy bar... but God knows that we need the medicine. So it may temporarily seem like God dislikes or ignores you but, in the end, He will only give us what we need.

Alright... so hopefully that makes some sense? Yes, got it. Praying to God is important, check. Prayer is not like tossing a coin in a wishing well, check. But, HOW DO WE PRAY?

Let's take a quick look at this movie clip from Bruce Almighty (see above for details); after the clip is over, ask the teens what they think of this.

Allow for some time to get some feedback from the teens

Thankfully the Church offers us many different ways. First and foremost, we have our check-in weekly Mass. Yes, Mass is a prayer! Think of it this way, as a prayer. Pray as you listen to the readings: gosh, I've heard this one a bunch of times before, but what is God trying to tell me today? How is this different, Lord? Pray as the consecration takes place: thank God for dying for you and allowing you to be a part of it... every week! Pray as you receive the Eucharist: thank you Lord for this opportunity to be with you! Truly pray and do not just read the words to that closing song, the Communion hymn... think about the words in that song and ask yourself: do I really mean this? Could I say “Amen” when the song is over? And remember that something that the Church offers that helps repair our relationship with God – would help our prayer life – would be making Confession a regular part of our life; this will help keep us both on track in this quintessential relationship, help to keep us in God's grace.

So, that's one – hugely central piece of the whole “prayer as communication essential to maintaining and deepening our relationship with God” idea – but there are many other ways to pray as well.

- Types of Prayer: Vocal, Meditative and Contemplative (see explanations above in the “Proclamation” section)

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- Ways of Praying: Adoration, Petition, Intercession, Thanksgiving and Praise (see explanations above in the “Proclamation” section)
- Liturgy of the Hours: Prayer of the Universal Church
- Others: Marian Prayers, Liturgy of the Hours, Rosary, Lectio Divina & more!

We can get more into the details on each of these in a few months (note for the youth minister: please refer to the “Semester Divisions” sheet to see what the upcoming months will be bringing)... but we wanted to give you a brief introduction here to get you familiar with the “options” that the Church provides us. Also, remember that the Church provides us with this variety not so that we can pick and choose what is easiest... but because they each connect us with God in different ways. The most vibrant prayer life is on that includes a great variety of prayer types. There is a saying that you should “pray always and pray all ways”!

A last thought before we take some time to break out into small groups: recall also that Jesus prayed... and he prayed often. He gives his disciples instruction on how to pray and not be hypocrites (Matthew 6:5-6), and he even goes on retreat...that whole trip to the desert thing! (Matthew 4:1-11) He is found praying in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46) the night before he was crucified, knowing that, more than ever, he needed to get close with God to be able to endure what he was about to go through. Even Jesus did not just rely on Himself! And he instructed the disciples precisely in giving them “The Lord’s Prayer”. (Matthew 6:9-15) This is huge... if prayer was an essential part of Jesus’ life – he found it important to communicate with God even though he was so much closer than we ever will be – if Jesus found this essential, shouldn’t we?

Small Group Discussion

Break teens into small groups of three or four and ask them to discuss the following questions. If possible, try to ensure that at least one adult is a part of each small group discussion. More importantly, try to have at least one senior or other student leader in each group; empower this teen to lead the discussion. Equip the leaders with these questions and follow their lead; add to the discussion only as needed: to move the conversation along (end those awkward silences, but not too quickly); correct, in a pastoral manner, anything that is not in agreement with Church teaching.

Here are a few sample questions (feel free to add as you see necessary, especially if good talking point arose during the “conversation” above):

1. Is praying difficult for you? Why? Why not?
2. Why do you pray? When do you pray? How do you pray?
3. What is one of the types of prayer that you connect with the most?
4. Is it crazy to you that Jesus prayed? I mean, He was God... but He even prayed to maintain and deepen his relationship with the Father. What do you think about this?
5. Have you ever felt so far from God that you just could not face Him (in prayer)? How were you able to work through that? If you are still working on it, what are your biggest questions? Do you believe that God’s love is boundless, and as such so is His persistence in reaching out and pursuing a renewed relationship with us?
6. “Universal Call to Prayer”: *man is in search of God and His love for us*. What are your thoughts on this? Do you think that this is true?
7. What are you doing to deepen your prayer life? What are you learning from spiritual reading to help you with your prayer?

To Pray or Not to Pray?

Re-gathering

Bring everyone back together and ask a few group-appointed spokesmen to share some highlights from their small group discussion. You may have to repeat some of the small group discussion questions to stimulate the conversation.

APPLICATION

Activity Option # 1: Eucharistic Adoration

Offer teens the opportunity to attend Eucharistic Adoration. Move from your “talk/small group” locations to the Chapel (or wherever you were able to get this set up). Before you leave, give each teen and adult a tea light candle, and light it as they leave the room. Have them move from the room to the Chapel in silence.

Prepare them for the experience with a quick three minute explanation of what Adoration is all about – this is Jesus, body, blood, soul & divinity – and that we are literally *looking at God* while we pray in Adoration. Prepare for this activity a week or two ahead of time by talking to your pastor or other parish priests (if your parish does not have Perpetual Adoration, i.e.) to ensure that this can be arranged. If possible, find a musician or a good recording of “Tantum Ergo” and “O Salutaris” to also provide a traditional Exposition & Benediction for the teens as well. One or two worship songs can be added halfway through the experience as well; suggestions: “Heart of Worship” by Matt Redman; “Enough” by Chris Tomlin; “Open the Eyes of My Heart” by Michael W. Smith.

Final Small Group Discussion, post-Eucharistic Adoration

After, speak with the teens in the same small groups as earlier about their experience:

1. Have you ever done this before?
2. How did it go for you? Remember that God speaks to each of us differently, so all of our experiences with this will be different.
3. What did you find to be the most powerful with this experience?
4. What did you find to be the most difficult?
5. Anything else that hit you?
6. Anything else strike you from the talk earlier this evening?

IF ADORATION IS NOT POSSIBLE, PICK TWO OF THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS

Activity Option # 2: Prayer Partners - Break teens into pairs, purposely splitting friends, family, etc. Ideally, pair people that do not know each other as well so that they can get to know someone new. Ask each teen to write out a prayer of each type – Adoration, Petition, Intercession, Thanksgiving and Praise – they can add a few more of any type (no more than eight total). Have the partners share their prayers with each other, pray for each other, and then exchange sheets with prayer intentions. Encourage teens to commit to praying for the intentions of their prayer partner each night until the next youth ministry meeting.

Activity Option # 3: What’s Your Spirituality Quiz

Give teens the opportunity to take this spirituality quiz which will give them an idea of what spirituality they tend towards (Thomistic, Augustinian, Franciscan, or Ignatian). Print out the surveys and read a quick explanation of each spirituality type to the teens. The quiz can be found here: <http://www.stmcenter.com/documents/prayer%20forms.pdf>

People usually enjoy finding out their spirituality type and discussing/thinking about how it affects their prayer. This is also good data to record for yourself, as a youth leader, for future nights, retreats and other activities in order to relate prayer to each of the teens that you minister to. Source: <http://vocation-network.org/articles/show/63>

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Activity Option # 4: Rosary with Intentions - A Rosary said with intentions before each Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be can help personalize this prayer experience for teens. A good way to do this, even with a small number of people, is to begin by asking for one prayer intention from everyone present; then open up the intention collection to everyone to add more until you collect 53. Ask for someone to lead each decade, and those people will also read the intentions, pulled from a hat (in random order), before each prayer. This will allow the teens to enter more deeply into the rosary experience, while including their intentions but without asking them to move, talk and even be anonymous... and just experience the Rosary. This also helps smaller groups to fully participate without making people feel like they have to return “to the microphone” over and over.

SEND

Summary: What does this have to do with Jesus?

Prayer is our means of communication with God, with Jesus. Jesus taught us how to pray and pointed us always to God, our Father. Jesus reminded us that God seeks a personal relationship with each one of us, culminating with His sacrifice at Calvary to save us. God’s desire for a personal relationship with us cannot get more crystal clear than this. Jesus left us the Church’s greatest prayer, the celebration of the Eucharist, to both commemorate and allow us to participate with Him in that moment.

Final Challenge: How will your prayer life change after tonight?

Allow the small group leaders to lead this. Challenge the teens to think about one way that they will increase prayer in their daily life. This can be big or small, and encourage them to start small (do not commit to going to daily Mass every day if you are having trouble getting to Mass once a week). Think about adding a Hail Mary every morning in the shower... or one more Mass each week. Brainstorm and discuss for a few minutes, but walk out with each teen committing to something new. And assign “partners” that will check-in with each other regularly... and make sure that you (the youth minister) catalogs these commitments in some way and also follows-up with the teens as well.

Closing Prayer

Have everyone stand in a circle for closing prayer. Select one teen to open prayer with a general thanksgiving and an intercession for the day such as time spent with friends, the opportunity to grow closer to God, the opportunity to learn something that night, etc. (You will likely want to pre-select this teen and “coach” them prior to this youth night; give them a few days to a week to prepare themselves with the material that you will be using; they can use this to dedicate advance time and thought to this opening). The teen can invite all others, following around the circle, to offer a prayer of petition and another of thanksgiving. After all of the teens and adult leaders have shared, close with the Te Deum (have handouts ready for everyone present):

Prayer: Te Deum

O God, we praise Thee, and acknowledge Thee to be the supreme Lord.
Everlasting Father, all the earth worships Thee.
All the Angels, the heavens and all angelic powers,
All the Cherubim and Seraphim, continuously cry to Thee:
Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts!
Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of Thy glory.
The glorious choir of the Apostles,

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The wonderful company of Prophets,
The white-robed army of Martyrs, praise Thee.
Holy Church throughout the world acknowledges Thee:
The Father of infinite Majesty;
Thy adorable, true and only Son;
Also the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.
O Christ, Thou art the King of glory!
Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
When Thou tookest it upon Thyself to deliver man,
Thou didst not disdain the Virgin's womb.
Having overcome the sting of death, Thou opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father.
We believe that Thou wilt come to be our Judge.
We, therefore, beg Thee to help Thy servants whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Precious Blood. Let them be numbered with Thy Saints in everlasting glory.

V. Save Thy people, O Lord, and bless Thy inheritance!

R. Govern them, and raise them up forever.

V. Every day we thank Thee.

R. And we praise Thy Name forever, yes, forever and ever.

V. O Lord, deign to keep us from sin this day.

R. Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us.

V. Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in Thee.

R. O Lord, in Thee I have put my trust; let me never be put to shame.

Source (with a history/explanation): <http://www.ewtn.org/faith/teachings/GODB6C.HTM>

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HISPANIC YOUTH MINISTRY

Prayer is an intimate conversation between a person and God, a love relationship. Most Hispanics learn to pray from their parents or their “abuelitas,” their grandmothers. It is likely that Hispanic youth grew up learning and continue to say their prayers in Spanish and attend Mass with their parents in Spanish, even if they speak English and attend public schools. English is very much a social language that is used outside the home and Spanish is considered to be a private language, used within the home and family and for faith and worship. When preparing prayer and worship events with Hispanic youth, we should be mindful of the possibility that they would prefer to pray in Spanish, hear familiar worship music in Spanish, and that they may need a written copy of prayers in English. We cannot assume that they even know their prayers in English, recognize books from the Bible with English titles, or know Biblical figures by their English names. It usually is not that teens haven't heard of these stories or characters but rather they've only heard about them in Spanish and are unaware of the English names.

Biography

Paul C. Bevins is the WorkCamp Coordinator for the Catholic Diocese of Arlington's Office of Youth Ministry. He has been in this position since February of 2008 and has been involved in high school youth ministry since November of 2000. He was introduced to youth ministry at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Parish in Arlington, VA and he is currently pursuing a Masters degree in Theology and Christian Ministry at the Franciscan University at Steubenville. Paul and his wife Melissa also enjoy hanging out at the dog park with their lab/beagle Liam.

To Pray or Not to Pray?

Love Has Come to Show the Way!

DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

Sacred Scripture

TOPIC

Divine Revelation

GOAL

The goal for this session is to introduce Divine Revelation to young people. They should view Divine Revelation as God's love letter to us. God reveals his love to us gradually and in stages and shows us the way to him. Divine Revelation is the map to get to him in Heaven.

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

(II.II.A.1.c.i, ii)

SCRIPTURE

Jn 1: 1-4

Genesis: Story of the Fall, Covenant with Noah, God choosing Abraham, Preparing Israel (Exodus)

Heb 1:1-2

1 Tm 6:14, Ti 2:13

1 Tm 6:20

CATECHISM

50-95, 230-231

God's plan of Loving Goodness- 50-53

Stages of Revelation- 54-65

Jesus is the Fullness of Revelation- 65

No Further Revelation- 66-67

Transmission of Divine Revelation- 74-95

GOLDEN THREADS

The Incarnation: Jesus is the FULLNESS of Revelation. In the story of our salvation, the Incarnation is the pinnacle of our belief. Love has come to show the way. Revelation shows us why the INCARNATION isn't simply a nice thought, but really why we are able to live and move and have our being (Jesus Christ).

The Paschal Mystery/The Church: This is Divine Revelation. Through the Incarnation and then the Paschal Mystery, we are able to be reconciled to Christ. Without Divine Revelation, we would be unable to know Christ as fully as we do. Part of Divine Revelation is the Tradition, which we see being given to us through the Magisterium and ultimately the Church.

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

Built on Christ. Divine Revelation is truly, built on Christ. With Christ as the Center of Divine Revelation we are able to see how our salvation is wrapped up on being built on Christ.

PROCLAMATION

Love has come to show the way!

God made it so that we could come to know him and share in his life. To share in his life, he works with our humanity and he allows us to come to know him in ways we understand.

Love Has Come to Show the Way!

1. We can know God and share in his life: Read CCC 50
 - A. God communicates his life to us!
 - B. We can know God with certainty through our reason. We see are able to see him in creation: world and in the human person.
 - i. We can know him through the world because it exists, because it is ordered,
 - ii. because it stays in existence (we couldn't be here without being sustained)...we had to come from somewhere. From here, we can see him as the origin and the end of the universe.
 - iii. human person: read CCC 32. First Cause
 - C. Reason however is not enough. What we cannot know by reason, he tells us through revelation. Revelation does not wipe away the need for reason; in fact, the God illuminates both reason and Revelation. It is not our reason that allows us to love God; it is our faith that allows us to love Him!
2. *Define Revelation:* God communicates his life to us
 - A. God wants for us to partake in his divine life.
 - B. Revelation is his giving of himself to us to share in the plan of our salvation. Revelation is universal! It is everyone's story. The plan for our salvation is his son becoming flesh!
 - C. He reveals himself to us so that we can be adopted as his sons and daughters and become his children, so that we know him, and love him.
 - D. His words and deeds reveal his life to us in a specific way!
 - E. Revelation shows us everything that we need to know for salvation. He loves us so much that he sent us his only son so that we could have access to him. His pinnacle is the Son, becoming flesh. He is our salvation and God shows us everything that we need to know for salvation. He has come to show us the way to the father!
 - F. Revelation is his gift to us!

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

Songs

- "Love has Come" by Matt Maher <http://www.spiritandsong.com/compositions/64918>

Movies

- *The Princess Bride:*
 1. "Special Present" 0:26-2:27
 2. "Kissing Book?" 4:10-4:28
 3. "Shrieking Eels" 12:13-12:40
 4. "Kissing Again" 40:08-40:24
 5. "I don't mind" 1:31:56- 1:33:20

Tie with the Princess Bride:

What is important to see in these clips is *how* Fred Savage changes. Explain that at first he was not into it and then at the end, he wanted to hear the story again. That is what it is like with us. We hear something, we come to know something and as we understand it better, we want to know more, to hear our story again and again. But our story is so much better than Fred Savage's. Our story with Jesus coming again in glory! That's far better than any sword fight in the movie. God is communicating his life to us in a story! With Jesus as the starring role of our story.

Love Has Come to Show the Way!

OTHER RESOURCES

- Look for online pictures to put into your sacred space or email Em Anderson at eanderson@stjamescatholic.org for some photos (Trinity, Mary and Jesus, the Last Supper, the Pope).
 - General Instruction on the Roman Missal (Eucharistic Prayer Number 4): It is always a good idea to put into your catechesis a direct link to the liturgy. Using the Eucharistic prayer is fail proof. Just make sure you are not saying the words of consecration (you can just skip that part).
 - *Dei Verbum*: Vatican II Document on Divine Revelation. This is accessible online and in the back of many New American Bibles. It is important because it discusses the role and transmission of Divine Revelation within the Church.
 - Lyrics for *Love Has Come* can be found in the appendix or are available at: <http://www.spiritandsong.com/compositions/64918>
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GATHER

Environment

A Sacred Space is an area of your meeting space where you set aside all things religious. This space should help by illustrating the catechesis topic that you're teaching. It can as simple as a crucifix and a Bible or it can completely illustrate you catechesis for the evening for this sacred space. One suggestion is to use a gold table cloth that covers multiple layers made by boxes underneath.

The pictures that would work well with this session could be a picture of the trinity, a picture of the Last Supper, or a picture of your church, each on their own level. On the same level, put a picture of The Pope, and the actual Catechism and the Bible.

For the gift you're unwrapping, you could put a picture of Mary and Jesus.

Icebreaker- *Pool Noodle Lancing*

Each teen will need a pool noodle that has been cut in half. They will be "lancing" with this. Teens should pick a partner and line up across from each other. When they are given the "go" signal, teens should begin to lance each other. For a hit to be good, it must be below the neck and above the waist. Five hits proceeds to the next round. Each winner faces off against another winner bracket style. This game has absolutely no connection to the topic, it is just a fun game to begin your session.

Opening Prayer

Play the song "Love Has Come" with the lyrics in background.

Read Eucharistic prayer #4:

Father, we acknowledge your greatness: all your actions show your wisdom and love. You formed man in your own likeness and set him over the whole world to serve you, his creator, and to rule over all creatures. Even when he disobeyed you and lost your friendship you did not abandon him to the power of death, but helped all men to seek and find you. Again and again you offered a covenant to man, and through the prophets taught him to hope for salvation. Father, you so loved the world that in the fullness of time you sent your only Son to be our Savior.

Love Has Come to Show the Way!

He was conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary, a man like us in all things but sin. To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation, to prisoners, freedom, and to those in sorrow, joy. In fulfillment of your will he gave himself up to death; but by rising from the dead, he destroyed death and restored life. And that we might live no longer for ourselves but for him, he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father, as his first gift to those who believe, to complete his work on earth and bring us the fullness of grace.

He always loved those who were his own in the world. When the time came for him to be glorified by you, his heavenly Father, he showed the depth of his love.

Father, we ask that you be with us tonight as we hear your Word. Help us to be open to come to know and love you more through what we're learning tonight. Amen!

EXPLANATION

Love has Come to show the way!

God loves us so much and knows us better than we can imagine. He loves us enough to know that in order to understand his divine will, he reveals his life to us gradually and in stages. Although Revelation is *complete and nothing new* can be added to it, we come to understand it *gradually and in stages*. God wants us to share in his life and gave us everything that we need to know, but because he loves us, he lets his mystery unfold to us... Everything that we come to understand through Revelation finds its light in the person and mission of the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

Revelation is a Gift... God could give us what is inside the present, right up front, but he knew that as humans, we would need to be able to understand things in our own time. So, instead, he wraps it up in a beautiful present! We can choose whether or not we want to open the present or if we want to put it away on a shelf. Now, that's just silly, but the choice is yours. Who wouldn't open a present?

We can actually see how God revealed to us in history by using this present. As we peel back the layers, we come closer to finding what's in the box.

Layers of the Box:

God makes himself known in creation: (TAKE OFF THE CARD: The CARD represents creation). First in the Garden of Eden, he makes himself known to us. He invited Adam and Eve to be in communion with him. Adam and Eve could see God in everything that was created. They had a relationship with him. He walked in the garden with them. After the fall, he still communicates with us and promises us a Savior. "He wishes to give eternal life to all those who seek salvation by patience in well doing.

God was revealing his plan for our salvation. He wanted us to know more about him, so he made a...

1. Covenant with Noah: Take the ribbon off the box. In Noah, we see how God sought to save the world part by part. Noah is not wiped out by the flood and all of the nations begin again with him. People are to keep this covenant. The sign of this covenant is a rainbow set in the sky. Read Genesis 9:8-12?

God was revealing his plan for our salvation. He wanted us to know more about him...

Love Has Come to Show the Way!

2. Abraham is chosen: take off the wrapping paper: As humanity scattered God calls Abraham to be the father of all nations. It is in his obedience to God that all of the nations of the earth are able to be blessed. “The promise of salvation was entrusted to Abraham’s descendents. They would be the trustees of the promise made to the patriarchs, the chosen people, called to prepare for the day when God would gather all his children into the unity of the Church.

God was revealing his plan for our salvation. He wanted us to know more about him.

3. God forms his people Israel: Open the box, take out the tissue paper! God formed Israel as his people by freeing them from the slavery in Egypt. Through Moses, he have gave them his law, so that they would recognize and serve him as the one true God, so that they would come to look for the savior. Through later prophets, God formed his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting covenant intended for all, to be written on their hearts: the Shema! (CCC 64)

God was revealing his plan for our salvation. He wanted us to know more about him.

4. The Word becomes FLESH! Take Jesus out of the box!
God speaks to us through the son. All of history leads up to Jesus Christ! His Son, the Word, becoming flesh is his ultimate communication to us. It is through the Incarnation that he most perfectly communicates to us. Everything that we need to be saved is in Jesus Christ. Because everything that God wanted us to know came to us in the Father, there will be no new Revelation. We know everything that we need for salvation.

He is God’s plan for salvation! In Jesus, we have everything!

LOVE HAS COME TO SHOW THE WAY!

The box concept works with us too, just like Fred Savage came to love the story, we too come to unwrap different areas of our faith and as we do, we open the box and we come closer to Christ. We respond to this revelation in FAITH! Revelation, although complete it’s on going. God gave us everything that we need to know for salvation, but we’re still growing into it more. It’s there for us to unwrap. Nothing new will be added, we’ll just grow to learn more and keep discovering.

LOVE HAS COME TO SHOW THE WAY!

God’s love must be proclaimed to all the nations! Revelation must reach the end of the earth, because of this, God ensures that his Revelation will come to all the nations in two main ways. Having commanded his apostles to go and spread his life to all the nations, the apostles communicated the Gospel to all men. He was to be the source of saving truth and moral discipline.

The Gospel was handed on in two ways:

First, Orally: By the Apostles who handed on the spoken word of their preaching, through the example they gave, but the institutions they established, what they themselves had received through the lips of Christ, from the way of his life and his works or they could have learned it through the promptings of the Holy Spirit. (TRADITION!)It transmits the entirety

Love Has Come to Show the Way!

of the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and HS. It's transmitted to the apostles and so forth, so that they can expound on it in their preaching (CCC 81). (These are not just practices that are born in the Church over time)

Second, Written: Apostles and other men, who under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit committed the message of salvation to writing. (SCRIPTURE). It is the speech of God as it is put down in the writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit.

In order to make sure that Christ's message would always be preserved, they left successors, who were given their own position of authority to teach. Their preaching, which is expressed in the inspired books, the Bible, was to be preserved in a line of successors until the end of time. This transmission is called TRADITION, which is accomplished in the Holy Spirit. It is separate from Scripture, but it is closely connected to it. It is the Church that perpetuates and transmits everything that she believes and prays. (Doctrine, life and worship). We get our liturgy from Tradition; it is safe guarded in the Church. It is in the liturgy that we get the gift of the EUCCHARIST!

The Father's communication of himself, in the Word, through the Holy Spirit remains present and ACTIVE in the Church! The Church is who the transmission and the interpretation of Revelation is entrusted to.

While Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition are separate, they communicate God's revelation. We need both. They are like two streams coming from one spring. We miss out on everything if we only believe in the Bible; we miss out if we only believe Tradition. They are both distinctive modes, but they form one complete unit of understanding God's life.

The Word of God is both Tradition and Scripture it is living. It is important to understand that everything in Revelation is entrusted to the entire Church, both laity and pastors. By uniting to its pastors, all of the holy people remain faithful to the apostle's teaching.

Magisterium: The interpretation of the Word of God is entrusted to the teaching office of the Church. This teaching Church is called the Magisterium. This is exercised in the name of Christ, which means it's been entrusted to the Bishops in communion with the Pope. The Magisterium is the servant of the Word. It's not above it, but simply at its service. It CAN NOT add anything, which is why doctrine can't change (Remember...gradually and in stages means it can develop however). They have the authority to declare dogma (CCC 88). Everything that the Magisterium proposes for belief is divinely revealed from the single deposit of faith... The three are connected and cannot stand without the others.

Because all the faithful share in the understanding and handing of revealed truth, the Holy Spirit, instructs and guides them as well. The Holy Spirit protects those living in communion with the Church/Magisterium from erring as well. This is our supernatural sense of faith. He guides all of us through the apostles and what has been handed down. (They never cease to welcome, to penetrate more deeply, and to believe more fully from the gift of divine Revelation).

It is the Holy Spirit who helps us to come to understand the realities of our faith found in both Scripture and Tradition. In order to deepen our understanding, to unwrap the gift more, we must grow in faith, through reading Scripture, through attending mass, through prayer and through sacraments, through going deeper into our faith. This is the call.

Love Has Come to Show the Way!

Love has come to show the way! He's still showing the way. We have to pursue him in faith. We're called to pass the faith on; God's knocking at the door of our heart. He sent us his son, his plan for salvation, and we have to go deeper into that mystery. The Incarnation changes our life! Our story changes our life! Love has shown us the way to the Father and we must follow.

APPLICATION

Activity Option # 1: Gift from God!

In order to understand that Revelation is a gift from God, it would be helpful for them to construct the pieces together within the box as you go through the covenants. As part of your talking points, you can include the covenants and do this activity as you go through it, or you can revisit it when you are done with your talk. Have your supplies available. Obtain enough boxes for everyone at your session (think small boxes in the craft section). Write "Yours to Open" on the top. Allow the teens to decorate it any way they want. As you go through the covenants, hand out the different items that can go in the box. This will make it more interactive than sitting there listening. To represent God's Covenant with Adam and Eve, you can use a bay leaf (close enough to a fig leaf). For God's Covenant with Noah, you can use anything that has a rainbow. I used ribbon. For God's Covenant with Abraham, use any item that's a star. Explain that God told Abraham his descendants will be numbered like the stars in the sky...For God forming is people Israel; you can use a small post-it note rolled up and tied with a ribbon to represent the prophet's scrolls. For the Word becoming flesh, you can use a small crucifix or a picture of Jesus. This activity is best done while explaining the covenants and should not take more than 10-15 minutes. What is nice is that they then have a "take home" item to remind them of the night.

Activity Option # 2: Small Groups

Break Teens into small groups.

1. How does the Princess Bride teach us about Divine Revelation?
2. God wants to be with him in Heaven. How does Divine Revelation help us to be with God in Heaven?
3. God reveals himself to us gradually and in stages. Give an example of a Church teaching that perhaps you did not understand initially, but have come to understand more fully now.
4. Discuss a story that you love to hear over and over? Why do you like it so much? How does it compare the story of our Salvation? Why is the story of God's Love one we want to hear over and over?

SEND

Read CCC 1-3. God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.

So that this call should resound throughout the world, Christ sent forth the apostles he had chosen, commissioning them to proclaim the gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Love Has Come to Show the Way!

teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." Strengthened by this mission, the apostles "went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it."

Those who with God's help have welcomed Christ's call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world. This treasure, received from the apostles, has been faithfully guarded by their successors. All Christ's faithful are called to hand it on from generation to generation, by professing the faith, by living it in fraternal sharing, and by celebrating it in liturgy and prayer.

Then say: *Father, by sending your son to us, you call us to RADICAL conversion. Through the Church we come to know you and come to fall deeper in love with you! Help us to seek you deeper, to unwrap the gift of revelation and constantly follow your son to you! AMEN!*

Summary: What does this have to do with Jesus?

Jesus Christ is the center of God's DIVINE Revelation. Jesus Christ is Incarnate Love and Love has come to show the way. God did not just abandon us; he gave us the keys of the kingdom and revealed to us his life so that we might live more fully with him. God allows us the dignity to participate in our own salvation and he does this by allowing us to know him through his REVELATION.

Love has come to show the way! He's still showing the way. We have to pursue him in faith. We're called to pass the faith on; God's knocking at the door of our heart. He sent us his son, his plan for salvation, and we have to go deeper into that mystery. The Incarnation changes our life! Our story changes our life! Love has shown us the way to the Father and we must follow.

Closing Prayer

Play "Love Has Come" By Matt Maher; Invite the teens to sing along.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HISPANIC YOUTH MINISTRY

Divine Revelation is directly related to how someone learns and knows God's love. Culturally, as a whole, Hispanics are more experiential learners than are typical Western World learners who are more didactic and systematic. This means that often times Hispanic youth and their families have come to know Jesus and God's love for them through experiential practices of popular piety that involve all five senses. For example, Marian processions and Passion Plays that have incense, flowers, music, costumes, spoken prayers and the after parties with lots of food incorporate a full range of senses. The Hispanic culture has a tendency to be very charismatic in this respect. Also, Hispanic youth may be able to identify with oral tradition easier than mainstream youth. The Hispanic culture has a practice called "Memoria Historica" or Historical Memory, which is the telling and retelling of the past so as not to forget where they have been and what they have accomplished. This plays a large role in passing down the faith from generation to generation. The disadvantage to be aware of concerning oral tradition among Hispanics is that often there are gaps and misunderstandings in catechesis. The result of poor catechesis can mean that the truth has been distorted along the way. One example to be aware of is an over-emphasis on Marian devotions that at times appear to elevate her in importance over that of Christ. Another example of distortion of truth is the great respect that Hispanics show towards their priests to

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the extreme of placing them on a pedestal of perfection and viewing them not of this world and capable of falling in sin.

Biography

Emily "Em" Anderson is the Director of Youth Ministry at St. James in Falls Church, Va. She has an MA in Theology and Christian Ministry with a (soon to be) concentration in Catechetics from Franciscan University of Steubenville. She has a passion for the teens of our Church and loves coming up with creative ways to get them to love Christ. She likes to sing at the top of her lungs in the car, make up awkward dance moves, and is constantly on the quest for silly bands.

Love Has Come to Show the Way!

Appendix

Matt Maher: Love Has Come

With one voice the Angels sing;
songs that make creation ring
Prophets hear and call us
to live in spirit and in truth

Father Yahweh, Elohim;
voice of thunder, spirit wind
Breathe on me your very life;
Grace will make the darkness bright

Word of God enthroned,
dwell in us forevermore;
Love has come to show the way
Halleluiah, peace be with us
Love has come to show the way

God of covenant divine,
lead us to the end of time
Beyond sorrow, beyond fear;
beyond pride and earthen tears

Keeper of the sacrifice,
manifest in Jesus Christ
Born to die and wake the dead
As we hunger, keep us fed

Now salvation has come
in the New Jerusalem
Dancers dance and singers roar;
proclaiming Jesus Christ is Lord

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DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

Profession of Faith

TOPIC

Creation

GOAL

The goal of this session is to give teens a deeper understanding of the creation story and God's purpose for creating man, including the inherent dignity of the human person because man is created in the image and likeness of God.

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

(II.I.A.1.c.i.a,b) (II.II.A.2.c.i.b,c,d)

SCRIPTURE

Profession of Faith- Mt. 5:48

Dignity of the Human Person- Gn 1:26-27; Dt 30:19; Ps 8: 5-7; Jn 12: 32; 1 Cor 15:22

Creation- Gn 1-3; Jn 1:1-3; Col 1: 16-17; 2 Cor 5:17; Ps 33:6

CATECHISM

Revelation- 54

The Creator- 279-282

Creation: Work of the Holy Trinity- 290-295, 301, 315-317, 319-320

Image and Likeness- 355-384, 1700-1709, 2331, 2334

GOLDEN THREADS

The Dignity of the Human Person: God created us in His image and likeness. He created the entire world out of His love for us and He gave us the capacity to love.

The Incarnation: Jesus came to reconcile us to God through His perfect sacrifice. Through His death and resurrection we are made a new creation and are able to enter the Kingdom with Christ our King.

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

Built on Christ. We are all created in the image and likeness of God. As such, we are set apart from the rest of God's creation by inherent human dignity and the responsibility of free-will.

PROCLAMATION

“Creator of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen...”

- All things were created for the glory of God out of love, not a need (CCC 259)
- Let there be...It is good (CCC 299)

Created in the image and likeness of God (CCC 299, 339)

- “Where do we come from, what is our purpose, where are we going (CCC 282)?”
- Free will, Self-Knowledge, Intellect, Self-Possession, Sin

Human Dignity (CCC 1700-1750)

- Respect and Responsibility
 - Human life is sacred from conception to natural death
 - People are more important than things
-

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

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Music

- “Indescribable” by Chris Tomlin
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PTvr755V8s&feature=related>
- “On The Third Day” by Matt Maher
- “We Are Yours” by Charlie Hall
- “More” by Matthew West
- “How Great is the Love” by Meredith Andrews
- “The Author” by Jimmy Needham
- “God of Wonders” by Third Day
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CBNE25rtnE>
- “God of All Creation” by Hillsong

Websites

- Early Christian Views on Creation
 - http://www.catholic.com/library/Creation_and_Genesis.asp
- *Creation and the Angels* by Rev. William G. Most
 - <http://www.ewtn.com/faith/teachings/goda32.htm>
- *The Creation, Nature and Fall of Man* by Rev. William G. Most
 - <http://www.ewtn.com/faith/teachings/goda42.htm>
- *The Scale of the Universe* by Fotoshop
 - <http://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/525347>
 - Zoom from the edge of the universe to the quantum foam of space time and learn the scale of things along the way! Learn the size of the Pillars of Creation and marvel at the minuscule scale of a neutrino!

OTHER RESOURCES

- OYM Resource Manual: Chapter 3
- *The Baltimore Catechism: Part One: The Creed*
- *Dignity of the Human Person* by the USCCB
- *The Gospel of Life (Evangelium Vitae)* by Pope John Paul II

GATHER

Environment 1: One possible environment suggestion would be to set up a Garden of Eden, with soft, indirect lighting, a lot of plants and stuffed animals (i.e. Lions and Tigers and Bears, oh, my!) and maybe a pool of water for everyone to gather around. You could also, if you are doing this inside, project an image of the universe on a large screen or on the ceiling. Tip: I just wouldn't use apples for a snack.

Environment 2: Another possible environment would be to show the splendor and diversity of God's creation by using scenic pictures and cultural pictures from around the world. Blow these up very large and have them around the room all mixed together.

Icebreaker: *Interviews in the Garden*

Divide teens into small groups and have each group come up with a skit. Have them first develop a list of questions they would want to ask Adam, Eve, God, and the Serpent. Give the group a specified amount of time to prepare a skit for the whole group. They can create a skit as an interview of the characters in the story, as a retelling of the story of the Garden of Eden,

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or another creative idea they may have. Teens should demonstrate their knowledge of the creation story and human dignity, while showing creativity and humor.

Opening Prayer

O God of all Creation Prayer

O God of all Creation: You have cared for the earth, and have filled it with your riches. Abundance flows in your steppes, through the pastures and wilderness. You provide for our land, softening it with showers, bathing it in light, and blessing it with growth.

The hills sing with joy; the meadows are covered with flocks; the fields deck themselves with wheat; and together they glorify your name!

On this occasion of our Thanksgiving, we as a nation take rest from our labors to consider your many blessings. We thank you for our freedoms, and for the opportunity to contribute our skills, our attributes and our values toward the good of society.

We thank you for the mixture of our cultures, blending us into one people under God. Help us to be a light unto other nations, and to further the cause of freedom and justice all over the world.

We remember those who are less fortunate than we. We lift up in prayer the victims of poverty and racism, and all those who suffer from forms of political and economic oppression. Let the word that goes forth from our mouths speak of your peace, and let us proclaim our hope in Christ as Savior of all humankind.

We pray that you will bless all those who gather here, as we have come to experience your presence among us. Give us your guidance, O God, and empower us for your work. For we claim nothing for ourselves, but return all honor and glory unto you, and offer our thanks and praise. Amen.

(Source: <http://www.prayer-and-prayers.info/thanksgiving-prayers/o-god-of-all-creation-prayer.htm>)

OR

Play the song “God of Wonders” by Third Day and/or show their YouTube Video for reflection: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CBNE25rtnE>

EXPLANATION

[Notes for presenter: *Open the night with the Profession of Faith – perhaps have it written or projected large enough so all the teens in the room can read it on the wall or screen. When you are giving this talk or if you choose to use it as a discussion; make sure you use the check-in questions to make sure the teens are following you.*]

- Begin Here -

“We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth,

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of all that is seen and unseen...”

When do we profess this and what does it really mean?

We profess this every Sunday at mass. We are saying that we believe that God is the creator of everything; of all that we can see and everything that we cannot see. He is the creator of all that is known and unknown. Even if we cannot see it, because it is too small or because it is so far away that even the Hubble telescope cannot see it, God still created it.

[To give some perspective on the size in the universe go to <http://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/525347> and show the teens how big humans are compared to Quantum foam, but so small in comparison to our galaxy and universe....and God knows and care about every hair on our head!]

Have you ever stopped at the sight of a glorious rainbow? Or had your breath taken away when gazing at the Milky Way on a clear night? Have you seen the majesty of the Rocky Mountains or enjoyed the simple beauty of a sunset?

God created it all. Why? How?

Why did God create...everything? Is there something lacking in God that He needed to create? Absolutely not! So...why?

The *Catechism* and the early Church Fathers tell us that, “the world was created for the glory of God (CCC 293)” and that, “God created all that is out of wisdom and love (CCC 295).” What does that mean? It means that God created everything out of love, not a need; He desires to show and communicate His love and glory. In His wisdom, God chose to do that through creation. The Baltimore Catechism states, “God manifests (shows or makes visible) His glory by sharing His goodness...All creatures by their very existence show the glory of God, for all depend on God for their existence (BC 3,3).”

[Pause here and ask a few questions to make sure the teens are with you, like: When do we profess that we believe God created everything? Describe for me one of your favorite awe inspiring moments. Why was it so inspiring? Did you see God in that moment?]

Okay, *how did God create everything?*

I am sure all of you at some time or another have heard a Bible creation story. What do you think of the way creation is portrayed in these stories?

For those of you that haven't picked up a Bible in a while, there are actually two creation stories there. What...two creation stories? Yep. Two. Does anybody know why there are two creation stories? Have any of you wondered why there are two?

(Give the teens a chance to respond.)

There are two creation stories in the Bible because of the way the Bible was compiled and the oral traditions that went into the background of the first 5 books of the Bible (known as the Pentateuch, these are the basis for the Torah in the Jewish tradition). Writing was not a common thing in those days; most people communicated important information and lessons through stories. These stories are like the ones your family

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may tell when you all get together, like the history of your family or why Uncle Bob is so weird, etc. Basically, the stories describe the truth, from your family's perspective, of where you came from, why you live where you live and how you got there. The same was true for the Israelites. These stories grew over a very long period of time and took in the slight cultural differences of the Israelites in the north and south to explain where we came from, what our purpose is and where we are ultimately going. The Catechism tells us that, "God in His wisdom progressively revealed to Israel the mystery of creation (CCC 287)."

[Note: You might want to have a picture of the Middle East to show how far apart the north and south was. The story of the creation and fall of man is a true one, even if not written entirely according to modern literary techniques. The Catechism states, "The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man. (Divine) Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents" (CCC 390).]

These creation stories tell us that God created all things out of nothing and from His divine will. As the first chapter of Genesis tells us, God spoke, "Let there be..." and it was. The next part of that is... "and it was good." This is important! All that God creates is good because every creation, "in its own way reflects a ray of God's infinite goodness and wisdom (CCC 339)." This means that all of creation reflects some portion of the goodness of God, especially you!

[Pause here and ask a few questions to make sure the teens are with you, like: Do you know of any other stories that convey deeper truths? What do you call these? (A: Parables.) Why can't we take historical events in life or the Bible as absolute minute by minute facts? How did God create everything? (A: By His will and Word) Why is all of creation good?]

Created in the image and likeness of God

Out of everything that God created, it is amazing that God chose humans to create in His image and likeness. Think about this for a minute. Out of everything that God created; the moon, the stars, the earth, the universe and all the tiny things in the world, God chose YOU to be created in His image.

What does it mean to be created in the image and likeness of God?

In both creation stories in Genesis, man is the summit of all God's creation. What does being created in the image and likeness of God mean though? The Baltimore Catechism puts it very succinctly, "God created man to make known His glory in a special way." In short, God gives man an immortal, rational soul. Along with this immortal soul He gives each of us an intellect and will that we would be able to know, praise and love God (BC 3,3). None of God's other creations (except other humans, of course) have a rational and immortal soul. On top of that, each of you is a unique and unrepeatable creation and your body and soul are not loosely connected parts, they are substantially united together to form one complete human nature. "God creates every human person; the soul directly, the body indirectly through the cooperation of one's parents (CCC 327)."

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Yes, I said that correctly, as parents, we are cooperating with God in the creation of another human life! We help God create individual people with individual and unique souls.

Why does having a soul mean that you are created in the image and likeness of God? Your soul is like God in that it is an immortal spirit, created by God, infused into your being which has understanding (intellect), a conscience, self-knowledge and free will.

Wow, this is deep. So, let's recap a little.

[Pause here and make sure the teens are still following: What do you have that is unique from all of the rest of God's creation? What does having a soul mean? When do you get your soul? (A: at the moment of conception)]

You guys are doing great! Here is the next question for you...

If God created you in His image and likeness, why aren't we more like gods?
(A: Original Sin)

According to the Genesis 1, God created us in a state of Grace (remember from earlier). This gift of sanctifying grace gave us perfect communion with God; we knew what God wanted for us and we knew what to return to God. However, God gave us one command, "...not to eat of the tree in the center of the garden..." The story goes on to tell us that we disobeyed this one command with disastrous effect. We chose not to obey; we turned from God's will and did our own. At that point we separated ourselves from that perfect union with God. We sinned. This is why Jesus came into the world; to restore the sanctifying grace we lost by our sin and show us how to live in relationship with God again. In other words, Jesus, by His incarnation, death and resurrection restores that sanctifying grace that we lost through the sin of Adam.

Human Dignity: A product of being created in God's image

So what does all of this have to do with you? God created everything from nothing, out of all of that, He created you in His image and likeness; creating in each of us an immortal and rational soul. Because of this you have what is called inherent dignity.

What does dignity mean? Can we earn or lose dignity?

Dignity of the human person is based in the fact that all of us are created, individually and uniquely in the image and likeness of God. We are unique creations, there is no other YOU out there and there will never be another YOU for all eternity. This makes you special, unique and unrepeatable. This gives you automatic dignity from the day you were conceived to the day you die. Each human life is special and must be treated with respect and dignity. We are each "someone" not "something."

Because dignity is something that is inherent (automatic) it is impossible to earn or lose. It is yours! We can sin, we can allow others to degrade us, or we can ignore another person's dignity, but it is still there through all of it. What are some of the other ways we can either respect or disrespect another person's dignity? *(Feel free to tailor this question to your group and any issues that may be prevalent.)*

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[You cannot repeat this enough: each person is a unique and unrepeatable creation of God, as such we are responsible to uphold that dignity in each other and respect the image of God in each other.]

To wrap up then, what do we know? (*rhetorical question*) We know that God created the universe and everything in it from absolutely nothing. We talked about how God creates through His will and Word. Out of all of that creation we are the ones God chose to create in His image and likeness; giving us an immortal and rational soul. God created us, unique and unrepeatable, and because of that we have an inherent dignity that calls for respect from ourselves and others.

- End of Talk -

APPLICATION

Activity Option #1 Community outreach - *Notes of Dignity*

Have teens create and write cards to send in support of people who do not always receive the proper respect due to them (i.e. a nursing home/assisted living, jail, military overseas, etc.). To get the teens more excited/involved in the project, have them help pick where to write and send the cards to.

Activity Option #2 Personal Reflection- *Amazed by Creation*

Have teens take some quiet reflection time to think about a time when they experienced God through nature. Perhaps it was a trip to the Grand Canyon, a gorgeous sunrise or sunset, or a walk on a beach. Ask them to write down how it made them feel, what their thoughts were, and what questions it may have provoked. Have them get together in small groups or partners and share their experiences. Discuss the question: When in my life did I feel the most alive and thankful for the gift of life?

SEND

Summary: What does this have to do with Jesus?

Jesus, as the Second person of the Trinity, is the Word through which all things were made. Jesus is also the Word made flesh who came to redeem humanity from original sin.

Closing Prayer

Canticle of the Sun by St. Francis of Assisi, Patron of Ecology (1182-1226)

(Translation from United States Catholic Conference)

O most High, almighty, good Lord God,
to you belong praise, glory, honor, and all blessing!
Praised by my Lord God with all creatures;
and especially our brother the sun,
which brings us the day and the light;
fair is he, and shining with a very great splendor:
O Lord, he signifies you to us!
Praised be my Lord for our sister the moon,
and for the stars,

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which God has set clear and lovely in heaven.
Praised be my Lord for our brother the wind,
and for air and cloud, calms and all weather,
by which you uphold in life all creatures.
Praised be my Lord for our sister water,
which is very serviceable to us,
and humble, and precious, and clean.
Praised be my Lord for brother fire,
through which you give us light in the darkness;
and he is bright, and pleasant, and very mighty,
and strong.
Praised be my Lord for our sister the Earth,
which sustains us and keeps us,
and yields diverse fruits, and flowers of many colors, and grass.
Praised be my Lord for all those who pardon
one another for God's love's sake,
and who endure weakness and tribulation;
blessed are they who peaceably shall endure,
for you, O most High, shall give them a crown!
Praised be my Lord for our sister,
the death of the body, from which no one escapes,
Woe to him who died in mortal sin!
Blessed are they who are found walking
by your most holy will,
for the second death shall have no
power to do them harm.
Praise you, and bless you the Lord
and give thanks to God, and serve God with great humility.

Biography

Jaclyn Weber has worked in the Office of Youth Ministry as an Administrative Assistant since 2008. She is an air force military brat and is from North Dakota. She loves to read literature and enjoys spending time with family, friends, and her dog.

*Terry Simons has been working for the Office of Youth Ministry since May 2010 as the Assistant WorkCamp Projects Coordinator. He is originally from Boise, Idaho and comes from a long line of wood workers and carpenters. His favorite book, other than the Bible, is *The Lord of the Rings*.*

Are Catholics “Red” or “Blue”?

DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

Issue Night

TOPIC

Politics and Faithful Citizenship

GOAL

The goal for this session is to introduce the idea of “faithful citizenship” and the moral obligation that Catholics have to participate in civic life. The concept of “legitimate authority” should also be discussed, along with ways to discern who holds legitimate authority in society, and what is owed to them. Teens should understand that while the Church does not tell us how to vote, it is the special calling of the laity to bring the values of the Gospel into the way we organize our common life together.

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

(II.I.C.7.a.i,ii) (II.I.C.7.d.ii)

SCRIPTURE

Relationship to Civil Authority- Mt 22:15-21; Rm 13:1-7; 1 Pt 2:13-17; 1 Tm 2:1-2

CATECHISM

Authority- 1897-1904

Common Good- 1904-1912

Responsibility & Participation- 1913-1917

GOLDEN THREADS

The Incarnation: God, through the person of Jesus Christ, is the source of all legitimate human authority.

The Dignity of the Human Person: God has created us in His image and likeness. Our laws must be ordered around treating human beings with the dignity and respect deserving of the children of God. This dignity comes with the responsibility to actively participate in our civic life.

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

Built on Christ. To participate fully in our civic life, we must recognize that all legitimate authority in the world ultimately comes from God. Our political participation must be built on Christ, through rightly forming our consciences in the light of Gospels and the teachings of the Church.

PROCLAMATION

Relationship to Civic Authority

Christ called us to respect civic authority but to remember that all authority comes from God, and we must put our relationship with God first. (Mt 22:15-21)

St. Paul says that we must pay taxes and respect legitimate authority because those that hold this power do so because God has given these responsibilities to certain people to promote the common good. (Rm 13:1-7)

We should pray daily for our elected leaders. (1 Tm 2:1-2)

Authority

Without some people being in charge of how we organize society, we would be unable to be as productive and prosperous as we could be. Authority comes from God, and those who hold

Are Catholics “Red” or “Blue”?

authority should be respected and obeyed. Beyond this respect for legitimate authority, however, we as a people should be free to choose the type of political system we want to select our leaders. (CCC 1897-1904)

Common Good

We are not meant to be alone, but to live together and work with each to better the world. The common good refers to the total of our life together as members of the human race. (CCC 1904-1905)

Working towards the common good means striving to ensure everyone’s needs for life are fulfilled. (CCC 1906)

The common good requires three things in particular: (1) respect for the inherent rights of all human persons, including the right to life, the right to fulfill one’s God-given vocation, and the right to act according to a sound norm of conscience; (2) providing for the well-being and development of all people, including the basic needs of human existence (food, water, clothing, shelter) but also education, meaningful work, the right to form a family; and (3) peace and security, which means that authorities have the right to provide for the common defense, against both individual and collective threats to our security. (CCC 1905-1909)

Responsibilities & Participation

Each of us is called to participate freely and fully in our society, to the best of our talents and abilities. Working for the common good is the special responsibility of all human beings. (CCC 1913)

Our first responsibility is always to take care of ourselves and our families through our education and work. (CCC 1914)

We should then take part in public life as much as we can, based on the political system in which we live. The Church gives special recognition to democratic governments which allow for the most participation by citizens in a free society. (CCC 1915)

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

Movies

- “A Man for All Seasons” 1966- St. Thomas More’s trial scene, particularly his statement to the court after being convicted of treason.
- “Legally Blonde 2: Red, White, and Blonde” 2003- Scene where Elle speaks to Congress about her hair. Addresses the need to speak up for what we believe. Do we speak boldly about issues in our political system with the confidence in God’s Truth?
- “Romero”- Archbishop Oscar Romero fights against the injustices of poverty

OTHER RESOURCES

- *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love), 2009 Encyclical by Pope Benedict XVI
- *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* (2007), U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
- *Render Unto Caesar* (2008), Archbishop Charles J. Chaput
- *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth), 2009 Encyclical by Pope Benedict XVI

Are Catholics “Red” or “Blue”?

GATHER

Icebreaker– *Mock Election*

Best used during an election year in which a Presidential, Congressional, or even statewide race has significant attention and is well known to the teens. Hold a “mock election,” allowing the students to vote for their preferred candidate using index cards and a “ballot box.” Select several students to tally the results and announce them to the group. If students are particularly interested in the election, allow students to give short summaries of the candidates’ positions prior to the voting. Make sure to emphasize the importance of the secrecy of the ballot box, but allow the teens to talk to each other about the election prior to voting.

OR

Who Am I?

On index cards, write the names of well-known politicians (both historical figures like George Washington or Abraham Lincoln, and also contemporary leaders like Ronald Reagan or Barack Obama), leaders of civic movements (Martin Luther King Jr.), and Catholic figures who influenced secular society (Mother Theresa, Pope John Paul II). Have the teens each select a card without looking at the name on it. Have them tape it to their back, with a small piece of Scotch tape, with the written name on it facing outwards. Each teen can then ask other students one YES or NO question about the name on their card. The object is to guess who you are by only asking other teens these YES or NO questions.

Opening Prayer

Lord, You are the source of all authority. Guide our leaders to make decisions in the light of Love and Truth, exemplified in the person of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Send Your Holy Spirit upon our President, our Members of Congress, our governors, mayors, and other civic leaders, and strengthen them to be true public servants and stewards of Your creation. Help us to participate fully and actively in the public life of our country, so that we may be witnesses to Your love and servants to Your people. We ask this Christ our Lord. Amen.

EXPLANATION

Part 1 – Our Faith & Our Civic Duties

We all know that voting is an important thing to do, right? We see political ads telling us to support one candidate or another. MTV tells us to “Rock the Vote!” In school, in newspapers, on TV, on the Internet – we consistently hear the message that we need to “exercise our right to vote.”

So I don’t think it’s any big surprise to you that the right to vote is a political right we enjoy as Americans. But what if I told you voting is not just a political right but also a *moral responsibility*?

Sound crazy? Well, check this out. The Church actually teaches that we have a moral responsibility to participate in our civic life – to help decide how we should all live together. Now, this doesn’t mean you have to like “politics” – some people like to watch the news, and read blogs, and follow politicians the way many of us follow the Redskins or the Capitals, or another favorite sports team. It’s definitely ok if you don’t like politics that way.

Are Catholics “Red” or “Blue”?

But what we do need to is spend time listening to our elected officials, and those running for office, and comparing what they propose to do with what believe, from the Gospels and the moral teaching of the Church. We need to evaluate the decisions made by our elected officials against what we believe about human dignity and the value of every human life. When we believe our leaders are acting wrongly, we need to take action to try to correct this.

Now let me be clear - the Church teaches that those who hold legitimate authority in society should be respected. We should obey the law, pay our taxes, and carry out public responsibilities like military service, jury duty, and holding elected office if we are called to do so.

We should also be clear that the world, isn't perfect, but it's our special calling as lay Catholic men and women to make the world a better place, a place more faithful to the Gospel. The Church views civic affairs as our responsibility, and doesn't seek to control our human governments. It is up to society's legitimate authority to make day-to-day decisions on how we should live.

However, the key phrase is **legitimate authority**. Not all authority is legitimate, not all laws are just, and not all leaders should be obeyed. I'm sure you all can think of leaders and laws that we would consider immoral and illegitimate – like the Jim Crow laws that used to segregate black and white Americans, for example.

The question we have to ask is by what standard do we judge who holds legitimate authority, and which laws are just? This is where the Church *does* have a role to play.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus talks very briefly about legitimate civil authority.

[Have a student read the Gospel]:

“The Pharisees went off and plotted how they might entrap Jesus in speech. They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a person's status. Tell us, then, what is your opinion: Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?" Knowing their malice, Jesus said, "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin that pays the census tax." Then they handed him the Roman coin. He said to them, "Whose image is this and whose inscription?" They replied, "Caesar's." At that he said to them, "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." (Matt 22: 15-21)

What does this passage reveal about the source of legitimate authority? **Legitimate authority comes from God.** Law that is not fundamentally based on God's law, on the “natural law”, will be wrong.

Now, there is plenty of room for legitimate disagreements on things like privatizing Social Security, or which bridges and roads to build, even on more serious issues like economic sanctions, immigration, and making war. **However, when human laws are in direct contradiction to God's law, Catholic Christians have a moral responsibility to work to fix this.**

Are Catholics “Red” or “Blue”?

Now I know this idea makes a lot of people, particularly in modern day America, very nervous. We have a long and proud tradition of religious freedom and tolerance in the United States, and this is a good thing. But in our concern about preventing one religion from dominating, perhaps we’ve gone to the other extreme, in which faith is entirely excluded from public life. This doesn’t make a lot of sense, however. How can it, if we take our faith seriously?

Check out this quote from Archbishop Chaput of Denver. **“People who take God seriously will not remain silent about their faith. They will often disagree about doctrine or policy but they won’t be quiet. They can’t be…”** Obviously the common good demands a respect for other people with different beliefs and a willingness to compromise whenever possible. But for Catholics, the common good can never mean muting themselves in public debate on foundational issues of faith or human dignity. Christian faith is always personal, but never private.” (*Render Unto Caesar*, pp. 10)

Most of the time, taking our faith seriously may just mean voting against politicians who express views that violate human dignity. Sometimes, it requires more decisive action, like those who practiced civil disobedience against the racist Jim Crow laws during the civil rights movement. Rarely, living our faith in the public square might mean an even greater sacrifice – giving up our lives.

[Show short clip from *A Man for All Seasons*, particularly the scene in which Thomas More explains to the court that has just convicted him of treason that his conscience demands that he follow God’s law over the King’s when the two are in contradiction.]

Part 2 – Our Faith & Political Issues

[Have students brainstorm what the most important issues facing voters are in the upcoming election, if applicable, or what the most important issues being discussed about today in the media.]

The Church has a lot to say on social justice issues and issues of war and peace. To be honest, neither of our two political parties “gets it all right” – there are moral problems with the policy platforms of both parties.

However, the Church acknowledges that ultimately it is up to the civil authorities to develop solutions to these types of problems. We live in an imperfect world, and politics is the “art of the possible” – we have to compromise, make sacrifices, and sometimes settle for the “lesser of two evils”.

On some issues, however, our bishops, whose authority comes from Jesus Himself, have said that Catholics in good conscience *cannot* compromise.

“There are some things we must never do, as individuals or as a society, because they are always incompatible with love of God and neighbor. Such actions are so deeply flawed that they are always opposed to the authentic good of persons. These are called “intrinsically evil” actions. They must always be rejected and opposed and must never be supported or condoned.” (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, para. 22).

Are Catholics “Red” or “Blue”?

The Church views, as does the founding document of our nation, The Declaration of Independence, the right to life as the most fundamental right a human being has, the right upon which all other rights are based.

Thus, bishops around the country, in their duty as the primary moral teachers of Catholics, have said that Catholics must consider protecting the right to life for all humans beings, born and unborn, as our first concern.

After all, if we believe as Catholics that unborn babies are human beings, legalized abortion in this country has resulted in almost 7 times as many intentional deaths as the Holocaust. How can we in conscience say any other issue rises to this level of moral significance?

This can seem frustrating, because it appears the bishops are telling Catholics how to vote. This is more a fault of our political system, which limits us to only two real choices in most national elections. In the larger picture, however, what the bishops are saying is that no different from what Thomas More, and Jesus Himself said – we must be good citizens of our country, but we must be citizens of God’s Kingdom first.

Ultimately, voting is up to us – the Church won’t be in the voting booth with us, making sure we make the right decision. But we need to remember that voting is not just a political act; it’s a moral one as well.

APPLICATION

Activity Option # 1: Political Hero Reflection

This activity requires a journal, or at least pen and paper.

Have teens spend some time reflecting on a person (elected official, activist, writer, or other public figure) or movement that they find inspiring, as well as faithful to Gospels (they don’t have to be Catholic necessarily, but should be in accordance with the spirit of Church teachings on at least the issue the teen is writing on). What did the person/movement do that the teen finds heroic? How did they demonstrate, through words or actions, their respect for the God-given dignity of human beings? How were they a model of legitimate authority? How did they demonstrate Christian values in their political actions? Have teens share their reflection in front of the group.

Activity Option # 2: The Great Debate

Suggest several current political issues upon which Catholics could legitimately disagree on whether or not a particular law or action is just and faithful to the Gospels – public health care¹, environmental regulation, welfare, affirmative action, immigration, education, or other similar issues. Avoid issues like abortion, marriage, embryonic stem cell research, the death penalty, and similar topics on which the Church teaches that the moral law is clear and not up for debate. Have the teens pick the issue(s) about which they are most interested or passionate. Divide up into teams that take different sides of the issues chosen. Have teens brainstorm reasons why their position is faithful to the Gospels, is a legitimate use of authority, and is consistent with the Church’s moral teachings. Then let the two teams on each issue present their case (for a couple of minutes) to the whole group. If you chose, you can have the group vote on which side they think has the better argument.

¹ Note: in this case, refer to the concept of public healthcare in general, not the recent health care legislation enacted in the United States that the U.S. bishops have condemned.

Are Catholics “Red” or “Blue”?

SEND

Summary: What does this have to do with Jesus?

Jesus Christ taught us that to be a leader one must first be a servant; we are called to serve others as Christ served his Apostles by the washing of their feet. Through active participation in public life, we help to ensure that the decisions we make on how to live our common life together are made in the example of love, stewardship, and service that Christ calls us follow. Catholics do not belong to the “red” or “blue” party, but the party of Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer

O Glorious St. Thomas More, Patron of Statesmen, Politicians, Judges and Lawyers, your life of prayer and penance and your zeal for justice, integrity and firm principle in public and family life led you to the path of martyrdom and sainthood. Intercede for our Statesmen, Politicians, Judges and Lawyers, that they may be courageous and effective in their defense and promotion of the sanctity of human life – the foundation of all other human rights. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Written by Most Rev. Michael Saltarelli, ret. Bishop of Wilmington, Del.)

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HISPANIC YOUTH MINISTRY

Politics can be very different from culture to culture. It is important to keep this in mind when discussing politics. In many Latin American countries, there is great corruption within the governments and this has affected the lives of Hispanics that have immigrated to the United States. You may find that young Hispanics are not engaged in politics or even show an interest. The “common good” discussed above is often disregarded and many of the countries that Hispanic young people and their families come from are poverty and war stricken. As a result, unconscious attitudes of distrust, fear or resistance to authorities, laws and government officials are at times pervasive in Hispanic culture. There can exist a mentality to protect ones own interests instead of working for the common good. These ideas at times may be passed from parents to children, even if the Hispanic youth was born here.

Additionally, Hispanic youth and their families whether documented or undocumented often view politics and officials as a risky and fearful experience that they would prefer to steer clear of. Hispanic youth may not learn about civil rights, voting and other political behaviors at home since their parents are not familiar with the United States system or are unable to participate in government activities such as voting. Emphasis can be made on other ways young Hispanics can be involved in politics other than simply voting. For those that do get involved politically, it is common in the Hispanic culture to believe that individuals themselves can be liberators of injustices instead of placing Christ as the liberator of all. It is important to always clarify that it is Christ that works through us and not our work alone that saves. A practical way to truly teach Hispanic youth about politics and the Church’s teaching of authority is to do so without using lofty terminology but recall they are experiential learners that do best with examples and scenarios from daily life.

Biography

Frank Caliva has been a volunteer high school youth minister at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Parish in Arlington, VA since 2007. He studied political science and international affairs at Providence College (Providence, R.I.) and at the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. He works for the federal government in Washington, D.C.

Mixed Messages

DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

Issue Night

TOPIC

Sexuality

GOAL

The goal for this session is to give an understanding of human sexuality and chastity in light of Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body. At the end of the session teens will be able to address the mixed messages that exist within the culture regarding human sexuality.

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

(II.I.C.5.a,b,c)

SCRIPTURE

Creation Account- Gn.1:26-28; Gn. 2:18-25

Original Solitude- Gn. 2:18

Original Innocence- Gn. 2:25

Original Sin- Gn.3

Love- 1 Jn. 4:8; 1 Jn. 3:18; 1 Jn. 4:18; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; Jn. 13:34; Jn.15:12;

Chastity and Purity- Job 31:1; Mt. 5:8; 1 Cor. 6:13; 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Eph. 5:3; 1 Th. 4:3-5; 1 Th. 4:7-8; 2 Tim. 2:22; Rom 12:1-2.

CATECHISM

In the Image of God- 356-359, 1700-1709

Unity of Body and Soul- 362-366

Male and Female He Created Them- 369-372, 2331-2336

Chastity- 2337-2350, 2517 -2519, 2520-2527

Passions- 1763-1770

Offenses against chastity- 2351-2359

Purpose of the Sexual Union- 2360-2363

GOLDEN THREADS

The Trinity: Created in the image of God we are to make manifest through our bodies and actions the love of the Trinity. And it is precisely through the communion of persons that we image the Trinity.

The Paschal Mystery/ The Work of Our Redemption: It is through the redemption of Christ that we are offered victory over vice and sin. It is by imitating His sacrificial love that we learn to authentically love others and ourselves.

The Dignity of the Human Person: Each human being by virtue of being created in the image of God has an inherent dignity. Therefore, the only proper and adequate attitude towards another is love.²

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

Built on Christ. Our call to love is rooted in the example and life of Christ, for we can only learn to love from God who is love.

PROCLAMATION

² Wojtyla, Karol. *Love and Responsibility*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993, pg 41.

Mixed Messages

Dignity of the Human Person

- Genesis 1:27 states, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.” The creation of mankind in the image of God is the source of human dignity (CCC 1700).
- To be created in the image of God means to be created in the image of love. In other words, God inscribed in man the vocation to love (CCC 2331). However, we can only authentically love another person and uphold their dignity if we have a personal relationship with God (Deus Caritas Est, 18).
- Man and woman were created with equal dignity yet distinct from one another. Masculinity and femininity “are as it were two ways in which the human being ‘created in the image of God’ is a body” (TOB, 157).

Love as a covenant

- Throughout the Old and New Testament God uses the imagery of husband and wife to portray His relationship with His people (Is 54:5-6; Jer 31:32; Mk 2:19; Jn 3:29; Rev 21:9).
- The love between a man and a woman is to image the love between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:25-31).
- True love requires total *self* donation for “man...cannot fully find himself except through a *sincere gift* of himself.” (Gaudium et Spes, 24). This means that love is not a momentary passion or desire; rather, to love is to will the good of the other person (CCC 1766). The greatest example of this is seen on the cross.

Sacredness of Sexual Love:

- In Mark 10:8 Jesus referring to Genesis 2:24 says “‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one.” This union is sacred because it is a reflection of the communion of the Trinity. In other words, the unity of the two becoming one flesh mirrors the unity of the three Persons in one God.
- Sexual love is oriented towards union and procreation. These two elements are inseparably connected (Humanae Vitae, 12). This means that every sexual act needs to be open to life and that procreation must always result as the direct union of husband and wife. (Humanae Vitae 14; CCC 2376-2377).

Chastity

- Love is expressed in many ways. This means that we do not need to engage in sexual behavior in order to adequately and fully express love.
- Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person (CCC 2337). It involves self mastery which leads to authentic freedom. “The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy” (CCC 2339).
- All the baptized are called to chastity (CCC 2348) yet it is lived differently according to one’s state in life. Consecrated men and women live chastity through a promise of celibacy which allows them to give themselves fully to God with an undivided heart (CCC 2349). Singles as well as engaged couples live chastity in continence reserving the expression of sexual love for marriage and growing in this way in mutual respect. Married couples practice conjugal chastity which safeguards the respect and dignity of the spouses.

Mixed Messages

- The virtue of chastity blossoms in friendship (CCC 2347).
-

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

Songs and Music Videos:

- Casting Crowns “Slow fade”
 - www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-8SYA6rfbs&feature=related
 - (Youtube search for: “Casting Crowns SlowFade”)
- Rebecca St. James “Wait for me”
 - www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyoVIvyHnw8

YouTube Videos:

Jason Evert on a variety of topics related to chastity

- www.youtube.com/user/bostonrespectlife#p/u

Philip Rivers on a variety of topics related to chastity

- www.youtube.com/results?search_type=search_playlists&search_query=philip+rivers+chastity&uni=1

Fireproof (on Temptation):

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_hVT6gomzA
- (Youtube search for: “fireproof breaking free”)

Purity Matters

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=wU_P5lEXfIE

Webpages:

- www.chastity.com
- www.demandyourdignity.com

OTHER RESOURCES

- John Paul II. *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*.
 - This is the starting point of all of JPPII’s reflection on the Theology of the Body. Chapter One is essential since it focuses on the meaning of the human body and sexuality as evidenced by Scripture.
- Paul VI. *Humanae Vitae*.
 - This encyclical focuses on the regulation of birth as well as the dignity of human love. The youth minister can review paragraph 9 and 10 so as to explain the Church’s understanding of married love.
- Benedict XVI. *Deus Caritas Est*.
 - Pope Benedict’s inaugural encyclical. The youth minister may focus on paragraphs 3-8 which focus on the difference between *eros* and *agape*.
- Bishop Paul S. Loverde. *Bought With a Price: Pornography and the Attack on the Living Temple of God*.
 - An excellent resource regarding the dangers of pornography. Chapter 3 does a great job explaining false arguments regarding pornography which can be discussed with the teens.
- Jason Evert. *If You Really Loved Me: 100 Questions on Dating, Relationships and Sexual Purity*.
 - This book addresses many of the questions teens have regarding relationships. Any one of these questions can be used for group discussions or small group sharing.

Mixed Messages

- Carl Anderson and José Granados. *Called to Love: Approaching John Paul II's Theology of the Body*.
 - This book gives great insights on the meaning of the Theology of the Body. Chapter One: "The Body Manifests the Person" explains in a new light the meaning of the body and Chapter 6 "Christ: The Redeemer of the Heart and the Fullness of Love" focuses on the Theology of the Body in the light of Christ.
 - United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Between Man and Woman: Questions and Answers About Marriage and Same-Sex Unions*.
 - In this document the bishops explain why marriage is restricted to a man and a woman. In doing so they highlight the meaning of marriage as well as address modern questions regarding same sex unions.
 - Live of Saints Maria Goretti and Laura Vicuña
-

GATHER

Icebreaker- *Who do You Say that I am?*

The leader puts a name tag with the name of a famous celebrity on the back of each person. Each person must then solicit information from the other members of the group in order to guess which celebrity he or she is.

- It does not have to be solely celebrities. The leader can use the names of famous saints, popes, singers, cartoon characters, etc.
- After everyone has guessed who they are, the leader can tie the game into the talk. The leader can point out that the way they learned who they were was by listening to what other people said about them. Many times we falsely base our identity not on who we really are but on who others say we are or want us to be.

Opening Prayer

Prayer to St. Maria Goretti

Dear Saint Maria Goretti! The world teaches that we must please others in order to be popular. Conscience demands that I please God more than one who asks an evil thing in the name of false love. Teach me by your example to instill into others a real respect for modesty and purity. Through your powerful intercession, help me to make of this evening an occasion for helping others to become spiritually stronger. Grant that others may see in me reason to change their ways, if that be necessary, and that I may have the courage to resist any temptation to sinful conduct. Let others be led closer to Jesus and Mary by my example. Amen.

OR

"I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect." (Romans 12:1-2)

EXPLANATION

What is Love?

- Begin by asking the students to explain what love is. Have them cite examples of where they have learned their notion of love from (ask them to quote song lyrics, TV shows, or catchy slogans).

Mixed Messages

- Point out that many people think that love is a feeling, a passion, a desire, or an attraction. The word love in modern times has lost its essential meaning. For example, many people say that they love their iPod or their cell phone.
- To understand what love is we need to go to the source: God.
- *Game: Bible Frenzy*
 - Divide the students into small groups and have a Bible (or more) for each group.
 - The youth minister will give the students a bible passage and the first group to find the passage and read it out loud receives a small prize (donuts, candy, etc).
 - Give teens the verse *1 John 4:8*, “Whoever does not love does not know God because God is love” and see who can find it and read it first.
- If God is love then what does He say that love is? What was God’s original plan for love and sexuality?

God’s Original Plan for Love

- Ask the students if they remember the story of Adam and Eve. Who was created first? What was created next?
- God created Adam first from the dust and before creating Eve He said “it is not good for man to be alone, I will make a suitable partner for him” (Genesis 2:18). Surprisingly, God did not create Eve but He created the animals instead and had Adam give them each a name. Pope John Paul II in his *Theology of the Body* stated that God did this so that man could realize he was not an animal but a person. Adam’s experience of not finding one equal to him and realizing that he is alone is known as “original solitude.” This experience taught Adam that unlike animals he had reason and intellect and a capacity to love. But this capacity could only be fulfilled by loving a creature equal to him, in other words another human person.
- Upon this realization of Adam, God put Adam to sleep and from his side (close to his heart) he created Eve. When Adam saw Eve he recognized her as a person, as one equal to him and he exclaimed ““This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23).
- Many years ago there was a popular song called “*Ain’t Nothing but Mammals*” that stated that man was another animal so he could act like one when it comes to his sexuality. Ask the students if they agree with that statement. Why or why not? Is man just an animal? How are they different? Man has reason and free will while an animal acts on instinct. Man can (and must) govern his passions. In this way he acts in accord with his nature and is more “free” as opposed to being enslaved by passions.
- After Adam’s recognition of the dignity and personhood of Eve the Bible says, “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body. The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame.”
- This experience is known as “original nakedness.” Man and woman were not ashamed because they saw each other with eyes of purity; they saw each other as gifts to be given not as objects of pleasure to be taken.
- The sexual union of Adam and Eve was blessed for they were to become “one flesh”. No longer were they two since through this union they became one. The Church upholds the sacredness of sexuality for she understands, as JPII taught, that the one flesh union of husband and wife is a reflection of the communion of the Trinity. Three persons one God, two persons one flesh.

Mixed Messages

Distortion of God's Plan

- What happened that changed everything? Adam and Eve sinned. They were told not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and they disobeyed. They thought that they could decide for themselves what was good and what was evil.
- Immediately after sinning they hid because they realized they were naked. Sin changed how they saw each other. Where before they felt no shame, now they hide from God and from one another.
- Their bodies were meant to express love and show forth the image of God but after the fall their body language was distorted.
 - The leader can use a short clip of a popular music video and have the teens discuss what is expressed through the body. They can compare what is being expressed by the music video to what God created the body to express.
- At this point the youth minister can have the students once again form small groups to do **Activity Option #1**.

Recovering God's Plan for Love

- Men and women have been created with inherent dignity for they are created in the image of God, which means that they are to express this dignity through their bodies. Modesty in dress speaks truth about the human person. When a woman uses clothing that exposes too much of her body she is speaking a lie with the language of the body. She is stating that her body is an object to be seen and desired rather than a person to be loved. The problem is that objects are replaceable people are not. A woman who allows herself to be seen as an object will soon find that men will replace her as easily as they would another object. And men who train themselves to see woman as objects will never be content or satisfied for objects do not satisfy only people do.
- In order to recover God's plan for love we need to rediscover our dignity as His creation.
- When we answer the question what is love we need to remember two main points. First, that "God is love." This means that if someone loves you, then they lead you closer to God for He is love. If your actions in your relationships lead you away from God then it cannot be love. Secondly, the Catechism says, "to love is to will the good of the other person" (CCC 1766). Therefore, to know if someone authentically loves you, you need to ask yourself if that person desires and wills what is best for you.
- To love another means to uphold their dignity as well as your own. Anything that is done in the name of love must be for the good of the other person and to bring that person closer to God.

Chastity

- Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being (CCC 2337). Man is a unity of body and soul, this means that what we do with our bodies affects our souls.
- Chastity involves self mastery which leads to authentic freedom. "The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy" (CCC 2339).
- *Bible Frenzy: Mt 5:28* "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:28).
 - Jesus equates the desire with the action. He calls for purity of intention and desire. This is also known as "custody of the eyes"
- **Youtube Video: Fireproof Breaking Free**
 - Is Caleb's reaction exaggerated why or why not?

Mixed Messages

- If an intruder were in your house about to kill your husband or wife how would you react? Pornography attacks and destroys marriage just as devastatingly. (A good resource for this section is Bishop Loverde's *Bought With a Price: Pornography and the Attack on the Living Temple of God.*)
- Or **Youtube Video** Casting Crowns "Slow fade"
 - www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-8SYA6rfbs&feature=related
 - (Youtube search for: "Casting Crowns SlowFade")
- The youth minister may wish to address other issues of "Offenses Against Chastity" from CCC 2351-2359)

Redemption

- Jesus took on our human flesh and became one of us. He redeemed us and His redemption brings salvation and grace. Jesus understands our struggles and desires for us to allow Him to help us. He is love and He is the one who fully willed what was best for. We see this evidenced on the cross.
- Jesus offers His forgiveness daily in the sacrament of penance.
 - To show how Jesus maintains and restores our dignity the youth minister may explain it visually. Take a \$20 bill and ask the students how much it is worth. Then crumple it and ask again its worth, throw in on the ground, step on it, throw it in the trash and ask once again what its worth is. No matter what is done to the \$20 it remains its worth. The youth minister then explains that no matter what we have done in the past we are still valuable and have immense dignity in the eyes of God.
 - Through confessions our sins are not only forgiven but we receive grace to help resist temptation.

You are Not Alone

- Living a virtuous life is not easy but we are not alone. Jesus has one the fight and offers His sacraments to help and save us.
- There are many great resources online and also there are many great role models as well.
 - **Activity Option #2** is a great way to end the night so as to conclude on a positive note.

APPLICATION

Activity Option # 1: Reality Check

Materials needed: magazines, music videos, lyrics of popular songs, and ads.

- This activity can be used in the section of *Distortion of God's Plan* or at the end of the talk. The idea is for teens to see how the body is used in the culture not to express the image of God but as an object to sell a product or to be used. Also, the teens can discuss the notions of love that the culture is proclaiming. It is very important that they think critically about the different medias that they come into contact daily.
- This activity can be done it two ways.
 1. The leader divides the teens into small groups and gives each group one of the materials mentioned above (a magazine, a song, a music video, etc). The leader gives each team a certain amount of time to discuss the material and then each team shares their discussion with the entire group.
 2. The leader creates stations with these materials. The teens have a certain amount of time to go to each station and discuss what they see. This way each team has had an opportunity to see all of the material. At the end of the activity they can all share their experience.

Mixed Messages

Activity Option # 2: Role Models

- The teens encounter authentic role models of chastity, purity and marital love.
- Saints (and Blessed):
 - Maria Goretti, Laura Vicuña, Domingo Savio, Luigi and Maria Beltrame
- Celebrities
 - Barlow Girl:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyqFybF3sG0&feature=PlayList&p=E3B418D289D705F6&playnext_from=PL&playnext=2
(Youtube search for: “Barlow Girl Interview”)
 - Philip Rivers (NFL)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNCSstzz06Fk&feature=related
 - Eduardo Verastegui
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qN_V3rADr3c&feature=related (On Youtube search for: “Eduardo's Story Hi-Res”)
 - Kaka (Brazilian soccer star) *see Appendix*

Activity Option #3: The Word and the World

- Divide the teen into small groups.
- In their small groups ask them to make a list of what the modern culture says that love is. They may use magazines, ads, song lyrics, or music videos as resources.
- Then have them analyze 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.
 - ⁴*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.*
 - ⁵*It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.* ⁶*Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.* ⁷*It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*
 - Encourage them to analyze each aspect (patient, kind, not self seeking, etc)
- Finally, have them compare what God has revealed love to be to what the culture says love is.

SEND

Summary: How does this have to do with Jesus?

Jesus came into the world to show us and restore in us authentic love. The greatest example of His love was manifested on the cross. Jesus reminds us that love requires sacrifice and self giving. He calls us to share in His love and to express this same love through our bodies. Just as His love was poured out to bring us closer to God our love for others must also bring them closer to God.

Closing Prayer

Prayer of St Thomas Aquinas

Dearest Jesus!

I know well that every perfect gift, and above all others that of chastity, depends upon the most powerful assistance of your providence, and that without you a creature can do nothing. Therefore, I pray that you defend, with your grace, the gift of chastity and purity in my soul as well as my body. And if I have ever received through my senses any impression that could stain my chastity and purity, I ask you, who are the supreme Lord of all my powers, to take it from me, so that I may with a clean heart advance in your love and service, offering myself chaste all the days of my life on the most pure altar of your divinity. Amen.

Mixed Messages

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HISPANIC YOUTH MINISTRY

If you think that sex is a taboo topic among mainstream Anglo's than it is even more so among the Hispanic culture. When teaching about sexuality to Hispanics, nothing should be taken for granted or be assumed. For example, it cannot be taken for granted that Hispanic youth are receiving good examples of chastity at home, that their parents are actually married within the Catholic Church (civil marriages are very common in Hispanic culture due to the lack of priests in their native countries), or that they have an understanding of what a sacramental marriage is supposed to look like. Hispanic parents very rarely talk to their children about expectations of sexual behaviors and the need for chastity. This may require that you provide an equal amount of parental education in regards to sexuality as you would for Hispanic teens. Hispanic female youth, unfortunately, have the highest percentage of teen pregnancy. Often there exists a double-standard for Hispanic females and males. The concept of "machismo" allows for boys to explore their sexuality, while girls are expected to remain pure and chaste until marriage. When teaching about sexuality, keep in mind these cultural differences, along with the temptations of lack of parent supervision and low self-esteem or feelings of not fitting in.

Biography

Carmen Briceño was consecrated into the Order of Virgins on August 22, 2009 and is currently is the Bilingual Youth Minister Director for the Diocesan Laborer Priests. She obtained a Masters degree in Education at George Mason University in 2005 and a Masters in Theology at the Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College in 2010. She is the creator of the program Sex and the City of God and is the author of the book What Everyone is Talking About.

Mixed Messages

Appendix



Brazilian soccer star Kaka admits he was a virgin when he married³

The Brazilian soccer superstar known as Kaka has said that both he and his wife, Caroline, were virgins when they married. Kaka has long been known for both his outspoken Christian faith and his remarkably good looks.

"The Bible teaches that true love waits until marriage," Kaka told the Italian edition of Vanity Fair. "If our life today is so beautiful, I think it is because we waited," he said about his marriage.

The soccer star admitted that it was not easy to stay a virgin until his wedding night, and that even still there are challenges to living faithfully. "There are always temptations," but the sacrifices the couple made for each other have been more than worth it, he said.

The couple's chaste relationship prior to marriage "was important, as it tested our love," said Kaka.

³ Taken from Catholic News Agency
http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/brazilian_soccer_star_kaka_admits_he_was_a_virgin_when_he_married/

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DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

Issue Night

TOPIC

Relativism

GOAL

The goal for this session is to define the philosophical concepts relating to postmodernism, including relativism and deconstruction, in order to prepare youth for a faithful counter-witness to such novel viewpoints. Subsequently, teens should grapple with these concepts in an up-to-date fashion so as to be prepared for secondary, collegiate, and post-grad trends in this respective area. Attention to the theme of Christian narrative will be rigorously highlighted.

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

(II.I.C.9) (II.II.B.3)

SCRIPTURE

Truth- Jn 18: 33-38; 1 Tm 2:4

Perspectives- Prv 14:12; Mt 13: 24-30

Narrative- Jer 10:23; Mt 11:2-5

CATECHISM

Faith passed on- 91-94

Trinity as ultimate truth- 2465-2466

Media and truth- 2496

Setting us free- 1741

GOLDEN THREADS

The Paschal Mystery/The Church: Postmodernism re-engages the question “*Who do you want to think, live, and act like?*” Catholic Christians will answer with Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, as well as how the subsequent Church interprets such significant revelation.

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

Built on Christ. In order for the faith to “make sense”, we must continuously build a narrative (or string of events) upon Christ’s teachings in the Church and in dialogue with others.

PROCLAMATION

The overall goal is to have the youth understand how they live in a Christian world, not a postmodern one. As such, God’s truths are eternal – that is, they don’t change. Additionally, however, we must remember how relativism won’t be defeated by abstract knowledge or a theory – it will only be overcome by the witness of a people bent on living Christ’s truth, freedom, and care.

Defining Terms: Each three should be covered as best as possible. (See Appendix for more in depth definitions.)

Catholic Narrative:

- More or less, the story of our faith.
- We believe our faith story to be true
- Some truths, especially those of the faith, need to be passed on (See CCC 91-94)

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Postmodernism:

- A belief system characterized by various “narratives” or stories competing to explain the “way things are”
- There are many stories out there (i.e. Darwinism, secularism, democracy, socialism, gay rights, various religions and political parties, etc. and of course, Catholicism).
- Each lays claim to the truth and how it is we are called to live. Some interact positively with others but at times also impede another story’s progress.

Relativism:

- The belief often associated with postmodernity which states that a person’s beliefs are a byproduct of their relative place and time.
- You come to “think, believe, or behave” in something in large part because of your culture, family heritage, social-economic condition, social groups, etc. etc. etc.
- Truth is relative to how you were brought up and/or how you “feel” at the present moment. What is good for you is not always good for another person and vice versa.
- Most people who say they’re “relativists” rarely follow through with their conclusions. When was the last time you heard anyone say the Holocaust was morally permissible because Hitler’s truth was to kill 6 million Jews? Hence most relativists, if they know it or not, still hold to the reality of objectively evil acts.
- Perhaps the bigger issue surrounding relativism is in faith-based beliefs. One often hears how “exclusive” Christianity is with its preaching of “the way, the truth, and the life”. It seems arrogant, almost absurd to do so. But there’s a flip side to this: The relativists exclude the exclusivists. Thus, to be a relativist of this mindset entails you’re excluding those religions which believe their faith is what God seeks from everyone. Relativism is self-defeating; it essentially deconstructs itself. True peace and freedom is not in doing whatever you want; true peace and freedom is living the way God has always intended for you from the beginning (ref. Psalm 119:160).

Deconstruction:

- Postmodernism’s tool to infect stories from the inside out in order to destroy them – like a zombie or virus.
- As a concept, deconstruction seeks to give arguments as to why one story is wrong or self-contradictory in nature. Example – All villains are bad. A vigilante is a type of villain. Batman is a vigilante. Batman has now been “deconstructed” as a Super Hero.

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

YouTube Videos:

- Exploration Films/Postmodernism
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oL8MhYq9owo>
- *Becoming Catholic Youth* by St. Joes Youth Community
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNgWYdSywe4>

OTHER RESOURCES

Websites:

- Young Catholics and Moral Relativism
 - <http://www.zenit.org/article-28794?l=english>
- Pope Benedict XVI’s 2005 World Youth Day Address
 - http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/august/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20050820_vigil-wyd_en.html

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GATHER

Icebreaker: *I AM LEGEND*

(Works better with large indoor and/or outdoor spaces)

The game is modeled after the movie starring Will Smith, encompassing the theme of zombies and a human doctor. Before the game begins, you will need to select 1 zombie for every six people gathered, keeping it secret from everyone else involved (failure to do can ruin the game). You will need 1 flashlight if it is dark OR 1 small filled squirt gun if it is not. Set boundaries, making sure there are plenty of hiding places (good game to play at night) and much space to run.

Explain the game by saying there are two types of people present – humans and zombies (kids will not know who is who, which makes the game entertaining to watch). The goal of the human is to stay alive and to not be turned into a zombie while the goal of the zombies is to turn humans into themselves. The way a zombie turns a human into a zombie is simply by tagging them and then bringing them into their lair (i.e. the lair is a secret zombie base planned before the start of the game – zombies should know where it is). Humans become zombies *only* when they are brought to the lair in which case they *cannot be turned back into a human*. Zombies must *walk* their prey to the lair holding their arm (they can run when they don't have a prey).

However, the other element of the game involves the “healer” or “doctor”. This is the person who finds a hidden potion to release a human from a zombie’s grasp as they’re walking him/her to the lair. The potion is hidden before the game begins and is typically either a flashlight or small water gun. If a human finds the potion, he or she becomes the doctor and can squirt or shine the zombies which will release any humans from their grasp, turning them away in another direction. (Note however, once you become a zombie you cannot become human again. Squinting or shinning the zombie only keeps them from taking others to become more zombies. Zombies cannot touch the potion if found, the healer cannot stand by the lair.)

Begin the game by giving everyone 5 minutes to hide. Remember, zombies are amongst the teens – *to hide with someone is dangerous!* Zombies can lie about who they are. Say “go” and let the game begin. Kids run every which way and are generally scared to approach anyone, not knowing the truth of who they are. As the game goes on, some zombies will obviously become known while others do not. After a designated amount of time, the game ends. Humans win if there are more humans than zombies. Zombies win if there are more zombies than humans or, in rare cases, no humans at all.

Application to Postmodernism/Relativism: The zombie is an excellent metaphor when talking about postmodernism/relativism. It is not alive so it cannot be killed, and because it is already dead it seeks to infect others so as to not be alive. Postmodernism in a sense can be likened to a zombie – it destroys foundations often by deconstructing (i.e. destroying) universal truths from the inside out. After truths and certainty are destroyed, you more or less get widespread violence and panic – something the game highlights well but in good fun.

Opening Prayer

“May the Lord Jesus touch our eyes as he did those who were blind. Only then shall we begin to see in visible things those which are invisible. May he open our eyes to gaze, not on present realities, but on the many blessings to come. May he open the eyes of our heart to

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contemplate God in Spirit, through Jesus Christ the Lord, to whom belong the power and glory through all eternity. Amen” ~ Origen

OR

“MY LORD GOD, I have no idea where I am going.

I do not see the road ahead of me.

I cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself, and just because I think I’m following your will does not mean I’m actually doing so.

But I believe the desire to please you does in fact please you.

And I hope I have that desire in all I do.

I hope I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore, I will trust you always though I seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.

I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.”

- Thomas Merton, "Thoughts in Solitude"

EXPLANATION

(After the opening prayer and icebreaker, get the youth together to watch one of the videos above as a lead in to the proclamation. If you did the “I am Legend” icebreaker, you can begin the proclamation by asking the youth how they felt to start a game without knowing the truth of who the other people around them were. Ask them if they thought the game was chaotic or peaceful, and then explain their reasons why.)

Let’s begin with a question. Give me a show of hands of how many of you have heard the following statements before:

- 1.) “Christianity may be truth for you, but it’s not for me.”
- 2.) “Abortion is a complicated issue. It all depends on how you see things.”
- 3.) “There is no absolute truth – only people’s opinion.

If you haven’t encountered statements like these yet, it’s probably only a matter of time before you do so. All of these statements have something in common: it is the idea that truth is relative. Relativism is the belief that truth is different from person to person, from place to place. And, because we’re all different, this mindset suggests that no one can claim to know universal truths – that is, the truth applicable to everyone.

Now, the Catholic Church speaks out against this mindset and rightly so. Recently, Pope Benedict XVI warned of a “dictatorship of relativism” whereby people have begun to choose what is right and wrong on an individual basis. He further states how the Church must maintain that real truth is always eternal and unchanging, because God, the creator of the world, is eternal and unchanging.

Now saying that truth is eternal and unchanging can be hard to do in today’s world. Many people don’t quite get it. Some think that it is close-minded to say there’s absolute truth - a truth for everyone. However, these people often don’t follow through with their conclusions.

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Take this example: If all truth is relative, then at what point is someone able to say someone else is wrong? Was Hitler wrong to kill over 6 million Jews? Or, was that merely Hitler's truth? If it was his truth, how can the relativist then say he's wrong?

The Church can say Hitler was wrong because it holds to the belief that there is a God who has put such truth on our hearts. By being created, we have been given a natural and implicit law to know some things as true – like unjustly killing millions of people.

The Catechism reads,

“The natural law, present in the heart of each man and established by reason, is universal in its precepts and its authority and extends to all men.” (CCC 1956)

Now, sometimes this natural law can be hidden from people due to sin or bad formation. Take the example of abortion. Many politicians, world leaders, and even Christians have said how abortion is a “complicated issue”. However, to the Church, such is not complicated at all – it is the taking of innocent life and thus always wrong. In this respect, the Church believes everyone can come to know this moral truth. But, at least in this case, Catholics must often teach and proclaim it in a life-giving way so as to witness the truth (most especially now).

This brings us to the problem of relativism in the world. Relativism is an unfortunate byproduct of postmodernism. Postmodernism is a way to define the world by saying there are competing stories or truth claims. It suggests that everyone is entitled to come to their own truth (i.e. relativism), their own story, of how the world works. But let's see what this creates:

(Ask for 6-8 volunteers and tape a different sign representing a specific story to each of them - i.e. Catholicism, Atheism, Buddhist, Democrat, Republican, Anarchist, etc.)

So here we have the postmodern world. You have up here 6-8 different stories each laying claim to truth or at least some aspect of it. Sometimes these stories can work together. (Show the republican and democrat coming together nicely for the betterment of democracy, or the Catholic and Buddhist coming together nicely for world peace.) However, because each story ultimately can see truth differently, they essentially compete against each other. (Show the Anarchist then trying to destroy the republican and democrat, and the atheist trying to destroy the Catholic and Buddhist.)

Because truth is relative in a postmodern world – because there is no fixed grounding - what you're left with is an undercurrent of violence. Notice the implications of this. Because beliefs differ from person to person and story to story, postmodernism assumes that there's always competition to further one's truth - even if it means taking over or destroying other stories. To do so, they try to deconstruct other stories by showing their inherent weaknesses.

Look, if everyone is fighting to keep their viewpoints alive and to make them known (have volunteers continue to play fight in the background), and if no one is ultimately right, then it becomes a “survival of the fittest” with worldviews.

Now, what I'm about to say is key for us as Catholics to understand. Unlike the postmodern and relativistic world where everyone fights for control, the Catholic sees him/herself in a world created by God, redeemed by Christ, and furthered by the Church – this is the truth of our faith. What this entails is that this model here doesn't apply to us! (Have the Catholic story in the line-up begin to pray while others continue to fight.)

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This is our story.

Instead of competing with other stories or saying there's no absolute truth, our faith works to foster peace through its faithful witness to the one Truth – Jesus Christ.

Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life". It is a verse which reassures us of how Christ has already won this game for us. It is His grace and life that controls our world and shows us what is true - not postmodernism's ways (ref. 1 Timothy 2:4). Christ wants us all to come to His truth, be it with moral issues like abortion, or with what it is we believe religiously speaking.

What this entails for us is that we need to continuously witness to the truth that we hold to in faith. Sometimes that witness can come in action, like graciously serving others, or in word, as in dialoguing with peers about your beliefs (see 1 Peter 3:15). The important thing to remember, however, is that ultimately God is at work through you. You don't have to be frightened to stand up for truth – He is always with you (read Matthew 28:20 - Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.)

Such a point is also made by Pope Benedict. In order to defeat a relativistic mindset and to make this more fully a Christian world bent on truth, we need to witness properly to Christ. He says,

"We cannot expect to change culture or influence people if we ourselves do not present an authentic witness to Christ, whom we know personally. And we cannot expect young people to witness effectively to their peers unless they have first developed a relationship with Christ that they are able to present in a very real way."

Which brings us to our final point – if anything, postmodernism and relativism should remind us of how our Catholic story matters. Our narrative, our story, is meant to bring peace, love, and truth to all regardless if they believe in it or not. In this way, we show postmodernity and relativism how we don't play by their rules. We genuinely care for the experiences of others, living peacefully in the knowledge of Christ's truth instead of trying to dominate them. We must instead pray, be patient, state and live our beliefs lovingly, and understand that it's not solely up to us– God's hand is always in play.

Go forward and to live and preach God's truth always and everywhere.

(Perhaps end with a prayer, and then move onto some of the activity options below.)

APPLICATION

Activity Option # 1: Small Group Sharing

Break youth into select small groups, giving each group a typical deconstruction of Christianity/Catholicism. As a group, they must work together to answer these charges brought against the faith, sharing with others how it is they would respond to such arguments. After 30 minutes, have each group share with the other groups what they came up with. Some examples include:

1. *Christianity, especially in its early years, fooled the known world into thinking being weak was actually being strong. In today's modern world, this no longer applies. People should "wake up" and*

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realize they must live for their own self interests, putting themselves first and foremost. (Possible Answer – Christians were never weak to begin with! Saying we’re “weak” is merely the opinion of those who want to live for themselves and further their self interests. From our vantage point, we were all created for God’s love and for others – it is what brings about true happiness and peace. We aren’t weak – it is in our human nature to live in this way.)

2. *The Catholic faith is repressive. It holds people back from being themselves and stifles creativity.* (Possible Answer – Many who claim the Catholic faith to be “repressive” often forget how the Church is amongst the biggest (if not the biggest) charitable organizations in the world. *It’s hard to be repressive when the faithful give so much of their time, treasures, and talent!* Furthermore, Catholics don’t seek to repress people from being “who they are” but rather wants people to live rightly and freely, bringing out who they were always called to be. Whereas others see the faith as repressive (i.e. you can’t party, have premarital sex, etc.), we see it as life-giving, positive adventure (we do party in the right way, joys of marriage and commitment, etc.).

3. *Catholics have been formed to see the world by archaic tradition. Colleges and Universities should try to “open their minds”, giving them a different picture of how the world works.* (Possible Answer – Why can’t Catholics “open the minds” of Colleges and Universities just as much as they apparently open our minds? Remember, just as we’ve been formed in the faith by tradition so have they been formed with a lack thereof! Hence, everyone has been formed...it’s just with a different picture of how the world functions. If Catholics have been “brainwashed” by their tradition, then what do colleges and universities do when they subvert the faith to new age, academic teachings?)

4. *Catholics should learn to think for themselves! Doing so makes them into more open, adjusted people.* (Possible Answer – No one “thinks for themselves”. You choose who you want to think like. “Thinking for yourself” only means you are thinking like the person who told you to “think for yourself.” Also, just because someone is Catholic doesn’t mean they’re necessarily “less open” or “poorly adjusted”. Who knows? Maybe it’s the person closed off to the possibility of faith who is the “less open, less adjusted” person.

Activity Option # 2: Candle Light Prayer Walk

Catholic youth should be proud to showcase who they are in a world of competing truth, claims and narratives. In a gesture of genuine peace and witness, break teens into prayer groups with at least two (2) adults in each group. Give every person a lit votive candle, preferably one that will not be blown out by wind or movement. Then, as all groups have their candles lit, go forth in different directions from the Church to surrounding neighborhoods, streets, parks, etc. in a *silent* walk of prayer and peace. Have youth pray silently for those they see or come across and, if asked, pray for the intentions of those inquiring about the procession. The point is for the youth to be comfortable with their Catholic identities while giving others a sign of our genuine love in prayer. After every group returns from their walk, give time for the youth to talk about their experiences in a group setting.

SEND

Summary: What does this have to do with Jesus?

Christ doesn’t deconstruct! Christ builds us up! The living God wants us to come to the truth - *the truth of Christ and the Church*. Instead of breaking down others in order to get our points across (i.e. postmodernity’s rules), He instead desires His faithful to be a witness to His abundant, life-giving grace. The Church rests on the foundation that all have been created by God and thus are called to return to Him. Let us continue to remember this, standing up in both word and deed to the faith we hold onto.

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Closing Prayer

Ever Ancient, Ever New

“Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there I searched for you. In my un-loveliness I plunged into the things you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would have not been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace.” ~from *Confessions* of Saint Augustine

Biography

David Bristow is the Director of Youth Formation at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Herndon, VA. His work frequently highlights the importance of Christian nonviolence and reconciliation in the lives of adolescent youth, as well as the proper role of communal formation in regards to character development. He is a full member of the Youth Apostles Institute in McLean, an organization devoted to the faith formation of young adults in the Northern Virginia area. Mr. Bristow also serves as a correspondent for the Diocese of Arlington about youth ministry matters and WorkCamp services, and teaches a character and virtue course to rising 9th grade students. He is married with a daughter, and in his spare time coaches the Herndon High Boy's Tennis Team.

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Appendix

Postmodernism: A belief system coming after modernity characterized by various “narratives” or stories competing to explain the “way things are”. There are many stories out there (i.e. Darwinism, secularism, democracy, socialism, gay rights, various religions and political parties, etc. and of course, Catholicism) each laying claim to the truth and how to live; some interact positively with others but at times also impede another story’s progress. Thus, postmodernism also has something of a violent ethic to it all – if all stories are on the same grounding, then they essentially compete against each other by trying to take one another over (otherwise known as out-narrating them).

Relativism: The belief often associated with postmodernity which states that a person’s beliefs are merely a byproduct of their relative place and time. You come to “think, believe, or behave” in something in large part because of your culture, family heritage, social-economic condition, social groups, etc. etc. Truth is relative to how you were brought up and/or how you “feel” at the present moment within a specific time and place. What is good for you is not always good for another person and vice versa. The Catholic Church speaks out against absolute relativism, believing we have all been created from God and were made for Him.

Deconstruction: Postmodernism’s trendy tool to infect stories from the inside out in order to destroy them – like a zombie or virus. As a concept, deconstruction seeks to give arguments as to why one story is wrong or self-contradictory in nature. Example – All villains are bad. A vigilante is a type of villain. Batman is a vigilante. Batman has now been “deconstructed” as a Super Hero. One of the more notable deconstructions of Christianity comes from the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). He argued that Christianity fooled the world into thinking “being weak” was actually strong (thus the “eagles” were fooled by the “lambs” to live amongst them *as* lambs). Christianity essentially made a story for those who were in a weaker position / social standing and pawned it off as the real truth. However, in Nietzsche’s opinion, all the eagles have to do is “wake up” to retake power. Questions arise as to what makes Christianity truer than something else? Why should eagles become lambs anyway? Is Christianity not repressing those eagles who seek power and dominion?

Defining Catholicism’s Place in Postmodernity:

When discussing our Catholic faith in the context of postmodernity, it is easy to play the game that we are one of many stories “competing” against each other to lay claim to the truth. Because truth is “relative” it is an all out slug fest to see who comes out on top, often using our language to control others’ opinions (i.e. marriage means *this* and not *that*.) The first problem with this outlook is that it gives postmodernity too much credit. From the Catholic point of view, our world is *graced*, thus making it a “Christian world” ever before it is a postmodern one (ref. 1 Timothy 2:4). Youth should know that we don’t “compete” to keep Catholicism alive; it is alive because of Christ’s action in the world and not by our own manipulation. Perhaps the biggest difference in outlook between postmodernity and Christianity is that the former believes people control through an undercurrent of violence while the latter believes Christ guides us through peace, giving us free-will to decide our way. *Our world is run by Christ’s peace, not postmodernity’s violence.*

The second problem with postmodernity is its relativistic outlook. With no moral absolutes, chaos inevitably ensues. Granted, most youth who say they are “relativists” rarely follow

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through with their conclusions (i.e. When was the last time you heard anyone say anti-Semitism could be viewed as morally permissible because Hitler's truth was to kill 6 million Jews...how can I say he's wrong?). Hence most relativists, if they know it or not, still hold to the reality of objectively evil acts. Perhaps the bigger issue surrounding relativism is in dogmatic, faith-based beliefs. One often hears how "exclusive" Christianity is with its preaching of how it's "the way, the truth, and the life" for all (ref. John 14:6). It seems arrogant, almost absurd to do so. But there is a flip side to this: The relativists exclude the exclusivists. Thus, to be a relativist of this mindset entails you're excluding those religions which believe their faith is what God seeks from everyone. Relativism is self-defeating; it essentially deconstructs itself.

At the same time, however, to dismiss postmodernity and even relativism as completely evil constructs with no opportunity for growth in the faith would be a mistake. Yes, Catholics might not believe in how postmodernity sees the world, and yes, we certainly hold to absolute truths, but the concepts of postmodernism and relativism can bring about fresh ways in which to act out the faith. First off, it reminds us of how our Christian story matters; our narrative, our story is meant to bring peace and love to all regardless if they believe it or not. Because we can't control the way others feel or even what it is they believe, Catholics must be pastoral and caring, listening with openness and gentleness while holding firmly to their beliefs. This way, we show postmodernity and relativism how we don't play by their rules; we genuinely care for the experiences of others, living peacefully in the knowledge of Christ's truth instead of trying to dominate them. To state our beliefs dogmatically and glibly to others without any concern for where they're at in life is to fall into postmodernity's trap of violence. We must instead pray, be patient, state and live our beliefs lovingly, and understand that it's *not solely up to us* to make someone come to our faith-based conclusions – God's hand is always in play. **When it is all said and done, relativism won't be defeated by abstract knowledge or a theory – it will be overcome by the witness of a people bent on living Christ's truth, freedom, and care.**

JOURNEY TO EMMAUS: A HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY CURRICULUM

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