

# TOTAL CATECHESIS

Christian Prayer

CATECHETICAL SESSIONS ON **the Creed**

Liturgy and the Sacraments

Christian Morality

Pray It! Study It! Live It!™ resources offer a holistic approach to learning, living, and passing on the Catholic faith.

# TOTAL CATECHESIS

## **The Total Faith™ Initiative**

### **Total Catechesis**

*Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality*

*Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*

*Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments*

*Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*

### **Total Youth Ministry**

*Ministry Resources for Community Life*

*Ministry Resources for Evangelization*

*Ministry Resources for Justice and Service*

*Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care*

*Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship*

*Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development*

*Total Faith™ Initiative Coordinator's Manual*

*The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*

*The Catholic Youth Bible™*

Christian Prayer

CATECHETICAL SESSIONS ON

**the Creed**

Liturgy and the Sacraments

Christian Morality


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Saint Mary's Press™

# Contents

Introduction	7
<b>1</b> Being Catholic: The “CliffsNotes” View	17
<b>2</b> Knowing God: Reason and Revelation	32
<b>3</b> Faith	43
<b>4</b> God Our Father	54
<b>5</b> The Human Person	66
<b>6</b> Jesus Christ: True God and True Man	79
<b>7</b> Mary, Mother of God: An Intergenerational Session	91
<b>8</b> Jesus’ Message and Mission	102
<b>9</b> Jesus’ Death	117

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**10** Jesus' Resurrection 133

**11** The Holy Spirit 145

**12** The Mission of the Catholic Church 159

**13** The Organization of the Catholic Church 174

**14** The Last Things 186

Acknowledgments 197

## Introduction

### The Total Faith™ Initiative: An Overview

In 1997 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) published its blueprint for youth ministry in the twenty-first century. That document, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, highlights three goals for ministry with adolescents:

- to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today
- to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community
- to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person

In *Renewing the Vision*, the bishops describe a rich and challenging vision for Catholic youth ministry. Catechesis is at the heart of that vision; throughout the document the bishops urge the Church to guide young people toward a life of fullness in Jesus Christ, and to give them the tools that will enable them to live out that fullness as Catholic Christians. To put it simply, the bishops call young people to embrace their faith as they study it, pray it, and live it. The bishops also challenge the faith community to surround young people with love, care, and attention and to include youth throughout the life of the parish.

By addressing each of the eight components for comprehensive youth ministry as articulated in *Renewing the Vision*, the TOTAL FAITH Initiative helps communities implement that vision. It addresses those elements in a way that pays attention to the intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral needs of young people. In this renewed vision, catechesis is one component of youth ministry; it is not distinct from it.

The initiative includes a three-part series that brings to the field of youth ministry the ancient yet timeless truths of the Catholic faith. The Scriptures and Tradition are set within a framework that any parish can apply in its everyday ministry with youth. From the initial proclamation of the Good News, through evangelization and outreach to effective catechesis,

## The Pillars of the Catechism and Total Catechesis

Here is how the four parts, or pillars, of the *Catechism* and the Total Catechesis manuals are related:

- The first pillar of the *Catechism*, based on the Apostles' Creed, is covered in *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*.
- The second pillar of the *Catechism*, based on the seven sacraments, is covered in *Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments*.
- The third pillar of the *Catechism*, based on the Ten Commandments, is covered in *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality*.
- The fourth pillar of the *Catechism*, based on the Lord's Prayer, is covered in *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*.

In addition, the core text of the Total Catechesis series, *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)*, follows the same structure. The Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has found the *CFH* to be in conformity with the *Catechism*.

the TOTAL FAITH Initiative seeks to root youth in and connect them to the unchanging truths of their Catholic faith—while challenging them to apply the words of the Gospel and the teachings of Tradition to their daily lives.

The TOTAL FAITH Initiative includes these components:

- *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)* and the first edition of *The Catholic Youth Bible (CYB)* serve as the centerpieces of this initiative. Each book is an integrated resource for youth who are participating in the learning elements of the TOTAL FAITH Initiative.
- The **Total Youth Ministry** resource manuals address six of the components of youth ministry that are outlined in *Renewing the Vision*. The advocacy component, which is aimed primarily at the adult Church, is woven throughout the ministry resource manuals and is addressed specifically in the *TOTAL FAITH Initiative Coordinator's Manual*.
- The four catechetical manuals that comprise the **Total Catechesis** series are grounded in the content of the *CFH* and address the four pillars of the Catholic faith as outlined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

## Total Catechesis: An Overview

Using tested strategies, catechists lead the participants through creative learning experiences and then invite them to reflect on those experiences. Prayer, the Scriptures, and other elements of Christian faith are carefully integrated into every manual in the series. These four manuals correspond to the four sections of the *CFH*:

- *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality*
- *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*
- *Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments*
- *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*

The manuals in the Total Catechesis series are Pray It! Study It! Live It!™ resources. The STUDY IT! component comprises a 45- to 60-minute core session focusing on the chapters found in the *CFH*. Optional activities, called session extensions, allow you to extend the core session to 90 minutes or longer. The PRAY IT! component offers a 10- to 15-minute prayer service on the session theme, and the LIVE IT! component suggests ways to connect the session topic to parish, community, and family life.

### *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*

The *CFH* is a teen's guide to the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church. This book is an integrated text for youth who are participating in the learning elements of Total Catechesis. All the sessions in the Total Catechesis manuals are linked to this handbook. Leaders in youth ministry will also find it to be a helpful resource and guide for sharing and living the faith.

### *The Catholic Youth Bible*

The *CYB* is designed for searchers and committed Christian youth to read and to apply the Scriptures to their life. The first edition of the *CYB* is linked to sessions throughout the Total Catechesis manuals and, therefore, is considered an important student resource.

### An Added Feature: CD-ROMs

Each manual is accompanied by a CD-ROM containing the full content of its activities. This feature enables you to provide materials to catechists, adult leaders, parents, and young people in a variety of delivery methods, such as e-mail, Web site posting, and photocopying. Handouts and resources are provided in both color and black-and-white versions, and the latter can be customized for the particular needs of your group. Each CD-ROM also provides video clips, hyperlinks to suggested Web sites, and a selection from A Quiet Place Apart, a series of guided meditations from Saint Mary's Press.

## Catechetical Sessions on the Creed: An Overview

*Catechetical Sessions on the Creed* focuses on understanding the treasure, the gift, the challenge, and the sacrament that is Church. The young people are supported as they grow in their faith and in their knowledge about the basic truths of the Catholic faith. They are encouraged to make the mission of the Church their own and challenged to set their heart on all that is good, holy, and true about being a young Catholic in the world today.

This manual focuses on part A of the *CFH*, offering 14 sessions on “The Creed.” The sessions are designed to help the participants delve into some core Catholic practices, attitudes, and beliefs and to foster an understanding of what it means to be Catholic. In addition, each session offers activities to cultivate good learning experiences among young people while remaining focused on the central tenets of the Catholic faith. The intergenerational, ecumenical, and parish community-building activities that are included help the participants broaden their understanding and learning.

## Session Outcomes

### Chapter 1: “Being Catholic: The ‘CliffsNotes’ View”

- The learner will identify and name core Catholic beliefs and discover how those beliefs foster Catholic identity.
- The learner will understand some core Catholic practices and how they are relevant to the learner's life.

- The learner will gain insight into some key Catholic attitudes and the ways those attitudes can be lived out.

### **Chapter 2: “Knowing God: Reason and Revelation”**

- The learner will gain insight into the Catholic Church’s understanding of Revelation and its transmission.
- The learner will understand how Catholics come to know the truth about God and why that has meaning for their lives.

### **Chapter 3: “Faith”**

- The learner will gain a better understanding of the Church’s creeds and how they relate to a life of faith.
- The learner will be prepared for a more meaningful recitation of the Nicene Creed during the liturgy.
- The learner will recognize the trinitarian structure of the Church’s creeds.

### **Chapter 4: “God Our Father”**

- The learner will recognize that people use various images to gain insight into the mystery of God.
- The learner will explore central images of God in the Scriptures and in Church Tradition.
- The learner will investigate the meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity and consider how it helps people to more deeply understand the mystery of God.

### **Chapter 5: “The Human Person”**

- The learner will understand key aspects of the Church’s teaching on Creation.
- The learner will reflect on the goodness of God’s Creation and her or his own identity as a part of Creation.
- The learner will be introduced to the doctrine of original sin.

### **Chapter 6: “Jesus Christ: True God and True Man”**

- The learner will distinguish between the fully divine nature of Jesus and the fully human nature of Jesus.
- The learner will recognize the mystery of Jesus through discovery of who Jesus is.
- The learner will recognize Jesus as the center of the Catholic faith.

### **Chapter 7: “Mary, Mother of God: An Intergenerational Session”**

- The learner will review Mary’s extraordinary gift to us when she said yes to becoming the mother of Jesus.

- The learner will consider Mary’s role as the first disciple—an example of the life all Christians are called to live.
- The learner will reflect on his or her own experiences of saying yes to God’s will.

### **Chapter 8: “Jesus’ Message and Mission”**

- The learner will understand the effectiveness of parables in Jesus’ ministry and their use in communicating the Kingdom of God.
- The learner will probe the concept of the Reign of God and how it guided Jesus’ mission.
- The learner will reflect on her or his own way of being and on goals for the future in light of Jesus’ mission and invitation to enter the Kingdom.

### **Chapter 9: “Jesus’ Death”**

- The learner will explore the Passion and death of Jesus and its profound meaning for all Christians.
- The learner will gain a general understanding of the key events surrounding the Passion and death of Jesus.

### **Chapter 10: “Jesus’ Resurrection”**

- The learner will understand the Paschal mystery—particularly the mystery of Jesus’ passage through death to new life.
- The learner will understand the Resurrection of Jesus to be both historical and transcendent, the fulfillment of God’s promise, and the work of the Holy Trinity.
- The learner will explore the story of the Resurrection and its significance both in the story of Jesus and in the faith journey of all Christians.
- The learner will explore the significance of Jesus’ death and Resurrection for her or his own life.

### **Chapter 11: “The Holy Spirit”**

- The learner will more deeply understand the Holy Spirit as one of the three persons in the Trinity, active and present in the world today.
- The learner will become familiar with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- The learner will discover the meaning and significance of many of the Church’s symbols of the Holy Spirit.
- The learner will be reminded that belief in the Holy Spirit involves having faith that God is active and present in his or her life and in the lives of others today.

### **Chapter 12: “The Mission of the Catholic Church”**

- The learner will appreciate the images used to describe the Church’s nature and mission.



- The learner will explore the meaning and significance of the scriptural images of the Church as the people of God, the Body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit.
- The learner will reflect on the Church as a mystery and as *one, holy, catholic, and apostolic*.

### Chapter 13: “The Organization of the Catholic Church”

- The learner will understand the hierarchical structure and decision-making process of the Catholic Church.
- The learner will appreciate her or his unique and important role within that structure.
- The learner will begin to understand the focus of ecumenism.

### Chapter 14: “The Last Things”

- The learner will explore the Church’s view of death and last things.
- The learner will identify the characteristics of particular people who, by living with extraordinary faith, provide the Church today with examples of the life of holiness we are all called to by God.
- The learner will identify potential areas of growth while striving to live a saintly life.

## How to Use This Manual

You may present the material in this manual in its entirety, or you may select sessions and activities that you think will be best for the young people with whom you work. The sessions and activities are not sequential, so you may organize them in the way that is most appropriate for your situation.

Each session begins with a brief overview, a list of expected outcomes, and a list of recommended background reading that includes corresponding *CFH* pages, related *Catechism* paragraphs, scriptural connections, and *CYB* article connections. All articles are excerpted from the first edition of the *CYB*. The next element is a suggested schedule, which is to be used as a starting point and modified according to your circumstances. A checklist of the preparation required, including all materials needed, is the next part of the presentation of every session. A complete description of the session procedure is then provided, including a core activity, session extensions, prayer experiences, and options and actions. The procedure descriptions are formatted as follows.

### STUDY IT! A Core Session and Session Extensions

Each session can be expanded and customized to meet your schedule and the needs of your group. All the sessions begin with a core activity that

should be used before any other activity in the session plan. Core sessions are structured for a 40- to 45-minute time frame and correspond to the content in the *CFH*. You may expand the sessions by using additional activities known as session extensions. These strategies vary in length from 10 to 60 minutes. Session extensions are intended for further development and study of the session theme and topics.

All the learning strategies in this manual are based on the praxis method of experience, analysis, and reflection, in dialogue with the Scriptures and Tradition, leading to synthesis of new learnings and insights. Variations are often suggested, including ideas for gender-specific groups and for larger or smaller groups.

Some manuals include sidebars that suggest specific *CFH* connections, and all manuals incorporate sidebars that suggest specific musical selections from *Spirit & Song* (Portland, OR: OCP Publications, 1999). The lists in those sidebars are not exhaustive; music resources are available from a variety of music publishers, and a Bible concordance will provide additional citations if you want to add a more substantial scriptural component to a session. *The Saint Mary’s Press Essential Bible Concordance* offers a simple, user-friendly index to key words in the Bible. Some of the sessions provide a list of media resources—such as print, video, and Internet—for more exploration. Family approaches provide simple, follow-up suggestions for family learning, enrichment, celebration, prayer, and service. In addition, all the activities can be enhanced by the creativity and expertise of the adult leader.

Because catechesis requires personal reflection, a Journal Activities sidebar with questions and suggestions for deeper analysis and reflection is provided in most sessions. Although those questions and suggestions may be used for oral discussion, it is recommended that they be employed to prompt a written exercise. An ongoing journal, reflection papers, or letters to themselves or God can help the participants process the material and activities, making connections to their own lives.

### PRAY IT! Prayer Experiences

Each session includes opportunities and suggestions for prayer focused on the session’s theme. Prayer forms include guided meditation, shared prayer, music, silence, prayers by young people, reflective reading, and experiences created by the participants. The PRAY IT! component gives the young people an opportunity to bring their insights and concerns to God in prayer. The time frame for prayer experiences varies from 5 to 20 minutes.

### LIVE IT! Options and Actions

This manual can be a springboard for connections with other youth ministry experiences. Therefore all its sessions include additional strategies to

support the learning process. Those activities provide good follow-up for the STUDY IT! core activities, and allow for age-appropriate assimilation of the material. They might include off-site events, intergenerational ideas, parish involvement, prayer and liturgical celebrations, service options, and social action.

### Session Talk Points

To encourage and support the growth of family faith, each session offers a “take home” handout that presents talk points, to encourage ongoing conversation about the session’s topics. The handout includes a summary of the session content, which is taken directly from the corresponding chapter of the *CFH*. Participants can also use the handout with small community groups, with peer groups, and for personal reflection. With this material available on a CD-ROM, you can customize it and choose a means of delivery that works best for your situation.

### Handouts and Resources

All the necessary handouts and resources for a session are found at the end of that session in the manual. They are also found on the accompanying CD-ROM, in both color and black-and-white versions. The black-and-white materials may be customized to suit your particular needs.

Some longer handouts and resources are found only on the CD-ROM. Instructions to print out a copy of those materials are included in the preparation notes where it is applicable.

## Teaching This Course

### Preparing Yourself

Read each session or activity before you facilitate it; then use it creatively to meet the needs of the young people in your group. Knowing your audience will help you determine which strategies will work best for it. Some of the activities require preparation. Allow yourself adequate time to get ready.

All the sessions include presentations of key concepts and teachings. The session plans offer guidelines for these talks. Preparing for those presentations is vital to the success of each session. You will want to review relevant content in the *CFH* and the *Catechism*. Spend time putting these presentations together so that they are clear and hold the attention of the participants.

### Standard Materials

To save time, consider gathering frequently used materials in bins and storing those bins in a place that is accessible to all staff and volunteer leaders. Here are some recommendations for organizing the bins.

#### Supply Bin

The following items appear frequently in the materials checklists:

- *The Catholic Youth Bible*, at least one for every two participants
- *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*, at least one for every two participants
- masking tape
- cellophane tape
- washable and permanent markers (thick-line and thin-line)
- pens or pencils
- self-stick notes
- scissors
- newsprint
- blank paper, scrap paper, and notebook paper
- journals, one for each participant
- index cards
- baskets
- candles and matches
- items to create a prayer space (for example, a colored cloth, a cross, a bowl for water, and a vase for flowers)

#### Music Bin

Young people often find profound meaning in the music and lyrics of songs, both past and present. Also, the right music can set the appropriate mood for a prayer or an activity. Begin with a small collection of tapes or CDs in a music bin, and add to it over time. You might ask the young people to put some of their favorite music in the bin. The bin might include the following styles of music:

- *Prayerful, reflective instrumental music*, such as the kind that is available in the adult alternative section of music stores. Labels that specialize in this type of music include Windham Hill and Narada.
- *Popular songs with powerful messages*. If you are not well versed in popular music, ask the young people to offer suggestions.
- *The music of contemporary Catholic artists*. Many young people are familiar with the work of Catholic musicians such as Steve Angrisano, Sarah Hart, David W. Kauffman, Michael Mahler, Jesse Manibusan, and Danielle Rose.

Also consider including songbooks and hymnals. Many of the musical selections suggested in Total Catechesis are taken from the *Spirit & Song* hymnal, published by Oregon Catholic Press (OCP). If you wish to order



copies of this hymnal, please contact OCP directly at [www.ocp.org](http://www.ocp.org) or by calling 800-548-8749. Including copies of your parish's chosen hymnal is a suitable option as well. You might also check with your liturgy or music director for recordings of parish hymns.

## Some Closing Thoughts

As a catechist you have taken on an exciting and profoundly important task. We hope you find this material helpful as you invite young people into a deeper relationship with the marvelous community of faith we know as the Catholic Church. Please be assured of our continual prayers for you and the young people you serve.

## Your Comments or Suggestions

Saint Mary's Press wants to know your reactions to the materials in the Total Catechesis series. We are open to all kinds of suggestions, including these:

- an alternative way to conduct an activity
- an audiovisual or other media resource that worked well with this material
- a book or an article you found helpful
- an original activity or process
- a prayer experience or service
- a helpful preparation for other leaders
- an observation about the themes or content of this material

If you have a comment or suggestion, please write to us at 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1318; call us at our toll-free number, 800-533-8095; or e-mail us at [smp@smp.org](mailto:smp@smp.org). Your ideas will help improve future editions of Total Catechesis.

# 1

## Being Catholic: The "CliffsNotes" View

### AT A GLANCE

#### Study It

##### Core Session

- ◆ Beliefs, Practices, and Attitudes (45 minutes)

##### Session Extensions

- ◆ We Are Catholic! (15 minutes)
- ◆ Questions! Questions! Questions! (20 minutes)

#### Pray It

- ◆ My Act of Faith (20 minutes)

#### Live It

- ◆ Creative beliefs
- ◆ Parish practices
- ◆ Sainly behavior
- ◆ School attitude! Cool attitude!

## Overview

What does it mean to be Catholic? Certainly the way a person worships is a sign of his or her Catholic identity. The celebrations, rituals, prayers, variety of religious orders, and approach to the sacred Scriptures are other indications of a person's Catholic identity. Yes, there is more to being Catholic than simply attending Mass or participating in the sacraments. Catholics value life in such a way that it affects how they approach living and how they relate to one another. Their beliefs, practices, and attitudes should make a difference in how they live. To understand what it means to be Catholic is a life-long journey. A Catholic's journey of faith begins at his or her Baptism. We will take a closer look at Catholic beliefs in this session.

## Outcomes

- ◆ The learner will identify and name core Catholic beliefs and discover how those beliefs foster Catholic identity.
- ◆ The learner will understand some core Catholic practices and how they are relevant to the learner's life.
- ◆ The learner will gain insight into some key Catholic attitudes and the ways they can be lived out.

## Background Reading

- ◆ This session covers pages 13–19 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*.
- ◆ For further exploration, check out paragraph numbers 26–53 of the *Catechism*.
- ◆ Scriptural connections: Mark 7:1–15 (Live God's commandments.), Luke 4:1–13 (Jesus is tempted.), 2 Thess. 2:15–17 (Stand firm and hold fast.)

- *Catholic Youth Bible* article connections: “I Believe! The Apostles’ Creed” (Acts 4:5–12), “The First Creed and a Contemporary Creed!” (1 Cor 15:3–11)

## Study it!

### Core Session

#### Beliefs, Practices, and Attitudes (45 minutes)

##### Preparation

- Gather the following items:
  - copies of handout 1, “Being Catholic: The ‘CliffsNotes’ View,” one for each participant
  - white 5-by-8-inch index cards, enough to list individual items from resource 1, “Beliefs, Practices, and Attitudes”
  - masking tape (2 or 3 rolls)
  - 4 sheets of newsprint
  - a dark felt-tip marker
  - a basket
  - a small table
- Create four large signs with the newsprint, using a different title from the following list on each sign:
  - Beliefs: What We Believe
  - Attitudes: The Actions and the Values We Treasure
  - Practices: The Way We Celebrate and Pray
  - We Have No Idea What This Is!
- Write each item listed on resource 1 on a separate index card. Shuffle the cards and place them face down in a basket on the table.
- Review the summary points in step 7 of this session and the relevant material on pages 13–19 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook (CFH)*. Be prepared to share the information with the young people.

1. Divide the participants into dyads or triads, depending on the size of the group. Then share the following information:

- Just what does it mean to “be Catholic”? Catholics might be challenged by their peers to answer that question, and though they might have an idea about what it means to “be Catholic,” they are often at a loss for words.

- We are going to take time to identify some items that will help us describe what being Catholic means.
- On the wall are four sheets of paper, each with a different heading. Our goal is to identify terms that can be posted under each heading.

2. Explain to the participants that the basket contains cards naming various items related to the beliefs, practices, and attitudes of the Catholic Church. Also explain that the first three categories are closely related: people’s beliefs cause them to act a certain way (practices) and to see the world a certain way (attitudes). The participants’ challenge is to select one card at random from the basket and then post that card under the category that best suits it. Emphasize that the goal is not to take a wild guess but to think about their selection and make their best decision.

3. Invite the participants to line up with their partners in two or three parallel lines that face the small table that holds the basket of cards and the masking tape. Tell them they will each have 10 seconds to choose a card, decide under which heading it should go, and post the card on the “Beliefs,” “Practices,” “Attitudes,” or “I Don’t Know” sign on the wall. Instruct the participants to speak with their partners only to determine where their cards should go. Have someone keep time.

4. Once the young people have posted their cards under the heading they think fits best, they should return to the back of the line. Continue this process until all the cards have been allocated.

5. When all the cards have been placed, invite everyone to sit where they can clearly see the results of their work. Begin a group discussion by asking whether the participants think each card has been posted where it belongs.

*Note.* Items related to a Catholic belief or formal teaching should be under the “Belief” heading; items related to ethical or moral positions supported by the Church should be under the “Attitudes” heading; items related to the public or community life of the Church or to private or personal prayer should be under the “Practices” heading.

6. Ask the participants to decide as a group where to place the signs that ended up under the “I Have No Idea” heading. Then invite the young people to look at all the lists again and decide whether the cards are placed correctly. If they decide to move a card, be sure they can articulate their reasons for doing so. Allow some discussion time, especially if differences of opinion arise. Because some terms could appear under multiple headings, make sure the participants’ discussion takes a “both-and” approach rather than an “either-or” approach to assigning locations.

### TryThis

Divide the participants into small groups, hand out the index cards, and give each small group time to come up with its own list of beliefs, practices, and attitudes. If necessary, supplement the participants’ lists with items from resource 1.

## Mediaconnections

- ◆ Introduce the young people to the DisciplesNow teen Web site at [www.disciplesnow.com](http://www.disciplesnow.com). Encourage them to check the “It’s Catholic” section to learn more about what the Church teaches.
- ◆ Invite the young people to gather a variety of creeds from various Web sites and organizations (Girl or Boy Scouts, other denominations, business organizations, and so on). Discuss the similarities and differences.
- ◆ View a series of religious paintings from well-known artists. Discuss how those paintings help or hinder one’s attitude toward faith. Give the participants an opportunity to describe their feelings about specific paintings.
- ◆ Find out what literature the young people are reading in school, and determine whether any of the books or stories reflect the Catholic attitudes discussed in *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth* on pages 18–19. Discuss how those attitudes are present in the books or stories; if the attitudes are not present, discuss how the characters, themes, or plots would be different if they were present.

7. Review the signs, and flesh out the statements on the cards using key phrases from the preceding steps and the following bullet points, which are taken from pages 13–19 of the *CFH*:

- Being Catholic means many different things to people. For some people it means a whole culture or way of being in the world. It is a wonderful way of experiencing God in the world and following Jesus Christ.
- Many people’s only understanding of Catholicism comes from what they see and hear in the popular media.
- The popular image of Catholicism formed by the media is filled with stereotypes and misinformation, and is an inadequate source for truly understanding what Catholics are all about.
- The great number of Catholics in the world testifies to Catholicism’s universal appeal and to the power that the Catholic faith has in people’s lives.
- The Catholic Church embraces people who desire a clear and unchanging set of beliefs, as well as those who want to explore how those beliefs are applied to different cultures and a changing world.
- Some common threads surface when Catholics talk about what is important to them about the Catholic faith.
- Catholics often talk about the beliefs of the Catholic faith that are rooted in the revelation of the Scriptures and Tradition:
  - God created human beings to be in perfect union with God and one another.
  - The sin of our first parents—called original sin—deprived the human race of our original holiness and justice.
  - Throughout human history God worked to restore the relationship of love and trust that was lost through original sin. He did this by entering into covenants. But the people often broke their covenant promises.
  - Ultimately God sent his only begotten son, Jesus Christ, as savior for the human race.
  - Christ was both fully God and fully man. He became the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins and the restoration of the relationship of love and trust between God and humankind.
  - Following his death Jesus was brought back to life in the Resurrection!
  - Christ overcame death and opened heaven’s gates for all the just.
  - The Holy Spirit has been at work in the world from the beginning of creation to the present day. The Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son.
  - God has revealed himself to be Trinity, that is, the mystery of one God in three divine persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
  - Christ established the Catholic Church on the foundation of the Apostles.

- The fullness of God’s revealed truth is called Sacred Tradition, and is entrusted to the Apostles’ successors, the bishops of the Church.
- The Bible is another source of God’s revealed truth for Catholics.
- The Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the Bible to write what God wants us to know for our salvation.
- All people are destined for eternal life after death.
- The baptized who have put their faith in Jesus Christ as their savior will find their eternal reward in heaven.
- Catholics also talk about the practices of the Catholic faith, the ways in which Catholics pray and make moral decisions:
  - Catholics celebrate seven sacraments that form the basis of their worship, or communal prayer, together.
  - The sacrament of the Eucharist is the heart of the Church’s life. We believe that in the sacrament we literally receive the body and blood of Christ in the appearance of bread and wine.
  - Sunday, or the “Lord’s Day,” is the principal day for the celebration of the Eucharist.
  - Catholics follow a special calendar with all the feasts and holy days of the liturgical year.
  - Catholics place a strong emphasis on living morally because we believe we are called to new life in the Holy Spirit.
  - Catholics defend the dignity of human life, and Catholic morality is often described as pro-life. Catholics are opposed to anything that threatens the sanctity of human life, including abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, and human cloning.
  - Serving people in need and working to transform society are essential elements of Catholic life.
  - We believe that the Church is called to be a sign of God’s perfect Kingdom yet to come, by working for justice and human rights in this life.
  - Catholics honor the great people of faith who have preceded them, the saints, and in a dear and special way, Mary, the mother of Jesus.
- Catholics talk about the worldview of Catholicism, that is, the attitudes that Catholics display as they live out their faith in the world:
  - Catholics recognize that God is present to, in, and through all creation—including the natural world, persons, communities, and historical events.
  - For us all creation is sacred and has the potential to be a source of God’s grace.
  - Catholics place their trust in the essential goodness of the human person, who is made in the image of God, even though we are flawed by the effect of original sin.
  - Catholics appreciate both faith and reason, both religion and science.

## JournalACTIVITIES

- ◆ Find out the date of your Baptism. Write a note as a reminder that each year on your baptismal anniversary, you will spend time identifying how you have grown in your understanding of what it means to be a Catholic and how that makes a difference to you. Take time each year to reflect on what you have written to see what is happening in your life.
- ◆ What are some common misperceptions you hear about Catholicism? How do you respond to those misperceptions?
- ◆ What does being Catholic mean to you?



- Although the fullness of truth resides in the Catholic Church, Catholics seek to recognize and affirm the aspects of God’s revealed truth that we share with other religions and all people of good will.
- Catholics emphasize community life and communal worship.
- Catholicism respects the great diversity of cultures in the world, and is committed to proclaiming the message of Jesus to all people in all cultures at all times.
- Catholics respect and embrace a wide variety of spiritualities and prayer forms.

**8.** Conclude by reminding the participants that in this first session, they are just beginning to take a closer look at what Catholics believe. They will explore what it means to be Catholic in more depth in subsequent sessions. Note that this session’s content is drawn from chapter 1 of the *CFH*. Encourage the participants to read and review it in the next few days.

## Session Extensions

### We Are Catholic! (15 minutes)

#### Preparation

- E-mail or mail copies of handout 2, “We Are Catholic,” to the participants before they gather for the core session. Allow enough time for them to complete the handout with their families. Ask them to bring the completed handouts to the first session.

**1.** After the core session, invite the young people to share their family information. Assure them that they do not have to share if they are not comfortable doing so.

**2.** Help the participants make connections between what they learned in the core session and what their families’ beliefs, practices, and attitudes are.

### Questions! Questions! Questions! (20 minutes)

#### Preparation

- Gather the following items:
  - three 3-by-5-inch cards for each small group
  - pens or pencils
- Invite your pastor, the parish DRE, your deacon(s), and teachers (grade school, high school, college, and seminary) to form a panel of “experts” in Catholic beliefs, practices, and attitudes.

**1.** Divide the participants into small groups of three or four. Distribute three cards to each group. Ask the groups to identify three questions

they have about the items on the “Beliefs,” “Practices,” and “Attitudes” lists. Tell them to write one question on each card. Collect the cards and distribute them to the adult volunteers.

**2.** Introduce the panel of “experts” you have invited to the meeting. Explain to the panel members the process the young people underwent during the core session. Ask the panel to answer further questions from the participants.

**3.** Invite the adult volunteers present to take turns reading questions for the panel. Be sure to allow time for additional questions that might arise from the panel discussion. Keep a notepad with you to record important ideas and comments.

**4.** Encourage the young people to continue exploring attitudes, beliefs, and practices that are unfamiliar to them or that they might question. Refer them to *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth* for further study. Refer to your notes and offer final thoughts to the group. Thank everyone for participating.

## Pray It

### My Act of Faith (20 minutes)

#### Preparation

- Gather the following items:
  - a small table, with a cloth for draping
  - a crucifix
  - a plant
  - a large candle and matches
  - a small basket
  - a *Catholic Youth Bible (CYB)*, opened to 2 Thess. 2:15–17
  - copies of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)*, one for each participant
  - pens or pencils, one for each participant
  - journals (if you are using journals) or blank sheets of paper, one for each participant
  - a tape or CD of soft, reflective music
  - a tape player or a CD player
- Make prayer cards from resource 2, “Act of Faith,” and prepare enough copies to distribute one prayer card to each participant who does not have a *CFH*.

#### VARIATION:

### Intergenerational

Invite senior citizens from your parish to participate with the young people in a small-group sharing experience. Ask the young people to share their ideas and questions in the small-group setting. Allow time for the senior citizens to respond to the questions with how the beliefs, practices, and attitudes of the Catholic Church have sustained them over time.

### Spirit & Song connections

- ◆ “River of Glory,” by Dan Schutte
- ◆ “Song of the Body of Christ,” traditional Hawaiian song (“No Ke Ano’ Ahi’ Ahi”) adapted by David Haas
- ◆ “Open My Eyes,” by Jesse Manibusan

- If possible, move to a place of prayer that will allow the group to be seated in a circle. You can also create an atmosphere of prayer through the use of plants, religious images, candles, cloths, and so on. Choose a location where you can dim the lights.
- Invite a young person to proclaim the Scripture reading. Invite another young person to read the *CYB* article “Traditions,” near 2 Thess. 2:15–17. Give both readers an opportunity to quietly read the selections before the service so that each can become comfortable with the material.
- Set up a prayer table with the cloth, the crucifix, the plant, the candle, the basket, and the *CYB*.

1. Ask the participants to sit in a circle around the prayer table. If the participants have their own copies of the *CFH*, ask them to bring the books to the prayer space. Distribute the prayer cards, pens or pencils, and the journals or blank sheets of paper. Ask the young people to set these items aside for the time being. Have quiet background music playing. Tell the participants they will have time to think about what “being Catholic” means to them now as a result of their discussion. Also tell them they will have time to write down their thoughts. Assure the participants that the thoughts are their own and will not be shared with the group.

2. While soft music continues to play, invite the first reader to proclaim the Scripture reading in a slow and respectful way. Allow a few seconds of quiet time before moving on. Now give the young people about 5 minutes to record in their journal or on their sheet of paper their response to the question “What does it mean for me to be Catholic?”

3. Invite the second person to read the *CYB* article “Traditions.” Allow a few seconds of quiet and again allow the young people about 5 minutes to record their response to the question “What Catholic tradition is most important to me and my family and why?”

4. Gather everyone in a circle, inviting them to bring their copies of the *CFH* or the prayer cards you distributed. Briefly describe in these words, from page 19 of the *CFH*, the prayer they are about to pray:

- The Act of Faith is an old and traditional prayer of the Catholic Church. People prayed it as a sign of commitment to the core truths of the faith.
- I now invite each of you to pray it as a sign of your desire to believe.

5. Instruct the young people to pick up their prayer cards or to turn to the Act of Faith on page 19 in their *CFH*. Together recite the Act of Faith.



## Options and Actions

- **Creative beliefs.** *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)* offers a section titled “Some Core Catholic Beliefs,” on pages 15–16. Divide the group into dyads or triads and assign one belief to each small group. Invite the groups to create posters reflecting their assigned belief.
- **Parish practices.** Divide the participants into pairs and assign each pair one of the core Catholic practices from pages 16–18 of the *CFH*. Ask each pair to interview the person in charge of the parish practice described in their assigned core practice (for example, pastor, DRE, parish council member). Tell them to ask the interviewee the traditional who, what, when, where, why, and how questions. Invite the participants to share what they learned.
- **Saintly behavior.** Have the participants research online their particular saint names or Confirmation names and identify how their namesakes lived out Catholic beliefs, practices, and attitudes. They can share their information with their families and within the parish group.
- **School attitude! Cool attitude!** Invite the young people to each choose one of the Catholic attitudes described on pages 18–19 of the *CFH*. Tell them to note their choice on a 3-by-5-inch card or in a small notebook. They should then spend a month writing down examples of that attitude as they see it in their classmates and teachers at school. They can share their findings with their families or during a catechetical session.



# Being Catholic: The “CliffsNotes” View

This session covers pages 13–19 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*. For further exploration, check out paragraph numbers 26–53 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

## Session Summary

- Being Catholic means many different things to people. For some people it means a whole culture or way of being in the world. It is a wonderful way of experiencing God in the world and following Jesus Christ.
- Many people’s only understanding of Catholicism comes from what they see and hear in the popular media.
- The popular image of Catholicism formed by the media is filled with stereotypes and misinformation, and is an inadequate source for truly understanding what Catholics are all about.
- The great number of Catholics in the world testifies to Catholicism’s universal appeal and to the power that the Catholic faith has in people’s lives.
- The Catholic Church embraces people who desire a clear and unchanging set of beliefs, as well as those who want to explore how those beliefs are applied to different cultures and a changing world.
- Some common threads surface when Catholics talk about what is important to them about the Catholic faith.
- Catholics often talk about the beliefs of the Catholic faith that are rooted in the revelation of the Scriptures and Tradition:
  - God created human beings to be in perfect union with God and one another.
  - The sin of our first parents—called original sin—deprived the human race of our original holiness and justice.
  - Throughout human history God worked to restore the relationship of love and trust that was lost through original sin. He did this by entering into covenants. But the people often broke their covenant promises.
  - Ultimately God sent his only begotten son, Jesus Christ, as savior for the human race.
- Christ was both fully God and fully man. He became the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins and the restoration of the relationship of love and trust between God and humankind.
- Following his death Jesus was brought back to life in the Resurrection!
- Christ overcame death and opened heaven’s gates for all the just.
- The Holy Spirit has been at work in the world from the beginning of creation to the present day. The Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son.
- God has revealed himself to be Trinity, that is, the mystery of one God in three divine persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Christ established the Catholic Church on the foundation of the Apostles.
- The fullness of God’s revealed truth is called Sacred Tradition, and is entrusted to the Apostles’ successors, the bishops of the Church.
  - The Bible is another source of God’s revealed truth for Catholics.
  - The Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the Bible to write what God wants us to know for our salvation.
  - All people are destined for eternal life after death.
  - The baptized who have put their faith in Jesus Christ as their savior will find their eternal reward in heaven.
- Catholics also talk about the practices of the Catholic faith, the ways in which Catholics pray and make moral decisions:
  - Catholics celebrate seven sacraments that form the basis of their worship, or communal prayer, together.
  - The sacrament of the Eucharist is the heart of the Church’s life. We believe that in the sacrament we literally receive the body and blood of Christ in the appearance of bread and wine.
  - Sunday, or the “Lord’s Day,” is the principal day for the celebration of the Eucharist.
  - Catholics follow a special calendar with all the feasts and holy days of the liturgical year.
  - Catholics place a strong emphasis on living morally because we believe we are called to new life in the Holy Spirit.
  - Catholics defend the dignity of human life, and Catholic morality is often described as pro-life. Catholics are opposed to anything that threatens the sanctity of human life, including abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, and human cloning.
  - Serving people in need and working to transform society are essential elements of Catholic life.
  - We believe that the Church is called to be a sign of God’s perfect Kingdom yet to come, by working for justice and human rights in this life.

- Catholics honor the great people of faith who have preceded them, the saints, and in a dear and special way, Mary, the mother of Jesus.
- Catholics talk about the worldview of Catholicism, that is, the attitudes that Catholics display as they live out their faith in the world:
- Catholics recognize that God is present to, in, and through all creation—including the natural world, persons, communities, and historical events.
  - For us all creation is sacred and has the potential to be a source of God’s grace.
  - Catholics place their trust in the essential goodness of the human person, who is made in the image of God, even though we are flawed by the effect of original sin.
  - Catholics appreciate both faith and reason, both religion and science.
  - Although the fullness of truth resides in the Catholic Church, Catholics seek to recognize and affirm the aspects of God’s revealed truth that we share with other religions and all people of good will.
  - Catholics emphasize community life and communal worship.
  - Catholicism respects the great diversity of cultures in the world, and is committed to proclaiming the message of Jesus to all people in all cultures at all times.
  - Catholics respect and embrace a wide variety of spiritualities and prayer forms.
- The Act of Faith is an old and traditional prayer of the Catholic Church. People prayed it as a sign of commitment to the core truths of the faith. (All summary points are taken from *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*, by Brian Singer-Towns et al. [Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 2004], pages 13–19. Copyright © 2004 by Saint Mary’s Press. All rights reserved.)

### Talk Points

- What attracts you to the Catholic faith?
- If someone asked, “Why are you Catholic?” how would you answer?
- Do you know a faithful and committed Catholic? Describe his or her characteristics. Then consider asking that person what he or she finds motivating and inspiring about the Catholic faith.
- Do you know a Catholic who has struggled with a moral issue? How did that person rely on beliefs, practices, and attitudes to work through the struggle? What have you learned from this?

# Beliefs, Practices, and Attitudes

## Beliefs

We are created for union with God.

Original sin deprived us of holiness and justice.

God established covenants as a sign of fidelity.

God sent Jesus as savior for the human race.

Jesus was both fully God and fully human.

We believe in Jesus’ Resurrection and salvation.

We believe in the Holy Spirit.

The Catholic Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

God’s revealed truth is found in sacred Tradition and sacred Scriptures.

We believe in eternal life after death.

## Practices

Celebration of the sacraments

Eucharistic celebrations, especially Mass

Following the liturgical year

Faithfulness to the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes

The dignity of the human person

Living out our Catholic social teachings

Honoring the Blessed Mother and the communion of saints

Forgiveness of sin

Keeping the Sabbath holy

Practicing discernment

## Attitudes

Recognizing that God is present to, in, and through creation

Seeing creation as sacred and a potential source of God’s grace

Placing trust in the essential goodness of the human person

Recognizing we are flawed by the effect of original sin

Appreciating both faith and reason—religion and science

Putting an emphasis on community life and communal worship

Respecting the diversity of cultures in the world

Being committed to proclaiming Jesus’ message to all people

Embracing a wide variety of spiritualities and prayer forms

# We Are Catholic!

Write your answers to the following questions and bring this handout with you to the next session.

How important is it to your family that you identify yourselves as Catholic? Circle the answer.  
not important      somewhat important      important      very important

What do you like most about being Catholic?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Place a check before the aspects of the Catholic faith that someone in your family knows about.

- the history of the Church
- the Apostles' Creed
- the meaning of symbols used during Mass
- the sacraments
- the Pope
- different ways of helping out in the Church
- the mission of the Church
- vocations in the Church
- the domestic church

Draw a picture or create a symbol of what your family brings to the Church (think about talents, interests, personality, and so on). Display your creation as a family reminder of the gifts you bring.

Have each family member list the best Catholic they know and share why they chose this person.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Let each family member finish this sentence: For me the Church is like . . .  
\_\_\_\_\_

What does being Catholic mean to you, individually? As a family?  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Act of Faith

<p><b>Act of Faith</b></p> <p>My God, I firmly believe you are one God in three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.</p> <p>I believe in Jesus Christ, your son, who became man and died for our sins, and who will come to judge the living and the dead.</p> <p>I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because you have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.</p> <p>Amen.</p>	<p><b>Act of Faith</b></p> <p>My God, I firmly believe you are one God in three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.</p> <p>I believe in Jesus Christ, your son, who became man and died for our sins, and who will come to judge the living and the dead.</p> <p>I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because you have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
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