

Junior High

Candidate Lessons



GIFTED WITH THE SPIRIT CONFIRMATION



Pflaum ...
SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Called by the Holy Spirit Jesus calls you to be his disciple. Confirmation calls you to a deeper commitment to discipleship and participation in the Church.

The
Way

We Pray

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be recreated, and you will renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever enjoy his consolations, through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Activity 1

With a partner, talk about what it means to you to be a follower of Jesus. Take turns naming at least three responsibilities of discipleship.

1

2

3

Discipleship



The
Truth

Catholic Tradition

The Sacraments of Christian Initiation

When Jesus began his public ministry, he called his first disciples on the Sea of Galilee. He said, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). Jesus makes the same call to us today. He invites us to be his disciples and, through that discipleship, to bring others to live in the Kingdom of God.

We live our call to discipleship through our membership in the Church.

In some ways, belonging to the Church is similar to belonging to other groups or organizations. But, in important ways, belonging to the Church is very different because the Church is much more than any other human group or community. We can see this in one of the names the Church is given—the People of God.

We become members of the Church in the Sacrament of Baptism. But Baptism is only a beginning. Our faith must grow after Baptism.

The Catholic Church celebrates three Sacraments of Christian Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. Baptism is birth into new life in Christ. Confirmation strengthens that life, and the Eucharist nourishes Catholics with Christ’s Body and Blood so they can be transformed in Christ.

The Sacraments of Christian Initiation in the Early Church



“Confirmation...must be understood in continuity with Baptism, to which it is inseparably linked. These two Sacraments, together with the Eucharist, form a single saving event—called ‘Christian initiation’—in which we...become new creatures and members of the Church.” —Pope Francis

In the early years of the Church, these three separate **sacraments**—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—were all celebrated together to initiate the catechumens into full membership in the Church. Often, this process could take years. People who wanted to join the Church were called *catechumens*. Members of the Church served as sponsors for the catechumens, helping them to learn about the life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus.

The catechumens learned how Jesus continues to be present in the community of his followers—the Church. They learned how members of the Church receive and share the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and

they participated in serving the Church’s needs. At various stages in this process of initiation, the catechumens were interviewed to see whether they were making progress in learning and living the Christian way of life.

Finally, after sundown on Holy Saturday, they were baptized at the Easter Vigil. As a symbol of their dying with Christ in Baptism, they walked down into a pool and were immersed in the water. As a sign of the new life in the Risen Christ that they received in Baptism, they were dressed in new white garments when they walked out of the pool. As a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives and as a symbol of their mission to bring God’s love and life to others, they were anointed with oil. They continued their initiation by participating in the Lord’s Supper for the first time. In sharing the Body and Blood of Christ, they celebrated their unity with the whole Church.

In the Eastern Catholic Churches, Confirmation is still administered right after Baptism, and both are followed by participation in Holy Communion. This shows the unity of the three sacraments.

What is a sacrament?

A **sacrament** is an outward sign of inward grace, given to the Church by Christ. Sacraments are celebrated in special ceremonies that give us a unique opportunity to dwell in the presence of God.

Celebrating the Sacraments Today

Slowly, over many years, Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist became separate celebrations. Today, most Catholics are baptized as infants. They may receive First Eucharist and celebrate Confirmation when they have reached the age of reason. But the *catechumenate*, the process of initiation for adults who wish to become members of the Church, has been restored. This renewed celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation is known as the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*.

In Confirmation, the grace you received in Baptism is strengthened in you. Here are the stages of preparing for Confirmation:

Inquiry: As you begin preparing, you’ll want to ask questions about what it means to be a member of the Church. You’ll want to hear the stories of adult members of the Church, and you’ll want to know that other members of the Church are supporting you.

Catechumenate: You’ll still be asking your own questions, but you’ll also be receiving formal



instruction to prepare you to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. The goal will be to help you recognize the presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in your life, in the Church, and in the world.

Enlightenment: Prayer (both private and communal), reflection, and other experiences of community will be important during this stage. You may be asked to

participate in a retreat, and you will certainly be asked to use your gifts in service to the community.

Initiation: This is the actual celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation with the community. For those involved in RCIA, this celebration will take place at the Easter Vigil. For the candidates in your group, the celebration will occur when you receive Confirmation.

Mystagogy: This term, from the Greek word *mystagogia* (“interpretation of mystery”), implies continued learning. With the grace of Baptism and Confirmation, you will be ready to continue your lifelong journey in faith. You will grow ever more aware of the presence and power of Jesus in your life; you will become ever more completely a part of the life of the Church. With all the baptized, you have been called to strive for holiness and become saints.

God’s Gift of Grace

Because he loves us, God wants us to be with him, but sin stood in the way. So God sent his Son, Jesus, to save us from our sins. By freely accepting suffering and death on the Cross and then rising from the dead, Jesus redeemed us from our sins and made new and eternal life available to us. Through Jesus, we receive grace.

Through **grace**, the free and undeserved gift of God, we become his adopted children. We are strengthened to do as he commands and to live as Jesus’ followers.

What is grace?

Grace is a gift from God that makes us holy and allows us to respond to his call to become his adopted children.

The gift of grace that we receive in Baptism, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is known as **sanctifying grace**. It is a habitual gift that perfects a person’s soul to enable it to live with God.

Actual grace is not habitual, but shows us how God is involved in our everyday lives that helps us to do good.

Sacramental grace is the grace received when we celebrate the seven sacraments of the Church.

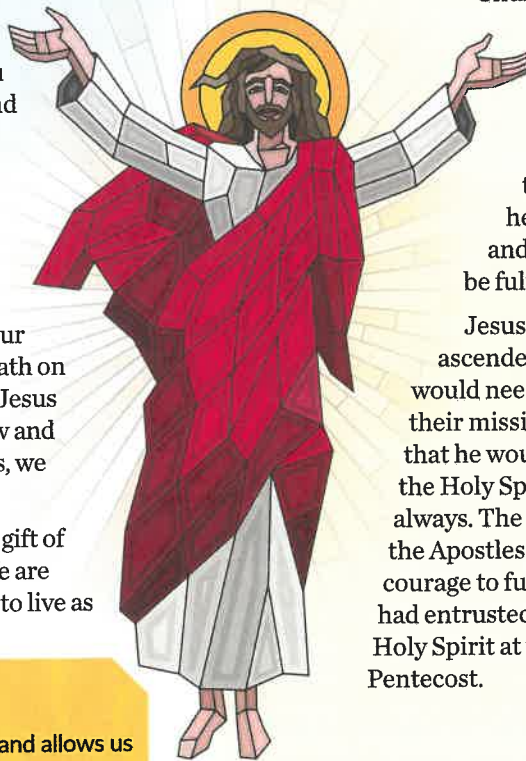
Jesus Gives Us the Church

Jesus’ Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension is called the *Paschal or Easter Mystery*. The Paschal Mystery is at the heart of the Good News that Jesus brought to the world. Before Jesus returned to his Father following his Death and Resurrection, he gave his Apostles the responsibility to spread the Good News of salvation to all people. He told them, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21). The Apostles became the foundation of the Church, whose mission is to spread the Good News through all generations, to all corners of the earth.

Jesus established the Church as the way for everyone to be saved from sin and death. The

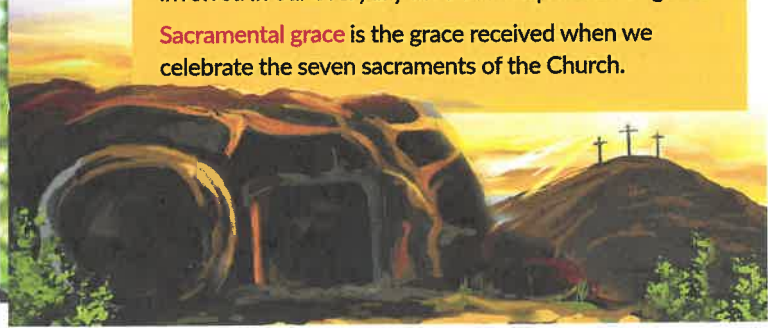
Church is the beginning of the Kingdom of God that we hear about in the Gospels. It is the Church’s work to continue Jesus’ mission to the end of time, when he will come again in glory and the Kingdom of God will be fulfilled.

Jesus knew that after he ascended to Heaven, the Apostles would need help in accomplishing their mission. He promised them that he would send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to be with them always. The Holy Spirit strengthened the Apostles and gave them the courage to fulfill the mission Christ had entrusted to them. We see the Holy Spirit at work in the Apostles at Pentecost.



“When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.”

—Acts of the Apostles 2:1–4



In My Own Words...

What challenges or discouragement have you experienced? Reflect on one of these experiences. Write about ways that faith in God may have helped you during this time.

When the Holy Spirit came to the Apostles, they became courageous witnesses to Jesus' Resurrection.

To keep the Apostles and the members of the growing Church connected to the Paschal Mystery, Jesus established the sacraments as "efficacious signs of grace" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1131). This means that the sacraments actually bring us grace when we celebrate them as our Lord intended.

The central sacrament is the Eucharist, which Jesus instituted at the Last Supper. In the Eucharist, the Church joins in and celebrates the Paschal Sacrifice

of Christ, and we are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ.

Christ has entrusted all the sacraments to the Church. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the sacraments make Christ's action present to us and show us God's love.

We have constant access to God's life and grace through the action of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the Church and the sacraments. The grace of the sacraments can transform us. Grace makes us adopted children of God. Grace makes us able to respond to God's gift to us—to live as God intends on earth and to be with him forever in Heaven.

Jesus Christ now lives and acts through the Church and the sacraments. Through the Holy Spirit and its action in the sacraments, Jesus Christ has established the members of the Church as his own Body. As members of the Church, the Body of Christ, we are called to contribute to building up the Church, to bringing about the Kingdom of God—a Kingdom of justice, peace, and love.

Jesus also calls the Church to spread the Good News of salvation to all the nations. All members of the Church strive to support that missionary effort. Through the Church and the sacraments, we receive the grace we need to work toward this goal. The Holy Spirit continually builds and strengthens the Church as we move toward the fullness of the Kingdom that will come at the end of time, when God has conquered all evil and when Christ will come in glory.



Activity 2

Read paragraphs 787–789 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. As a group, write a summary statement of what the paragraphs teach about the Church. Then design a logo that supports this message.



Catholic Literacy: The Marks of the Church

"I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church."

This statement from the Nicene Creed names the *marks*, or attributes, of the Church.

- The Church is *one* because of her source and founder, the one God, and because of the Church's own unity.
- The Church is *holy* because Christ sanctifies the Church.
- The word *catholic* means "universal." The Church is *catholic* because Christ is present in her. Wherever Christ is, the Church is there. The Church is also catholic because Christ has sent the Church on a mission to the whole human race.
- The Church is called *apostolic* because she was founded on the Apostles. The authority of the Apostles continues today and into the future through all the bishops, especially the Pope, who is the successor of Peter.



GROWING TOGETHER in Our Catholic Faith

Work as a group to answer these questions and learn about the Church. If you need help, refer to the paragraphs of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that are listed. Appoint someone to record your answers and be prepared to share them with the larger group.



WHO

Who is called to join the Church? (CCC, 781)

Who does Christ send to lead his Church? (CCC, 935-939)

WHAT

What are members of the Church asked to do? (CCC, 2041-2043)

What does the Church want to accomplish? (CCC, 737, 824)

WHERE

Where is the Church present in the world today?
(CCC, 832-833)



WHEN

When was the Church founded? (CCC, 759, 763-766)

HOW

How is the mission and authority of the Apostles passed along? (CCC, 1591-1596)

Spread the Word

Write the Church's purpose in the form of an easy-to-remember slogan.

Design a logo that will represent the purpose and work of the Church.

I Respond to God's Word

Being a follower of Jesus and a member of his Church means learning to live as Jesus did. In the Gospels, Jesus explains how to do this.

Read Matthew 25:31-40.

Discuss these and any questions of your own with your group and your catechist:

Who do you think the king is?

Who is the king's father?

What does it mean to "inherit the kingdom"?

Who does Jesus say will be blessed? Why?

Who do you think "these least brothers" refers to?

Reread verse 40. What are some ways you can show love for Jesus by caring for those in need? Choose one action you will do this week.



*"Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."
—Matthew 25:40*

Called to Be Priest, Prophet, and King

At your Baptism, you were marked with oil. This is a sign that you are consecrated to God and anointed by the Holy Spirit. The anointing also signifies that you are joined to Christ and share in his threefold mission as priest, prophet, and king.

A *prophet* is a messenger sent by God, a person who speaks for God. He or she calls people to conversion, to turn their hearts to God. Prophets often are rejected for their message.



You are called to be a prophet.

To whom can you bring God's message?

What message would you bring to this person or group?

We Pray

Leader: God, our loving Father, as we prepare for full initiation into the Church, we pray for your help.

Reader 1: Read *Ephesians 3:14-19*.

Reader 2: That we may feel and return your great love for us, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 3: That we may know and receive your Holy Spirit, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader 4: That we may have strength to follow Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Let us reflect now on our other needs and bring them before God. *Invite the young people to share brief, appropriate personal intentions. After each intention, the leader says, "We pray to the Lord," and all respond, "Lord, hear our prayer."*

Reader 5: Read *Ephesians 3:20-21*.