

UNIT 1

Confirmation Preparation

CATECHIST SESSION PLAN

The Holy Spirit

Just as Jesus called his first disciples, he calls us to follow him.

Nihil Obstat

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HOW CANDIDATES UNDERSTAND THE LESSON

Middle school is a time of rapid growth—physically, intellectually, and emotionally. This growth prompts self-reflection and self-consciousness. It's important for candidates this age to realize that, while we are all different, each one of us is wonderfully made, and we are all called by God to be a part of his work.

Discerning Our Call We often ask young people at this level what they would like to be, but we rarely ask where they feel God might be calling them. It's important for us to realize that we can only be truly happy when we discern his call and pursue it.

Choices They Make Help the Confirmation candidates appreciate that God knows each of them by name and wants to share his plan with them. Encourage them to consider how the choices they make move them closer to, or farther away from, what God has planned. This sometimes calls for difficult and drastic choices, such as when the first disciples left their lives behind and followed Jesus. At other times, it is choosing between something good . . . and something better.

The Holy Spirit

Reflection for Catechists

As Catholics, we believe in one God in Three Divine Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Of the three, people may feel they know the least about the Third Divine Person. This is ironic, since it is the Holy Spirit who is perhaps closest to us. Saint Paul tells us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (see I Corinthians 6:19). It is this Person of God who dwells inside us, guiding us to do God's will and interceding for us to the Father (see Romans 8:26–27).

The Holy Spirit helps us hear and follow God's call in our lives. God calls each of us by name (see Isaiah 43:1), just as Jesus called each of his Apostles. Listening to and following God's call is a lifelong process. It sometimes means going against what others expect of us, or even what we had planned for ourselves. It is within our God-given nature to seek happiness, but we often seek it in the wrong places. The only way to achieve true happiness is to be the people we were meant to be—to do that for which we were created.

We learn and understand God's plan for our lives as we grow in our friendship with him. This usually begins in an initial encounter with God, a moment of conversion in which we recognize our need for him and decide to give our lives to him. It continues as we listen to his voice, through Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the counsel of trusted friends and family, and the events and opportunities of our lives.

- When did you first “encounter” God in a meaningful way?
- How do you continue to listen for God's voice, so you can discern his call in your life?

Scripture Background

This unit opens with a passage from Psalm 139. Here, the psalmist praises the Creator for his life and because God knows his “very self.” God is with us at all times, guiding us according to his plan.

The primary Scripture passage used for this unit is Jesus' calling of the disciples. In this passage, we can readily see that Jesus chose ordinary people. It is striking that he does not seek out disciples among the religious leaders of the day, for example, the scholars and teachers of the Law. Instead, he chooses fishermen, tradesmen, and even the tax collector. This drives home the point that God can use anyone. He calls whomever he will, and gives them what they need in order to fulfill the call.

Also featured is the connection between Isaiah 11 and Matthew 3—the promise that the Spirit of God would rest upon one of Jesse's descendants and the promise fulfilled at the baptism of the Lord, when the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus.

Objectives

- Reflect on God’s presence in our lives as expressed in the words of Psalm 139
- To introduce the key themes of the unit and to reflect on God’s presence in the candidates’ lives



Let Us Pray

Invite the youth to gather in the prayer space. Begin by praying the Sign of the Cross. Have a volunteer read the leader’s part, then prompt the group to join in praying aloud the part marked “All.” Afterward, direct the candidates to take their seats.

Lead into the session with the following or similar words:

“Jesus called his first disciples after their return from a day of work as fishermen. He calls each of us, too, as we go about our daily lives, and he is always with us. Let’s listen to what the psalmist says about God’s relationship with us.”



Scripture

Guide the candidates through a reflection on the verses of Psalm 139.

- You might wish to play instrumental music during the reflection.

Invite the young people to be still, close their eyes, and quiet themselves. Encourage them to open their minds and hearts to what God is saying to them. Also let them know there will be time to silently reflect on the reading, then you’ll have a couple of discussion questions for them.

- Proclaim the Scripture as the candidates listen. Allow for several minutes of silent reflection.
- *Ask:* What did you hear God say to you today?
- Call on volunteers to respond.
- *Ask:* What does this psalm say to you about God’s presence in your life?
- Call on volunteers to respond.

Have you ever thought...

Share that God, as our loving Father, is always present in our lives. He never abandons us. He is patient and understanding even when we do not welcome or respond to his love.

- Read aloud both questions in this section and call on volunteers to respond.

Getting Started

Use page 8 to introduce the key themes of this unit.

- Invite a volunteer to read aloud the Getting Started paragraphs.
- *Ask:* What are some ways you can listen to Jesus speak to you?
- Invite several volunteers to respond. Possible responses include: through prayer, at Mass, in Sacred Scripture.

As we study the call of the Apostles, young adolescents will want to discuss the many “calls” they hear in their daily lives. These include the call of peers and the need to be accepted by them, the call of academic pressures and the desire to succeed, and the call of social networking and the desire to “see and be seen.”

Help the candidates recognize that because of the many demands on their time and attention, they may not be tuned in to Jesus’ call to them or his presence in their lives. Help the young people learn to be aware of Jesus’ presence and voice by sharing the following points:

- Sometimes we need to be intentional in making room for Jesus in our lives. We need to make time to pray and even to just be still and be in God’s presence.
- Jesus is always near, but he often speaks to us in a whisper and not in a loud or insistent way. We have to cut through the noise of daily living to hear him.

ACTIVITY

God’s Presence in My Life

Read aloud the first paragraph from this activity on page 8.

- Have the candidates work on their own to complete the activity.
- Consider beginning by sharing with the group your own responses.
- Call on volunteers to share their responses to the first two items.

Symbol of Our Faith

Call on a volunteer to read aloud the text on page 9 about the bishop's crosier.

- Ask if the candidates have ever seen their bishop or another bishop—perhaps at a friend's or relative's Confirmation—carrying a crosier.
- Emphasize that the crosier symbolizes the bishop's role as shepherd of his flock—that is, of all the members of the Church in his diocese.

Encounter with Christ

Invite a volunteer to read aloud "Encounter with Christ."

- Ask: Who in your life can help you come to know God's plan for you?
- Call on volunteers to respond.

Optional Activity

Distribute writing paper and tell the candidates that they will be writing a poem reflecting on their hopes and dreams.

- Provide the following guidelines: The poem or letter must be at least eight lines long. It must include at least two lines addressed to God. It must conclude with a commitment related to hopes or dreams in general or to a specific hope or dream.
- Call on volunteers to share their poems with the group.

Objectives

- Develop an understanding of Jesus' call of the first Apostles
- Reflect on this event from the perspective of the Apostles who were called by Jesus

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

Have the candidates silently read the two introductory paragraphs on page 10.

- Invite a volunteer to read aloud the Scripture from Luke Chapter 5:4–11.
- Lead a discussion of the Scripture, using the following questions:
- What did Jesus tell Simon, James, and John would change in their lives? (He said they would be fishers of men.)
- What did Jesus mean by this? (That their work would be to help others know about God)

ACTIVITY

Imagine

Invite the candidates to write their responses to the Imagine questions.

- Call on volunteers to share their responses.

Optional Activity

Extend the Imagine activity by having the young people imagine that Jesus is here today to choose disciples.

- Have the youth work in four groups to identify occupations or trades in our contemporary culture from which they would not expect Jesus to choose disciples.
- Where would the initial call take place for each occupation?
- What would concerns be for the people called?

Jesus' Call and the Holy Spirit

Read aloud the first paragraph on page 11. You may wish to have the candidates read John 14:16–17 in their Bibles, or to read the passage aloud to the class.

- Explain that *Advocate* is one of the titles for the Holy Spirit.

Our Trinitarian Faith

Have a volunteer read aloud the text.

- Discuss why, for some people, the Holy Spirit might be the least well-known Person of the Trinity.
- *Ask:* How can knowing more about the Holy Spirit help you grow in faith?
- Invite volunteers to respond.

Celebrating the Sacrament

Read aloud the text.

- *Ask:* How does the calling of the candidates by name during the Order of Confirmation evoke Jesus' calling of the first disciples?
- Call on volunteers to respond.

ACTIVITY

Expand the discussion about why the Holy Spirit may be the least known Person of the Trinity.

- Organize the class into either three or six groups, depending on the size of the class.
- Assign one Person of the Trinity to each group or to a pair of groups.
- Direct each group to choose someone to take notes. Then have the group members work to identify as many facts as possible about the Person of the Holy Trinity assigned to their group. Explain that information they name can include titles, characteristics, Church teaching, and events from Scripture.
- Allow sufficient time for the candidates to complete their lists. Then invite the groups to share with the class—in the order of the Persons of the Trinity—the facts they named. (Be sure to correct any wrong or inaccurate information.)
- Call on volunteers to name facts about the Persons of the Trinity that they did not previously know. Especially encourage the class to identify new facts about the Holy Spirit.

Objectives

- Explore how the Holy Spirit was at work in the lives of holy people
- Explore the words of the prophets inspired by the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit in the History of God's People

Summarize the first two paragraphs on page 12 for the class.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the Scripture passage from Isaiah 11:1–3a.

- Point out that this passage names Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which they will learn about in a later unit.
- *Ask:* About whom is this passage speaking? (The passage is speaking about Jesus)

Have the class read the remaining text to themselves.

- *Ask:* What are some times in Scripture when we see the Holy Spirit working in Mary's life? (The Holy Spirit prepared Mary for her role as the Mother of God; Mary conceived Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary was present with the Apostles at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon them.)

Go to the Source

Organize the candidates in pairs or small groups.

- Distribute Bibles (one per pair or small group).
- Have the candidates read Matthew 3:13–17, about the baptism of Jesus. Then have the pairs or groups discuss how the passage is connected to the passage from Isaiah.
- Allow time for discussion, then invite a spokesperson from each group to share a key insight about the passage with the class.

Optional Activity

Consider this group activity to increase the candidates' understanding of the major Old Testament prophets. This activity will help strengthen the young people's familiarity with the books of the Bible.

- First organize the class into six groups. Then distribute Bibles, one per candidate.
- Assign each group one of the following prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos, Micah.
- Direct the groups to use their Bibles to learn about their assigned prophet and to work together to identify at least three important facts about him. Explain that they can use the introduction to their assigned book of the Bible for some important information, such as the period when the prophet wrote, key themes of his writing, and important events the prophet addressed.
- Call on a spokesperson from each group to share their findings with the class.

Symbols of the Holy Spirit

Read aloud the introductory sentence at the top of the chart on page 13.

- Call on volunteers to take turns reading about the symbols of the Holy Spirit. For each symbol, invite volunteers to share examples from Scripture, Tradition, or the liturgy and Sacraments of when we encounter that particular symbol. (Examples include: At Baptism, we are baptized with water; at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire; we are anointed with the seal of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.)

The Spirit Helps Us Hear God's Call

Invite volunteers to read aloud the paragraphs.

- Read aloud the reflection question: "How is Jesus calling you today?" Allow time for silent reflection.
- *Ask:* What are some ways you can hear Jesus' call in your life each day?
- Call on volunteers to share their responses.

Objectives

- To reflect on how Jesus calls each of us today
- To consider what discipleship means and how to grow as disciples
- Consider ways to live out what has been learned
- Explore the faith life of Saint Clare of Assisi

From Head to Heart

ACTIVITY

Read aloud the reflection questions. Invite the candidates to write their responses.

- Call on volunteers to share what they have written.

If time allows, direct the candidates to complete the drawing activity about the Holy Spirit.

Optional Activity

Expand the “Head to Heart” activity on page 14 using the Reflection below.

- Read aloud the introduction below that begins with “Jesus calls,” then ask volunteers to read to the class some or all of the Scripture passages. For each passage, ask the following or similar questions:
- What are some times in your life when you can follow Jesus’ example?
- What can make it challenging to follow Jesus’ example?
- What was a time when you followed Jesus’ example as presented in this passage? How did that strengthen you as a disciple?

Reflection

Tell the class: Jesus calls us each day to live as his disciples. He teaches us how to live through his own example, handed down to us in the Gospels. Here are some passages that show the way to live, as taught and lived by Jesus himself.

Have candidates work independently or in groups and read the following passages. Then have them summarize what is said in each passage.

- Taking time to pray: Mark 6:45–46
- Obedience to God’s will: Luke 22:41–42
- Caring for those in need: Matthew 9:27–31
- Forgiving enemies: Luke 23:33–34
- Resisting temptation: Matthew 4:1–11
- Speaking out against wrongdoing: Matthew 21:12–13

The Grace to Guide Us

Read aloud this section on page 15.

- **Say:** The first disciples left everything to follow Jesus. You don’t have to give up everything, but that doesn’t mean that discipleship is always easy. Yet the Holy Spirit will always give you the guidance you need, if you open your heart to his presence.

- Remind the candidates that discipleship means accepting Jesus' invitation to believe in him by learning about him and living according to his teachings.
- Point out the word "discipleship" in the acrostic. Then call on volunteers to take turns reading aloud the words and what they mean in our lives.
- Have the candidates take turns choosing one of the words from the acrostic and its explanation and telling how they can make it part of their lives.

Optional Activity

Help the group visualize the meaning of discipleship by acting out skits related to the theme, if time allows.

- Organize the young people into groups of four or five.
- Instruct the group members to work together to develop a skit on discipleship. Explain that their skit can present ways of living as disciples or can focus on Jesus' call to discipleship and our response.
- Allow time for the candidates to develop their scripts and practice their skits. Encourage them to assign a role to every member of the group.
- Invite the groups to take turns presenting their skits.

Saint Clare of Assisi

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the text on page 16 about Saint Clare.

- *Ask:* How is Saint Clare an example for young people today?
- Call on volunteers to respond.
- Point out that we can learn a lot from her example such as Saint Clare's devotion to the Eucharist, her openness to God's call, and the way she helped lead others to God.

Take the Message Home

Have the candidates read the text to themselves.

- *Ask:* What are some ways you can teach the Good News through your words and actions in the coming week?
- Invite volunteers to respond.
- Encourage the youth to commit to at least one way to share the Good News through their words, and one way to share it through their actions.
- Ask the young people to write an answer on a slip of paper to this question: What part of this unit did you find most important in strengthening your faith and why?
- Have them save the slip of paper for the unit prayer.



Unit Prayer

Gather around a prayer table with a Bible, a candle, and a container of Holy Water or some other sacred place.

Catechist: Let us take a deep breath and become aware of the presence of God with us. Let's begin with the Sign of the Cross.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Catechist: We have been reminded of God's great love in the creation of the world and in his calling to each of us by name. As we prepare to fully enter into the Church and our relationship with God, the Holy Spirit opens our hearts. He helps us to see what we need to grow closer to him. Please take out your slips of paper and read what you found most important from this first unit lesson.

[Individually, each candidate reads what he or she wrote and why.]

Catechist: Loving Father, we thank you for opening our hearts and minds to what you are saying to us in our lesson. We pray that we will continue to be aware of what your Holy Spirit is prompting us to know, and how we are being called to live. Help us to follow the example you set for us through Jesus Christ your Son. Together, let us pray Glory Be to the Father.

All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world with out end. Amen.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.