

Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation

Session Focus

This session explores the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. It identifies what we say Amen to as we celebrate these sacraments of initiation—what the person, the family, and the community say Amen to. Participants will experience the symbols and words of the rites as well as Scripture passages to unpack the deeper meaning of these two sacraments.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

“The sacraments of Christian initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—lay the *foundations* of every Christian life. . . . The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life” (1212).

“Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments.” (1213).

Learning Objectives

This session on Baptism and Confirmation guides learners of all ages to:

- comprehend Baptism and Confirmation as saying Amen to full membership in the Body of Christ
- value and appreciate the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation for disciples
- live out their baptismal call in the Church and in the world

Session Overview

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| Part 1. (20-25 minutes) | Gathering and Opening Prayer Service |
| Part 2. (15-20 minutes) | All Ages Learning Experience: Called by Name |
| Part 3. (90-100 minutes) | In Depth Learning Experience: Sacraments of Baptism & Confirmation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Option 1. Whole Group Format: All participants remain in the same room.• Option 2. Age Groups Format: Participants go to separate rooms for parallel learning: families with children, adolescents, adults. |
| Part 4. (20-25 minutes) | Sharing Learning Experiences |
| Part 5. (10 minutes) | Closing Prayer Service |

Design Options for In-Depth Learning

Option 1. Whole Group Format

This format guides the entire assembly through each of the learning experiences. You might choose this format if you have:

- a large physical space with good acoustics/sound system and furniture to comfortably accommodate the learners
- a competent large group facilitator/master of ceremonies able to provide clear directions and to manage the dynamics and energy of a large group
- a group of catechists who feel comfortable moving through the assembly offering assistance, or a large enough team of table leader catechists to have one catechist work with each table group
- a learning topic that lends itself to everyone learning the same thing at the same time, but in different ways, in the same space

Facilitation Tips for This Format:

Guide small groups through each of the activities at the same time.

- Organize people into table groups based on age groupings: families with children (grades 1-5), middle school adolescents, high school adolescents, young adults, and adults.
- The lead facilitator guides the entire group through each of the learning experiences. All presentations and activity instructions are given to the whole group.
- The age-appropriate learning activities within each learning experience are conducted in table groups.
- Where needed, catechists and small group leaders facilitate the work of the table groups.

Option 2. Age Group Format

This format provides for three separate parallel learning programs. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic. You might choose this format if you have:

- an adequate number of meeting spaces for the various groups to gather
- an adequate number of competent facilitators and catechists to work with each group
- a topic that is best explored through age-specific learning

Facilitation Tips for This Format

- Organize participants into three or more parallel learning groups: families with children (grades 1-5), adolescents (grades 6-12), and adults.
- If there are a large number of adolescents, divide them into two groups: middle school and high school.

Organize separate groups for young adults, adults, and older adults. Or you can give the adults their own choice for forming small groups.

- Direct the adolescents and adults into small groups. Give them all the handouts and learning materials needed for the learning experiences
- Guide the families with children into table groups of two or more families. Give each table all the handouts and learning materials necessary for the learning experiences.

- A facilitator must guide all the of the families through each learning experience, while catechist move from table to table assisting.

Materials Needed

Gathering and All Ages Opening Experience

- Name tags
- Community building activities
- Opening Prayer Service – copies for the leader and readers
- Bible

In-Depth Learning Experience

- Handouts
- Supplies for learning activities (see activity descriptions to ascertain which supplies are needed for each activity)
- Pictures of the RCIA process. For Learning Experience Two, use PowerPoint or another means to show pictures of the entire Catechumenate journey, from Rite of Enrollment through Mystagogy. Perhaps you can collect some photos from recent catechumens. It is important to give participants some concrete visuals to go along with their learning.

Closing

- Closing Prayer Service—copy for the leader and musicians
- Bible

Session Plan

Part 1. Gathering and Opening Prayer (20-25 minutes)

Preparation

Prepare a newsprint sheet or handout that lists the order of the activities or create a PowerPoint presentation that guides people through the session.

Registration and Hospitality

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags or invite people to make their own.
- Distribute the handouts participants will need for the session. You can also distribute handouts for the activities at the beginning of the activity.
- Invite people to share a meal. Depending on the time of day, the program may end with a meal. Some optional learning activities for use during the meal follow below. These may be used as the table waits for food or waits for other groups to be finished eating.

Baptism and Confirmation Remembered

Invite participants to share stories and items of interest about baptisms or confirmations in their family. Challenge each table to see if they know the date of their baptism or the confirmation names of their parents or siblings. See how many still have their baptismal gowns and/or baptismal candles—and where they are kept in the home.

Water Challenge

Invite participants to create a list of all the uses of water they can think of. Then have them list all the songs they know that contain the word water in them. Finally, ask them to think of as many Scripture stories as possible which involve water. Reassure them that they don't need to know the chapter and verse, or even the book in the Bible from which the story comes.

Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session, using your own words or the words below:

This session explores the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. We will discover what we say Amen to as we celebrate Baptism—what the catechumens, the families of infants, and the church community say Amen to in this sacrament. We'll explore the deepening of the Amen in the Sacrament of Confirmation and experience how the sacraments of initiation call us to be disciples in the world. We will also learn what our baptismal call asks of us.

Conduct an icebreaker or community building activity if you wish.

1. Group Formation

Organize people into intergenerational small groups of approximately eight people for the All Ages Learning Experience. Ask all members of the same family to sit together in these intergenerational groups. Each group should have as many of the following categories as possible: family (parents,

children, teens), young adults, adults without children, and older adults. If members of the same family are intergenerational—children, teens, parents, and grandparents—keep them together in one group.

For the In Depth Learning Experience (Part 3) organize the participants into three types of table groups: family clusters of two or more families, groups of adolescents, and groups of adults. See the session plans for adolescents and adults for more instructions on organizing groups.

2. Opening Prayer Service

Preparation

Ask someone to be the presider for the prayer if you choose not to do it yourself.

Find volunteers to proclaim the different voices in the Creation Story (Genesis 1:1-19).

Ask one person to play the part of Noah and read the words written below.

Find a creative way to display the images of light, water, a white cloth, and chrism oil. The Paschal Candle is also ideal for this session, as is the baptismal font.

Gather

Presider: As we gather to reflect on the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, we begin by praying to the God who gives us our identity as individuals and as a community of faith. We bless ourselves in the name of the Father who created us, the Son who showed us how to live, and the Spirit who dwells within us. Amen.

God of life, we come to you today to celebrate your gifts of baptism and confirmation and to learn how to live more faithfully the promises we make in these sacraments. As we say Amen to being your children, we say Amen to choosing life in Christ over the death of sin. We ask your blessing on all of us so that we can be witnesses to your love, justice, and compassion to all the world. We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus, and in the name of His Spirit. Amen.

Listen

Proclaim (either by one person or a variety of voices, each taking one line) the following Scripture passage to the assembly.

Genesis 1:1-19

Respond

Presider: God separated the dry land from the water, which made life on earth possible. Each of us was immersed in water or had water poured over us when we were baptized. The story of creation reminds us that baptism draws us out of the death of sin and into the waters of new life in Christ. We say Amen to dying to sin and living in the light! As we say Amen to life, I invite you to proclaim your Amen to your baptismal call.

Assembly: We choose life in Christ.

Listen

Have one participant portray Noah in the Genesis story of the flood.

Presider: God created water as a source of life. Human beings cannot exist without water in their lives. But water also has the potential to destroy. You all know the story of Noah and the great flood. The great flood destroyed most of the life on earth, but God chose to protect Noah and his family from death so that they could continue to live faithfully and fully. They survived the flood and went on to cooperate with God's plan to renew life on earth.

Noah: I was a bit skeptical when God first told me to build an ark. I mean, really! An ark? What was God thinking? But I'd trusted him with my life as far back as I can remember, so I wasn't going to stop just because he asked me to build...an ark! The hardest part of the whole deal was getting my family on board—literally and figuratively! And the neighbors made a joke out of me. But I put my life in God's hands and started hammering. And when the flood came, washing everything and everyone away, my family stayed alive on the ark—along with all those animals. When the waters receded and we came off the ark, all we could do was thank God for the gift of life emerging from all that death.

Presider: We say Amen to the life-giving water which only God can give.

Assembly: We choose life in Christ.

Go Forth

Have one or more volunteers (depending on the number of participants) go through the assembly, sprinkling people with holy water. Invite all to make the sign of the cross as they are sprinkled.

Presider: And we close our prayer with the Glory Be.

Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience: Called by Name (15 to 20 minutes)

This all ages learning experience explores the Sacraments of Initiation through the lens of Catholic Identity. Families with children can work together on this activity.

Preparation

Have two people ready to play the roles of Abraham and Peter on Handout #1: God Calls Us by Name.

Materials

- 3 x 5 unlined index cards at each table, one per participant
- Colored markers at each table
- Handout #1: God Calls Us by Name

Introduction

Communicate the following in your own words or the words below.

When we are baptized, we receive a new identity, one intimately linking us with the Holy Trinity. We become children of the Father. We follow in the footsteps of Jesus, who was baptized by John in the Jordan River and heard the Father proclaim his identity: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). And we receive the Spirit of God in the same way the first Christians received the Spirit when they were baptized by Peter and the apostles. Peter proclaimed, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

Naming people has been a significant part of our faith tradition. Let’s listen to how two people in Scripture received new names to represent that they had been claimed by God.

Abraham: When God invited me into a special relationship with him, he said to me, “No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations...I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God” (Genesis 17:5, 7-8). Then God gave my wife, my old and barren wife, a new name. He called her Sarah! And he promised that this 90-year-old woman would have a son. And God told us to name this miracle son Isaac. So we were all called by name!

Peter: I was always known as Simon until the day Jesus asked us what name people were calling him. We told him the rumors—some thought Jesus was John the Baptist, others Elijah or Jeremiah or another prophet. When Jesus asked us who we said he was, I answered, “You are the messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). And then Jesus gave me a new name. He said, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church . . . I will give you the keys of the kingdom, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:17-19). You know, I *love* my new name. It gave me the courage to live up to the leadership Jesus entrusted to me.

Saint Paul also received a new name when God challenged him to change his identity. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul wrote, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:19-20).

For Abraham, Peter, and Paul, their name change came as they began a new chapter in life. Abraham leaves everything to follow God. Peter becomes a disciple of Jesus. Paul is transformed from persecuting Christians to becoming the great apostle to the Gentiles. Baptism always begins a new chapter in a person’s life, whether as a baby, or young person, or adult.

The Rite of Baptism for Children begins with the celebrant asking the parents, “What name do you give your child?” (37). Each one of us was given a new name at baptism. We received a Catholic

identity which will stay with us all our lives. As the words of the rite state, “I claim you for Christ” (41).

To celebrate our identity in Christ, we are going to create Catholic IDs. On your tables there are small blank cards, one for each of you.

1. Talk about your name with those at your table. If you know why you were given your name, share that with the people at your table. Parents with children can re-tell the story of how you chose your children’s names.
2. Take your ID card and personalize it. Write your baptismal name on it, then add words or symbols which characterize you as a child of God. Include a special gift which God gave you as well.
3. Share with those at your table your response to this sentence, “The most important thing about being Catholic for me is . . .
4. Save room for more to be added later in this session.
5. Share your IDs with your table groups.

Part 3. In Depth Learning Experience (90 to 100 minutes)

The learning experiences are the same for families with children, adolescents, and adults. The choice is whether to do the activities as a whole group or in age groups.

Learning Experience 1: Journey to New Life—Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (60 to 65 minutes)

Preparation

This learning experience will be greatly enhanced if you have members of your parish RCIA team and recent former catechumens assist in leading parts of the session. Specific places where they can contribute are noted below.

Prepare a couple of newly initiated members to share some memories and reflections from their experience of being baptized at the Easter Vigil. Ask them to prepare their stories to last three to five minutes, no longer.

Recruit a presider to conduct the ritual activities on baptism. You may want to take this role yourself.

Find a creative way to display images of light, water, a white cloth, and chrism oil. The Paschal Candle is also ideal for this session, as is the baptismal font.

Materials Needed

- Candle, water, white cloth, chrism oil, Paschal Candle
- Pictures of the RCIA process. Use PowerPoint or another means to show pictures of the entire Catechumenate journey, from Rite of Enrollment through Mystagogy. Perhaps you can collect some photos from recent catechumens. It is important to give participants some concrete visuals to go along with their learning.
- Handout #2 and Handout #3

Activity

This experience takes the participants through the RCIA journey and invites them to apply each step of the journey to their own lives of faith.

Share the following overview of the RCIA process in your own words or use the words below. Show the PowerPoint pictures of the RCIA process that you have gathered. Remind people that most of us have been baptized as babies, received First Eucharist as children, and were confirmed sometime in our youth. These are the same sacraments, just a different journey for adults. Participants will also find a similar summary on Handout #2.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) involves a series of ritual steps toward initiation into the Catholic Church. It is designed for adults who have experienced a conversion to Christ and seek to follow the way of Christian faith. These steps are briefly outlined here. The journey may take a year or more. In most parishes, the celebration of full initiation for adults occurs at the Easter Vigil.

Period of Evangelization and Pre-catechumenate

This is a time, of no fixed duration or structure, for inquiry and introduction to Gospel values, an opportunity for the beginnings of faith.

First Step: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on the same annual date or dates, marking the beginning of the catechumenate proper, as the candidates express and the Church accepts their intention to respond to God's call to follow the way of Christ.

Period of the Catechumenate

This is the time, in duration corresponding to the progress of the individual, for the nurturing and growth of the catechumens' faith and conversion to God; celebrations of the word and prayers of exorcism and blessing are meant to assist the process.

Second Step: Election or Enrollment of Names

This is the liturgical rite, usually celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent, in which the Church formally ratifies the catechumens' readiness for the sacraments of initiation and the catechumens, now the elect, express the will to receive these sacraments.

Period of Purification and Enlightenment

This the time immediately preceding the elects' initiation, usually the Lenten season preceding the celebration of this initiation at the Easter Vigil; it is a time of reflection, intensely centered on conversion, marked by celebration of the scrutinies and presentations and of the preparation rites of Holy Saturday.

Third Step: Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

This is the liturgical rite, usually integrated into the Easter Vigil, in which the elect are initiated through baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist.

Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy

This is the time, usually the Easter season, that follows the celebration of initiation. The newly-initiated experience being fully a part of the Christian community by means of pertinent catechesis and particularly by participation with all the faithful in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration. (The Rites of the Catholic Church, Volume 1, pp. 48-49)

Invite participants to use Handout #3: The RCIA Journey to guide them in walking through the RCIA process. Share the following:

The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens includes the candidates' acceptance of the Gospel, affirmation of the candidates by the sponsors and the assembly, and their being signed with the cross.

Listen to the words which the celebrant proclaims to the candidates:

"This is eternal life: to know the one true God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. Christ has been raised from the dead and appointed by God as the Lord of life, and ruler of all things, seen and unseen. If, then, you wish to become his disciples and members of his Church, you must be guided to the fullness of the truth that he has revealed to us. You must learn to make the mind

of Jesus Christ your own. You must strive to pattern your life on the teachings of the Gospel and so to love the Lord your God and your neighbor. For this was Christ's command and he was its perfect example. Is each of you ready to accept these teachings of the Gospel?"

The candidates reply, "I am" (*The Rites of the Catholic Church Volume One, Christian Initiation of Adults, 52-C*).

On your handout, jot some notes in response to the following question, then share with others at your table

What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus today?

The signing of the candidates with the cross includes the tracing of the cross on the foreheads of the candidates while the celebrant prays:

"N., receive the cross on your forehead. It is Christ himself who now strengthens you with this sign of his love. Learn to know him and follow him."

The whole assembly responds,

"Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!"

At your tables, beginning with the oldest person, sign the person to your right on the forehead, sharing the words of the celebrant. Each time someone is blessed, everyone at the table is invited to share the response.

Share the following:

The next stage of the RCIA journey is the catechumenate, the time in which the candidates learn more about the Catholic faith and move deeper into conversion. The catechumenate prepares adults to be initiated into the Catholic Church.

Have an RCIA team member and an adult convert describe how candidates learn about Catholicism and following the way of Christ.

Then share:

Discuss at your tables ways in which you can grow deeper in your understanding of your Catholic identity and turn ever closer to Christ. Write down one idea from the discussion—one to which you can commit.

After enough time, continue:

Our journey now moves to the Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names. It marks the end of the catechumenate and the beginning of the final, intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation. The Rite usually coincides with the beginning of Lent. The candidates come forward to have their names enrolled. Following that ceremony, the assembly prays for the candidates. Let us mark our journeys by praying for all those who are on the journey to baptism and confirmation:

My brothers and sisters . . . these elect, whom we bring with us to the Easter sacraments, will look to us for an example of Christian renewal. Let us pray to the Lord for them and for ourselves, that we may be renewed by one another's efforts and together come to share the joys of Easter.

That these elect may find joy in daily prayer, we pray:
Lord, hear our prayer.

That by praying to you often, they may grow ever closer to you, we pray:
Lord, hear our prayer.

That they may humbly acknowledge their faults and work wholeheartedly to correct them, we pray:
Lord, hear our prayer.

That they may dedicate their daily work as a pleasing offering to you, we pray:
Lord, hear our prayer.

That each day...they may do something in your honor, we pray:
Lord, hear our prayer.

That they may abstain with courage from everything that defiles the heart, we pray:
Lord, hear our prayer.

That they may grow to love and seek virtue and holiness of life, we pray:
Lord, hear our prayer.

That they may renounce self and put others first, we pray:
Lord, hear our prayer.

That you will protect and bless their families, we pray:
Lord, hear our prayer.

That they may share with others the joy they have found in their faith, we pray:
Lord, hear our prayer.

Invite participants to write their own personal prayer for those on the journey to Catholicism on the handout. Continue:

Following the Rite of Election comes the Period of Purification and Enlightenment, a time for the candidates to reflect and grow deeper in their conversion. During this period in Lent, they experience the three Scrutinies, in which they search their souls for sin and grace in their lives, repent, and resolve to love God above all. At the same time the community offers a host of prayer intentions for the elect as they focus all their attention on the Easter Vigil and their baptism.

During the purification period, catechumens receive the Creed and the Our Father from the Church. The Creed represents the basic beliefs of all Catholics, and the Our Father is the prayer which Jesus himself gave us.

One of the Gospel readings used in the second scrutiny is the story of the man born blind, John 9:1-12, in order to emphasize that all baptized Christians are called to see with new eyes.

Provide a dramatic presentation or reading of John 9:1-12.

Activity: Reflect on the following question, jot some ideas on your handout, and then discuss your responses with those in your group.

How do your eyes need to be opened? How do you need to change in order to live as a follower of Jesus?

Presider: Let us pray. "Father of mercy, you led the man born blind to the kingdom of light through the gift of faith in your Son. Free [us all] from the false values that surround and blind [us]. Set [us] firmly in your truth, children of the light forever" (Christian Initiation of Adults #168).

Assembly: Amen.

The Easter Vigil is the crux of the entire session. Here, you want to give participants an experiential introduction to the key symbols of baptism: water, oil, garment, and light. This learning experience concludes with a renewal of baptismal vows.

Lead participants through the following ritual activities.

Presider: Our life-giving God rescued us from the death of sin and gave us new life in baptism. Let us pray to almighty God for our brothers and sisters who are preparing for baptism. May God grant them, and us, light and strength to follow Christ with resolute hearts and to profess the faith of the Church. May God give them, and us, the new life of the Holy Spirit.

Assembly: We choose life in Christ.

Let us raise our voices in gratitude for the symbols of baptism which we celebrate today.

Reader: Let us pray in gratitude for the gift of water.

A large bowl of water is raised high, or the presider cups handfuls of water from the baptismal font in his/her hands and lets the water fall back into the font.

Reader: Water, death-dealing and life-giving, reminds us that the waters of our baptism cleanse us of sin and call us to live in the light.

"Father, look now with love upon your Church and unseal for it the fountain of baptism. By the power of the Holy Spirit give to this water the grace of your Son, so that in the sacrament of baptism all those whom you have created in your likeness may be cleansed from sin and rise to new birth of innocence by water and the Holy Spirit" (Rite of Baptism #222).

Assembly: We choose life in Christ.

Reader: Let us pray in gratitude for the Oil of Chrism with which we are anointed at our baptisms and our confirmations.

A carafe of oil is raised for all to see.

Reader: The word chrism has the same root as the word Christ, “anointed one.” It reminds us that we who are anointed have been chosen to do God’s work on earth.

Through the chrism of salvation we are united with God’s people and we remain forever a member of Christ who is Priest, Prophet, and King.

Assembly: We choose life in Christ.

Reader: At our baptisms, we are clothed in a white garment to remind us that we have changed, have become clothed in the light, the purity, the freedom from sin which Christ Jesus gives us.

A white cloth is held high.

Reader: We are no longer strangers, but children of God who are called to walk in the light of Christ.

Through baptism we become a new creation and we clothe ourselves in Christ. We are invited to receive the baptismal garment and bring it to the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may have everlasting life.

Assembly: We choose life in Christ.

Reader: Let us pray in gratitude for the gift of fire and light.

A fire bowl is lit and held high.

Reader: The lighting of the new fire at the Easter Vigil, the carving of the Easter Candle, the proclamation of Christ’s conquering of death, the bearing of the candle through the assembly, and the spreading of the light from one person to another—all these actions remind us that we receive the light of Christ and are called to be his light to others.

We have been enlightened by Christ. We must always walk as children of the light and keep the flame of faith alive in our hearts.

Assembly: We choose life in Christ.

Invite the newly-initiated members to share their stories and memories of being baptized at the Easter Vigil. Continue:

Just as our speakers shared their stories of baptism and moving into a new life with Christ, I now invite you to share with one or two others one way in which you can renew your own life in Christ.

Allow several minutes for groups to share, then move back into prayer.

Presider: Let us stand in solidarity with those who enter our faith community by renewing our own baptismal promises.

Do you reject sin so as to live in the freedom of God's children?

I do.

Do you reject the glamour of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin?

I do.

Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness?

I do.

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

I do.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

I do.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting?

I do.

As we immerse ourselves in the words and symbols of Baptism and Confirmation, may we be cleansed from our sins and rise to new birth in Christ.

Assembly: We choose life in Christ.

Presider: May God bless us with life. And may we live our lives to the fullest.

Assembly: Amen.

Continue:

Following their reception into the Church, the neophytes fully participate in the Eucharistic liturgy. They enter a Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy in which they continue to learn more about their faith. This is a time in which the community and the neophytes grow in deepening our grasp of the paschal mystery through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and doing works of charity.

Ask one or two newly initiated adults to talk about their continuing journey in faith.

Invite participants to write on their handout one thing they can do to refresh their own journey in faith. Have them share with others at their table.

Learning Experience 2: Confirmation—Sharing Our Gifts with the Community (30 to 35 minutes)

Preparation

Invite two parishioners, one who celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation recently and one who celebrated the sacrament many years ago, to share the most powerful memories they have of the sacrament and what it meant for their lives.

Invite four persons to proclaim the four Gospel passages printed below.

Have a small dish of scented oil on each table, along with napkins for participants to wipe their hands after they touch the oil.

Materials Needed

- Handouts #4, #5, and #6
- Small dish of scented oil on each table
- Seven small, wrapped packages or “gifts” with a slip of paper inside each wrapped box with one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit written on it. The seven papers should include the following:

WISDOM – the ability to personally discern God’s will for my life

UNDERSTANDING – knowing that which God has revealed

KNOWLEDGE – knowing and believing in things as they really are

FORTITUDE – special strength and courage needed to face human troubles, questions, and struggles

COUNSEL – right judgment, deciding what to do and what to choose in problem situations

PIETY – reverently approaching God as our loving and good Parent and Creator

FEAR OF THE LORD – awareness that God is transcendent, all good, and loving, thus deserving of our complete reverence, awe, and adoration

(*The New Concise Catholic Dictionary* by Reynolds R. Ekstrom)

Activity

Share the following in your own words or use the words below.

Confirmation is the second of the three sacraments of initiation. It completes the work begun in baptism. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* quotes Vatican II in stating that “by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed” (1285).

We sometimes talk about Confirmation as if we receive the Spirit for the first time in this sacrament. But we are baptized in the name of the Father and the Son *and* the Holy Spirit. In Confirmation, we receive special grace and strength from the Spirit which give us the courage to be disciples of Christ to the world.

Before his death, Jesus promised his apostles that he would send the Spirit to them when he said, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you in all the truth . . .” (John 16:13). Jesus shared the Spirit with his apostles after the resurrection as he had promised: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:22-23). At Pentecost, the fullness of the Spirit was given to the apostles—and is given to us when we experience this special sacrament.

Invite the two designated parishioners to share their stories of confirmation.

Then continue:

We receive special strength from the Holy Spirit at Confirmation. The Spirit is present in our lives. It is important that we understand who the Spirit is. We know that the Spirit is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. The Spirit is portrayed in Scripture through images like fire, wind, and breath. Take Handout #4: Inviting the Spirit In to reflect on the meaning of the Scriptural images of the Spirit for your own life.

Proclaim these four passages for all to hear.

Passage #1

“He said, ‘Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.’ Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then a voice came to him . . .” (1 Kings 19:11-13).

Passage #2

“The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:2).

Passage #3

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil” (Luke 4:1).

Passage #4

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability” (Acts 2:1-4).

Ask participants to reflect on and discuss this question: What do these passages tell us about the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers?

Instruct participants to choose a symbol of the Spirit which speaks to them and draw it on their Catholic ID card.

After sufficient time, instruct participants to take Handout #5: Anointed in the Spirit. Share the following in your own words or use the words below.

The central symbolic act in Confirmation is the anointing with chrism. The presider, usually the bishop, makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the candidate and prays, “N., be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

The use of oil has been part of our Judeo-Christian heritage for thousands of years. In the First Book of Samuel, we hear the Lord say to Samuel, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.” Then Scripture says that Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David “in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward” (1 Samuel 16:12-13).

Psalm 23 proclaims, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows” (Psalm 23:5).

Instruct each table group to take the dish of oil, pass it around, and have each person touch it, massage it into the skin, and smell it.

Ask groups to discuss how each of the uses of oil named on the handout (and below) contributes to the richness of the symbol in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

Oil is cleansing and used for bathing.

Oil is used to soothe sore muscles or limber up stiff joints.

Oil heals wounds and takes away the pain of bad burns.

Oil makes people more radiant, more beautiful, more pleasing.

Finally, tell them to focus on the quote from the Rite of Confirmation to identify why the Church uses anointing with oil to mark the occasion of Confirmation, the moment when candidates are sealed with the Holy Spirit.

“The whole rite presents a twofold symbolism. The laying of hands on the candidates by the bishop and the concelebrating priests represents the biblical gesture by which the gift of the Holy Spirit is invoked and in a manner well suited to the understanding of the Christian people. The anointing with chrism and the accompanying words express clearly the effect of the giving of the Holy Spirit. Signed with the perfumed oil, the baptized receive the indelible character, the seal of the Lord, together with the gift of the Spirit that conforms them more closely to Christ and gives them the grace of spreading ‘the sweet odor of Christ’ (*The Rites of the Catholic Church Volume One, Confirmation, 9*).

Instruct participants to take the seven wrapped boxes on their tables. Invite each individual to take one box, unwrap it, and share the message inside.

Ask participants to discuss how this particular gift can be lived out in life—as individuals, as families, at work or school, in the parish, and in the world. Invite them to take Handout #6: Gifted by the Spirit with them as they depart to remember the gifts which they are given in the Sacraments of Initiation.

Instruct participants to mark their Catholic IDs with one of the Spirit’s gifts which they want to develop more in their lives and then share with the community.

Part 4. Sharing Learning Reflections (20-25 minutes)

Preparation

Make copies of Handout #7.

Whole Group Sharing and Reflection

The whole group sharing experience provides an opportunity for each age group to share something they have learned with the entire group.

Ask participants to gather in intergenerational groups and to share what they have learned and what they are saying Amen to in baptism and confirmation. Invite them to share their responses to the following questions (also found on Handout #7):

- Did you learn something new about baptism? What thought, phrase, or image are you carrying home with you?
- What did you learn about the RCIA journey? How can you accompany the catechumens in our parish as they journey toward becoming members of our faith community?
- What will you take with you regarding Confirmation and the role of the Spirit in your life?
- Which image or symbol from the Sacraments of Initiation has special meaning for your life? Why?
- What does your Catholic Identity represent in your life?

Part 5. Closing Prayer Service (10 minutes)

Gather

We have come together to celebrate the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation in our lives. As we go forward, may we take courage from the presence of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in our daily lives.

Listen

Matthew 28:16-20

Response

Jesus invites us to make disciples of all nations. We are called to be evangelizing communities for those who need the Good News of Jesus in their lives. We are called to set an example of discipleship for the new members of our faith community.

We will end our time together by making a commitment, by saying AMEN, to what the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation call the host community to whenever someone is baptized or confirmed in our parish. Please stand and make your personal commitment as a member of (NAME OF PARISH) Faith Community.

Our response will be a resounding **Amen!**

The Church challenges us to pray for one another. Whenever a baby is baptized in our parish, we commit to praying for that baby, for the parents and godparents, and the extended family, so that they can surround the child with the love of Christ and a faithful experience of Catholic Identity.

Amen.

Faith is a precondition for sacramental participation. When babies are baptized, it is the faith of the parents and family *and the Church at large* which is brought to the sacramental moment. We commit to growing deeper in our faith and always seeking conversion on our faith journey.

Amen.

We live in a world which Pope Benedict XVI described as corrupted by relativism and secularism. As members of this faith community, we commit to being models of Christian discipleship for the newly baptized, and we promise to set a better example of faithful living than the world at large.

Amen.

The Rites of the Catholic Church states that “Before and after the celebration of the sacrament [of Baptism], the child has a right to the love and help of the community” (Baptism for Children, #4). We commit to loving and helping each person baptized in our parish.

Amen.

The Christian Initiation of Adults first invites candidates to be evangelized. We commit to sharing the Good News of Jesus without embarrassment or hesitation with those who need good news in their lives.

Amen.

RCIA is a journey which cannot be taken alone. We promise to pray for the catechumens at each stage of their pilgrimage, and to spiritually journey with them toward the Easter Vigil.

Amen.

We promise to be a loving community which celebrates our new members with joy and gratitude, continuing to support them as they move into the mystical stage of their faith journeys.

Amen.

Confirmation invites candidates to “share more completely in the mission of Jesus Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit.” We pledge to share in the mission of Jesus along with the newly confirmed.

Amen.

Jesus loved us enough to share his love and his mission with us. We pledge to bring more love, more hope, more faith into the world, and to bring the Kingdom of God to fruition here on earth.

Amen.

Go Forth

Let’s offer each other a sign of peace.