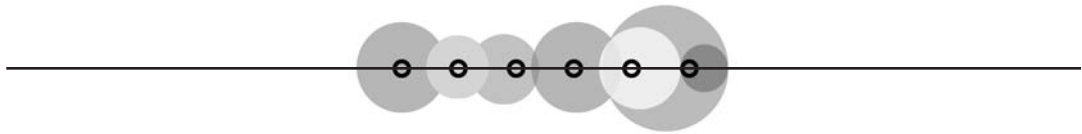


Leader's Guide for

Journey of Faith

for Ordinary Time



Creating a Sense of Belonging
Between Young People and the Church

Mary Shrader and Jenni Vankat

Saint Mary's Press®

Journey of Faith series

Journey of Faith for Advent and Christmas:

Creating a Sense of Belonging Between Young People and the Church

Journey of Faith for Lent:

Creating a Sense of Belonging Between Young People and the Church

Journey of Faith for Easter and Pentecost:

Creating a Sense of Belonging Between Young People and the Church

Journey of Faith for Ordinary Time:

Creating a Sense of Belonging Between Young People and the Church



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Introduction

THE SEASON OF ORDINARY TIME

Ordinary Time can be misleading. On the surface, the season seems to suggest that life and faith carry on as usual. In a sense, this is true, in that Christmas and Easter are the high points of our liturgical year, filled with preparation and celebration. The truth, however, is quite the contrary when the readings of the season are taken into account. Discipleship is a main focus of Ordinary Time. Truly living as a disciple of Jesus is out of the ordinary! Being Jesus's follower goes against the culture; taking to heart his message of love contrasts the message of modern society. Thus, Ordinary Time is a misnomer because the schema of Scripture readings calls us to be extraordinary.

Ordinary Time highlights Jesus's life between his entry into this world and his entry into Jerusalem. Ordinary Time covers Jesus's mission and ministry. Essentially, it is a how-to manual for disciples. We hear the stories of Jesus's miracles. We listen to the master storyteller himself explain the Kingdom of God through parables. We face the challenge of recognizing who Jesus is and what God asks of us, just as the first disciples did centuries ago. We struggle to surrender ourselves and be available for others through service. Jesus calls us by name to share in his mission and ministry. Even in this season of Ordinary Time, living as Christians is far from ordinary!

Ordinary Time Color

Liturgical colors are not merely decoration. They are visual aids that point to reasons and rhythms in the liturgical calendar. The color for Ordinary Time is green. This color journeys with us through the cycle of nature. Our worship space in Ordinary Time mirrors creation, accenting the green with the brightly colored flowers of spring and summer and the rich hues and harvest colors of fall.

Symbols

The symbols traditionally associated with Ordinary Time are present throughout our liturgical seasons, and we have grown accustomed to their presence. One visual that surfaces during this season is that of the Eucharist, the bread and wine. The Eucharist is the center and source of our liturgical lives. It calls us back to who we are and whose we are. It tells the story of Jesus Christ with noble simplicity—his life, death, and Resurrection. The bread and wine, the extraordinary presence of Christ's body and blood, seem fitting as a focal point for this season.

Thirty-Four Weeks

Ordinary Time is the longest season of the liturgical year at thirty-four weeks. It briefly appears between Christmas and Lent, then reappears after Easter, and is with us until Advent begins. The majority of the season occurs in summer and fall. Major feasts in Ordinary Time include the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity, the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Solemnity of Christ the King.

JOURNEY OF FAITH FOR ORDINARY TIME: AN OVERVIEW

The Journey of Faith books are designed to present a different model of ministry with young people, one based on the liturgical seasons of the year. This offers parishes the opportunity to gather with their young people and involve them in the rich experiences these seasons offer.

We experience and express our faith in various ways. One way is through the use of the *Lectionary* at Mass. The readings tell the story of our community's Christian faith journey and highlight the teachings at the core of who we are as Christian people. The activities in this manual help the young people explore various Sunday readings and meet a variety of scriptural people. By drawing from the Scriptures of the liturgical seasons and of our sacramental Tradition, the participants will dig more deeply into their own faith and explore aspects of the community's faith tradition during these important seasons.

Each activity in this manual points to the readings throughout the Ordinary Time season. Activities highlight core ideas, themes, images, symbols, and meanings of the season. Essentially, each activity provides the structure, content, and context for continuing the Scripture reflection often begun at the Sunday Eucharist. This format offers young people insight into and connection with what is happening in the parish community during the Church's celebration of the Ordinary Time season. It also gives them the opportunity to meet and learn from adult parishioners through intergenerational activities blended with the seasonal activities in the parish. Each activity encourages and challenges young people to uncover what it means to be Jesus's disciple, how to act on the call to discipleship within their parish or school community, and how God works in and through their lives. The young people will discover potential mentors from the parish community and learn about the ways many people choose to live out their Christian faith.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

You may present the materials in this manual in their entirety, or you may choose activities that will work best for the young people with whom you work. Each chapter begins with a brief overview and highlights the objectives of the activities. The next element is a suggested schedule—a starting point that can be modified according to your circumstances. Each activity begins with a checklist of required materials and preparation, followed by a complete description of the activity procedure.

The activities in the Journey of Faith series follow the PRAY IT! STUDY IT! LIVE IT! format. The STUDY IT! component comprises activities that range in time from 15 to 30 minutes, with the final activity running from 1 to 3 hours. In this component, the participants explore the chapter theme in-depth through the Scriptures, activities, and discussion. Ministry leaders present additional background and information to periodically augment the participants' work. The student workbook is frequently used as a tool in these activities.

LIVE IT! Longer activities allow you to extend a session to 90 minutes or longer. These activities connect what the participants have read, seen, written, and heard to their own lives.

Each activity includes opportunities and suggestions for prayer that all focused on the 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. Prayer experiences range from 5 to 15 minutes.

The Student Workbook

The student workbook is an integrated resource for youth who participate in the activities of the Journey of Faith series. All the activities in the manual are linked to the workbook. Ideally every young participant will have a workbook. We recommend that you have students write their names in their workbooks, then you can collect the workbooks at the end of each gathering and return them to the participants when they gather the next time.

Preparing Yourself

Read each 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. Some of the activities require preparation. Allow yourself adequate time to get ready. In addition, think about additional ways to include members of the parish community in the activity. Throughout the activities, you will find suggestions for involving other parish adults in mentoring young people as they learn to be active participants in the life of the parish.

Standard Materials

To save time, consider gathering frequently used materials in bins and storing those bins in a place 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
- student workbooks, one for each participant
- 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
- index cards
- baskets
- candles and matches
- items to create a prayer space (for example, a colored cloth, a cross, a bowl of 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.* This kind of music is available in the adult alternative section of music stores. Labels that specialize in this 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 teens are familiar with the work of Catholic musicians such as Steve Angrisano, Sarah Hart, David W. Kauffman, Michael Mahler, Jesse Manibusan, and Danielle Rose.

Including copies of your parish's chosen hymnal is also a suitable option. You might also check with your liturgy or music director for recordings of parish hymns.

SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS

We hope these activities connect the young people to both their faith and their faith community in ways that kindle the fire within them to better understand what it means to be a disciple of Christ and to act on that call. We also hope that young people discover new meaning and develop new skills as they explore the ministry of members of the parish community.

YOUR COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS

Saint Mary's Press wants to know your reactions to the materials in the Journey of Faith 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 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, 1-800-533-8095; or e-mail us at smp@smp.org.



Chapter 1

Making Decisions as Disciples



OVERVIEW

Early adolescence thrusts youth into a world of options. Developmentally, young people move from concrete thought to abstract thought, always at their own pace. Socially, they long for greater independence. Parents struggle with the delicate balance of enabling autonomy and guiding their young toward healthy choices. It seems as if young adolescents are learning to walk again, but instead of practicing in the safety of the home with loved ones at their fingertips, they practice in the insecurity of the outside world, holding loved ones an arm's length away.

This chapter looks at what is involved in being Christian. The chapter connects the skill of decision making to Christian discipleship and acquaints the young people with the power of the Holy Spirit. While young adolescents are the primary audience for these activities, learning this decision-making process for disciples is more effective when the family is included. Participants use various Gospel stories to examine decisions Jesus and his followers made and relate them back to life today. They learn a process for decision making that raises awareness of one's faith commitment and a deepening trust in God's Spirit. Participants then apply the formula to current choices and practice the method among friends, family, or both in a safe environment.



AT A GLANCE

Icebreaker Simon Says (10 minutes)

STUDY IT! Scripture Survey (25 minutes)

LIVE IT! Discipleship Alert System (15 minutes)
SPIRIT Decision-Making Process (30 minutes)

PRAY IT! Learning from Christ, Relying on the Spirit (10 minutes)

STUDY IT! Longer Parish
Families
Other Generations
Celebrate the Season

LIVE IT! Longer To Be or Not to Be a Disciple

ICEBREAKER

Simon Says (10 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

Optional: Write out a set of directions for “Simons” to use. Directions could include the following, or create your own:

- Get on your knees and pray the Glory Be.
- Simon says shake hands with three people you don’t know and tell them your name.
- Simon says find a partner and sing “Row, row, row your boat.”
- Simon says offer the sign of peace to the person on your right.

1. Conduct a traditional game of Simon Says. If needed, use the following instructions to remind the participants how to play:

- The leader of this game is named Simon. Players are to follow Simon’s directions if the directions begin with the magic phrase “Simon says.” If Simon doesn’t use that phrase, players should not follow the directions Simon gives. If a player follows the directions when Simon doesn’t use the magic phrase, that player is out of the game.

2. If the group is unfamiliar with the game, demonstrate how the game is played. Give a few young people and adults a turn at being Simon. If the game is needed to help people get to know one another, write out the directions for Simons to encourage that interaction. If the group is familiar with another or the game, allow the young people to come up with their own wacky directions. Depending on the size of your group, Simon may have to assign a few helpers to determine whether all players have followed Simon’s directions correctly.

3. Unpack the game with the young people by asking the following questions:

- Who makes the decisions in the game?
- How are consequences of one’s decisions carried out in the game?

In this discussion, help the young people see that while Simon makes the decisions on actions the players should do, the players must also decide when to follow or not follow the instructions. If Simon hasn’t “said,” the players face the consequence of being excused from the game. If directions are followed correctly, the players remain in the game.

4. Follow up by sharing that today’s activities will help the participants look at how being a follower of Christ influences the decisions we make in our daily lives.

STUDY IT!

Scripture Survey (25 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - Catholic Youth Bibles* or other bibles, one for each small group
 - Ordinary Time* workbooks
 - pens or pencils
 - pieces of poster board or contact paper the size of a bumper sticker
 - markers, one for each group

1. Create small groups of three to four people or split into family groupings. Assign each group one Scripture passage listed in the *Ordinary Time* workbook on page 6. *Note:* More than one group can read the same passage.

- Matthew 5:38–48
- Matthew 7:24–27
- Mark 10:17–22
- Luke 6:39–45
- Luke 10:25–37

2. Distribute the bibles and instruct the groups to read their assigned passages, looking for the choices Jesus or his followers made. Use the following questions to guide the group discussions:

- What decision or choice was being made in the story?
- What options did the person in the story have?
- Did Jesus encourage one option over another? which option? Why?
- Did the decision maker choose to follow or not follow Jesus?
- What decisions do you make today that are similar to those in the Scripture passage?

3. Ask the small groups to record their findings in the space provided on pages 6 and 7 of their workbooks and then report them to the large group. If more than one group has the same passage, invite those groups to work together as they share with the larger group. The reports are to include the names or titles of the stories they read, articulations of the decisions being made in the story, and identifications of similar decisions the participants must make today. Then distribute the bumper stickers and markers and have the groups record the actions on the bumper stickers and place the stickers in an area visible to the whole group. An example of a group report could be: “We read Matthew 5:38–48, where Jesus teaches about loving our enemies. Jesus’s disciples were challenged to choose to pray for the people who persecute or mistreat them. Today, we have to do the same thing—love those who may hurt us or cause us pain.” The action recorded on the bumper sticker could read “Love Your Enemies.”

4. After the groups have shared, they will have generated a list of “discipleship actions.” The list may look like the following:

- Love Your Enemies (Matthew 5:38–48)
- Follow Jesus’s Teachings (Matthew 7:24–27)
- Share Your Treasures (Mark 10:17–22)
- Do Not Judge Others (Luke 6:39–45)
- Show All People Respect (Luke 10:25–37)

5. Close this activity by pointing out that the actions groups have identified are some of the ways Jesus wants us to live our lives. As Christ’s disciples, we are often called to make decisions based on how we love one another. These choices can be difficult but can become clearer when we look to our faith to inform our decisions and when we invite God’s presence into the process.

LIVE IT!

Discipleship Alert System (15 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - three different colors of self-stick notes, five of each color for every group or every person, depending on the size of your group and the space available (colored dots could also be used)

- marker
- newsprint
- tape

1. Transition into this activity by reminding the young people that decisions can be easier or more difficult depending on the stage of life we are in. Say the following or something similar:

- We are going to identify the level of difficulty of following the ways of Jesus.
- Using the discipleship action list we created earlier, we will now create a “Discipleship Alert System” similar to a weather alert or terror alert warning system.

2. Distribute five self-stick notes of each of the three colors to every group (or every person). Determine which color represents which level of difficulty. For example, yellow is “relatively easy,” green is “pretty darn challenging,” and blue is “super hard!” Write the levels of difficulty codes on the newsprint, and post the codes where they can be easily seen.

3. Instruct the groups (or individuals) to decide which of the discipleship actions is easy, challenging, or difficult. When the young people have decided, they stick the appropriate colored note on or near the corresponding action. The result may be that a majority of people find the same actions difficult, or there may be a wide variety of difficulty levels. The goals are (1) to think about what it takes to be a disciple of Jesus and (2) to help the participants comprehend levels of difficulty. Emphasize that this activity is to help them understand the uniqueness of how different people identify easy, challenging, and hard actions in their views of discipleship.

4. Review the results of the warning system colors. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- What can be learned by seeing which actions are viewed as harder than others?
- What difference, if any, does age (youth or adult) make in how people select the difficulty level?

SPIRIT Decision-Making Process (30 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - Ordinary Time* workbooks
 - pens or pencils
 - reflective music
 - CD player
- 1. Begin the activity by sharing the following points with the participants:
 - No matter what age we are, deciding to live as Jesus did can be challenging. God wants us to be our best selves and base our actions on love for our neighbor as well as ourselves.
 - Choosing to live as a disciple is not something we do alone. God sent God’s Spirit to give us wisdom and strength. We also must rely on one another.
 - Sometimes we need “triggers” that remind us who we are and prompt us to respond the way Jesus would want. One trigger is a decision-making process called SPIRIT.

Note: This is one faith-based method to help people of all ages, especially early adolescents, think through their decisions. If your young people are familiar with another decision-making process, review it during this time.

- SPIRIT calls us to invite God into our minds and hearts as we make decisions. Each letter stands for one step in making healthy choices to live as a disciple. The process is as follows:
 - S = Stop
 - P = Pay Attention
 - I = Investigate Options
 - R = Remember You Are a Follower of Christ
 - I = Invite the Spirit's Wisdom and Guidance
 - T = Take Action

2. Continue your explanation of the process by discussing each letter with the following comments and questions.

- **S = Stop** makes us pause in the heat of the moment or at the brink of frustration to give ourselves time to think.
- **P = Pay Attention** enables us to take in the situation and our surroundings. Who is involved in this situation? Do the people and things involved contribute to my health and happiness or do they cause friction in my life?
- **I = Investigate Options** gives us options for actions and reactions. What possible decisions could I make? Whom do my decisions affect? Would any of these options harm my relationships, or would they bring about good things? Who could help me figure out my options: parents, trusted adults, older siblings?
- **R = Remember You are a Follower of Christ** reminds us that we are called to do as Jesus did. Would my decision go against God or the Church? Would I be living out my faith or turning away from it?
- **I = Invite the Spirit's Wisdom and Guidance** invokes the Spirit to help us live as disciples. For what should I pray to help make my decision?
- **T = Take Action** calls us to make the choice to live as disciples.

3. After reviewing the SPIRIT process of decision making, invite the participants to think of a decision they have to make as a family or as an individual. This could be dealing with keeping the house clean, dealing with a friend who has gossiped about you, or any other situation that calls for a decision.

4. Look at page 7 in the *Ordinary Time* workbook to practice applying the process to life experiences. Allow enough time for individuals to work through the sheet so they can get a realistic feel for the methodology. Play some reflective music to set the mood during this time.

PRAY IT!

Learning from Christ, Relying on the Spirit (10 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - parish hymnals or other songbooks
 - Catholic Youth Bibles* or other bibles
 - optional: tambourines, maracas, or other percussion instruments

- Recruit eight readers and instruct them to turn to page 8 of their *Ordinary Time* workbooks. Allow them to practice their parts before the activity begins.

1. Distribute the hymnals and invite the participants to join in singing “I Will Choose Christ,” by Tom Booth, or a similar song with a discipleship theme.

2. Begin the prayer in the following manner:

Leader: Let us begin with the sign of our faith: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

3. Lead into the proclamation of Mark 2:13–14, *Jesus Calls Levi*, by saying:

- We learned that being a disciple of Jesus is a choice. Daily, we decide whether to follow Jesus’s way of life. Let us listen to the choice that Levi, a tax collector and a nonbeliever, made.

4. After a moment of quiet, invite the participants to turn to page 8 in their workbooks, noting that they should respond where **All:** appears. Continue the prayer with reassurance that the Spirit helps us with our decisions.

Leader: Jesus knew it was hard to live the life of a disciple, so he sent us his Spirit. The Holy Spirit graces us with seven gifts that strengthen us to live a holy life.

Reader 1: Wisdom: Through wisdom, the wonders of nature, every event in history, and all the ups and downs of our life take on deeper meaning and purpose.

All: Jesus, our teacher, Holy Spirit, our guide, grant us the wisdom to choose the path to holiness.

Reader 2: Understanding: The gift of understanding is the ability to comprehend how a person must live her or his life as a follower of Jesus.

All: Jesus, our teacher, Holy Spirit, our guide, grant us understanding to recognize your presence in our daily living.

Reader 3: Right Judgment: The gift of right judgment is the ability to know the difference between right and wrong and then to choose what is good.

All: Jesus, our teacher, Holy Spirit, our guide, grant us right judgment to distinguish right from wrong and do what is right.

Reader 4: Courage: The gift of courage enables us to take risks and to overcome fear as we try to live out the Gospel of Jesus.

All: Jesus, our teacher, Holy Spirit, our guide, grant us courage in our struggle to live out the Gospel.

Reader 5: Knowledge: The gift of knowledge is the ability to comprehend the basic meaning and message of Jesus.

All: Jesus, our teacher, Holy Spirit, our guide, grant us knowledge to learn how to be who you want us to be.

Reader 6: Reverence: The gift of reverence gives us a deep sense of respect for God.

All: Jesus, our teacher, Holy Spirit, our guide, grant us reverence to invite you into our lives and into our decisions.

Reader 7: Wonder and Awe: The gift of wonder and awe makes us aware of God’s total majesty, unlimited power, and desire for justice.

All: Jesus, our teacher, Holy Spirit, our guide, grant us wonder and awe to revel in your unconditional and unlimited love.

Leader: May we continue to learn from Jesus, trust in the Holy Spirit, and praise God in all we do so people will know we are Christians.

All: Amen.

(The teaching lines on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit are taken from Brian Singer-Towns et al., *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*, pp. 374–375.)

5. Close the prayer session with a joyful rendition of “They’ll Know We Are Christians,” by Peter Scholtes, or another song that sends the participants out with a sense of mission.

STUDY IT! LONGER

Parish

Invite one or two members from the parish pastoral council to share how decisions are made on the parish level. Give them information on how the SPIRIT decision-making process works. Ask them to identify a current issue on the council agenda that can be used with the young people and the SPIRIT process. Be sure to have any background information available to weigh into the decision making and offer this experience as an opportunity for the youth of the parish to make a recommendation to the parish council.

Families

Create a flyer outlining the SPIRIT decision-making process for families to refer to at home. Or make SPIRIT magnets with card stock and adhesive magnetic tape to put up on the refrigerator or in a school locker.

Other Generations

Toward the end of the “Discipleship Alert System” activity, set up a panel of people from different stages of life (teens, young adults, parish elders) to share their ratings of the list of discipleship actions. Which actions do the various generations feel are most difficult? Why? What other actions would they add to the list? Invite them to share about times in their lives when they have felt the presence of the Spirit giving them wisdom and strength. Or invite those recently confirmed, possibly a candidate for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, to talk about their experience of Confirmation and how the Spirit helps them make decisions in keeping with Jesus’s example. Make sure the speakers you bring in are able to articulate an understanding of the Spirit’s role in their lives and to connect healthy decisions back to their foundation in faith.

Celebrate the Season

Invite the young people to consider the following ideas for continuing to live out the season of Ordinary Time:

- Think about people who are leaders in the community. Think about people you know or know about (either personally or through the media or as an acquaintance) who you believe are models of good Christian discipleship. Spend some time finding out

how they have been influenced by others to live a Christian lifestyle. How do they show their commitment to living as Christ's disciple? Use the Internet, the newspaper, or other people as your resources.

- If you are not already familiar with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), take the time to learn about it. Attend open sessions in your parish with your parents or older siblings. Find out when those preparing for RCIA will be praying, retreating, learning, and so on. Remember to pray for them and recognize them at Mass. If you know someone personally in the RCIA process, ask if you can interview that person about why he or she decided to join the Catholic Church and how that decision has affected his or her life.



LIVE IT! LONGER

To Be or Not to Be a Disciple

Use the media to help the young people differentiate between decisions in line with discipleship and decisions contrary to discipleship, and draw attention to people the youth may know (celebrity and noncelebrity) to share background on their choices to be followers of Christ.

- Have small groups scan a few stories from a section of the newspaper. Highlight decisions people made that resulted in positive actions. Contrast those by finding stories with negative actions. How did people's decisions contribute to the outcome positively or negatively?
- Pick a movie the majority of the group has seen and one that is appropriate for early adolescents. Review decisions made in the movie that led to positive endings and negative endings.
- Discuss people the participants know who live as disciples. These can be celebrities or personal acquaintances. How do these people show their commitment to living as Christ's disciples?
- Invite Confirmation candidates to share why they decided to join the Catholic Church and how that decision has affected their lives.
- If young people seem interested in a particular reality TV show, use their interest to apply SPIRIT to decisions they see the contestants making.

Acknowledgments

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Endnote Cited in a Quotation from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1. *Dei Filius* 4: Denzinger-Schonmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (1965) 3017.