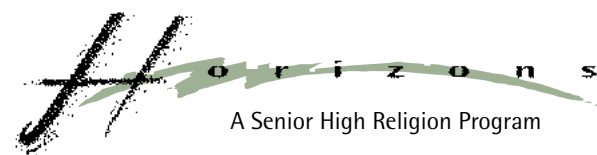


*The Church:
Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship*



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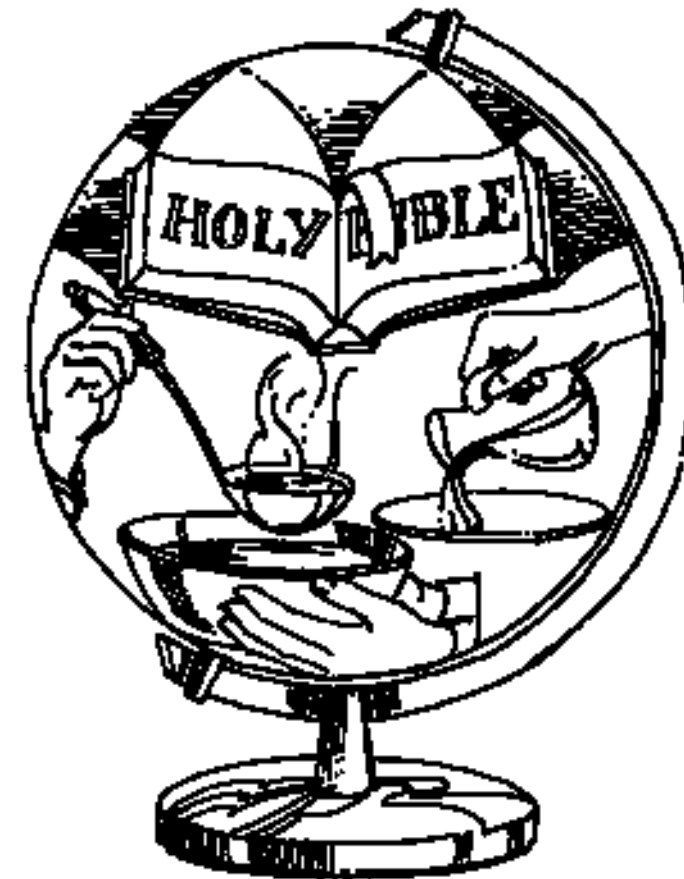
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Introduction



An Overview of This Course

The decision to include in the Horizons Program a course on the defining characteristics of Catholicism was not a particularly difficult one. After all, how could a religious education curriculum that makes a claim to completeness not include such a course?

The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship is designed to do two things. First, the course introduces and summarizes the church's central beliefs, moral vision, and communal worship. The young people will be able to leave this course with a clearer and more integrated sense of how the beliefs and practices of the church fit together. Second, *The Church:*

Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship invites the young people to identify concerns and questions related to the church that are of primary significance for them, and it provides a structured approach for the leaders to respond to those concerns. The course accomplishes these goals in creative ways that actively engage and hold the interest of the young people, without in any way compromising the theological integrity of the material.

We view this course as a central and essential component of the Horizons Program for two complementary reasons:

Young people have a natural hunger for a sense of religious identity and for connection to a meaningful community. Within the broad search for a sense of self that is a dominating concern of adolescents, young people also struggle to make sense of their experience of personal faith and communal religion. Many adolescents begin to recognize that they have been socialized into a particular religious tradition, probably through the religious convictions and influence of their parents. The question they now confront is Do I want to embrace this tradition for myself, on my own terms? To answer that question, young people need solid information that is appropriately presented.

Adolescents also have a powerful drive toward community, a need to belong to a caring group that can provide a sense of meaning in life. Participation in church-related programs and activities can speak to that need. In addition, a course on the beliefs and practices of their inherited tradition can help them feel more deeply connected to the community of believers.

As adult representatives of the church, we have a responsibility to faithfully pass on to a new generation our heritage as Catholics. We offer a course on Catholic identity not simply because “the kids need it.” We do so out of a love for and commitment to our Catholic faith, and a desire that our central beliefs, practices, and moral convictions be not only understood but freely embraced by the young people. We want to continue the process that has been sustained for nearly two thousand years, as one generation of believers faithfully passes on its heritage to another. This is not merely a commendable desire on our part. It is also a fundamental responsibility, mandated by Jesus himself: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19–20, NAB).

Because the available content for a course on Catholicism is nearly overwhelming in scope and complexity, we needed to find a way to structure the course that would be easy to follow and make sense to the young people. The title for this course, *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship*, reflects the framework within which the content is organized and integrated. The course structure and method of organization are discussed in more detail later in this introduction.

The opening session introduces the broad parameters of the course. After two icebreakers and an introduction, the young people engage in a prayer ritual focused on the meaning of baptism. The ritual is followed by a presentation that reviews important concepts treated in earlier Horizons core courses. The session then moves into a creative exercise that opens up the entire range of topics related to Catholic belief and practice by challenging the young people to organize within the categories of wisdom, works, and worship over one hundred items related to Catholicism. Finally, the young people brainstorm questions regarding any of those dimensions of the church. Their questions become the subject of optional panel discussions in succeeding sessions.

Sessions 2, 3, and 4 each focus on one of the categories surveyed in the first session. Session 2 centers on the wisdom, or central beliefs, of the church. The opening prayer ritual uses two primary Catholic symbols—the sign of the cross and holy water. A panel discussion on the church’s wisdom follows, in which guest panel members dialog with the young people about the questions related to church teaching that were generated in the first session. Then the participants engage in an art activity that challenges them to demonstrate in a graphic way how the central beliefs of Catholicism fit together. Next, the teacher makes a short presentation on the characteristics of the Catholic worldview. The session closes with a prayer ritual centered on the Nicene Creed as a summary of the church’s beliefs.

The moral vision of Catholics is the theme of session 3. Both the opening prayer service and the first discussion exercise help the young people identify the values that define them as persons and serve as primary influences in their life. The participants then reflect on the central values of Jesus. A Scripture search exercise follows, in which the participants identify the central biblical principles that constitute the church’s moral vision. The teacher then has the option of including a panel discussion, like the one in session 2 but centered on moral issues of concern to the young people.

In session 4 the young people explore the rich tapestry of symbols and rituals that is the foundation of the church’s sacramental life. The teacher is guided through the creation of an opening ritual. A brief presentation on symbols, rituals, and sacraments in the life of the church follows the opening ritual, and two exercises help the young people understand the power of these elements to convey and celebrate profound meaning. Once again the

teacher has the option of including a panel discussion, this time focusing on the young people’s questions related to the church’s worship. A guided meditation on personal encounters with Jesus closes the session.

The final session serves as a wrap-up for the course by providing an opportunity for the young people to reflect on, summarize, and then celebrate what it means to live as Catholic Christians. The session opens with a discussion exercise on the church of the future and invites the participants to reflect on the contribution they might make to help create that future. The key point is that *they are the church*, and they share in the responsibility of all believers to make the church a living reflection of the person and message of Jesus. In another activity the young people try to imagine their local parish as they would like it to be. Then the teacher gives a presentation that summarizes some key principles for personal spiritual growth that must undergird one’s participation in the community of faith. The closing prayer service recalls the rich meaning of baptism and invites the participants to express ritually what they have shared with one another in the course.

Background for This Course

The Adolescent and This Course

In his landmark book *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), John Westerhoff identifies four styles of faith within the broad sweep of lifelong faith development. The second and third styles are most applicable to the mid-adolescent experience. In the second style, affiliative faith, the young person’s need for peer acceptance and for participation in a caring community finds expression in a desire to feel included in the religious community in which he or she has been raised. Because of this desire, learning about the traditions of the faith community and participating in broader youth ministry activities can be attractive to younger adolescents. The third style, searching faith, typically emerges during the mid- to late-adolescent years. This style of faith is characterized by questioning, doubting, and serious reflecting on the faith that the person has inherited. The essential question asked at this time is Do I now want to freely accept as my own the traditions, beliefs, and

practices of the community with which I have been affiliated? For some people, the answer is an immediate yes. For others, deep and sometimes painful reflection takes place.

Making generalizations about the faith development of any age-group is somewhat risky, but the majority of young people with whom you will share *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* will be in the process of moving from affiliative faith toward searching faith. This broad movement will itself be characterized by diverse levels of depth and intensity.

Some of the participants will be deeply affiliated with the church and its teachings, convinced by their upbringing and experience that the church possesses truth and should not be questioned. Perhaps a larger number will be only culturally affiliated, bound to the church more by socialization than by personal conviction. Some will be facing the emergence of major questions on many levels of their life, perhaps most strongly in the areas of self-esteem and relationships. For them, religion and faith may seem like nonissues because other concerns dominate their life. Finally, a minority of the participants may well be engaged in a conscious searching faith, raising questions about everything from the existence of God to the right of the church to dictate moral guidelines.

Besides the issue of faith development, another consideration in your work with *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* is the various levels of experience the participants have with evangelization and religious formation. This course responds creatively to a diversity of starting points and addresses a classic challenge for religious educators. On the one hand, we must faithfully represent the traditions and teachings of the church. On the other hand, we must do so with full awareness of and respect for the young people *as they are*.

The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship attempts to be responsive to the needs of youth in a number of ways. First, the course does not presume that the young people are already committed Catholic Christians. Second, every attempt is made to create a safe and nonthreatening learning environment. Finally, active learning processes are used throughout the course, allowing the already evangelized and religiously informed young people in effect to evangelize their peers. The teacher is primarily a facilitator of that dynamic process rather than a source of all wisdom and knowledge.

The Structure of This Course

We faced a daunting task in conceptualizing a course on such a broad and complex theme as Catholicism—particularly knowing that we had only a *total* of 10 hours with which to work! Where does one begin in deciding what belongs in such a course and how that content is to be organized?

A number of optional approaches to this course were available to us. For example, the basic content and organization of the course might have been approached from a historical perspective, in which central beliefs and practices are identified and discussed in the order that they have emerged over the centuries. A biblical approach may have been employed, centering on the scriptural origins of the church in the Acts of the Apostles and perhaps exploring some of the biblical images of the church. Or we might have used the creed as the organizing principle for the course. In light of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, we might well have organized the course along the lines of the “four pillars” of faith identified in that document: the creed, the sacraments, the life of faith, and prayer (see *Catechism*, nos. 13–17).

Though we did not intentionally base *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* on the structure of the *Catechism*, of the options identified, that structure is most clearly reflected in the course. This is the case because the four pillars of the *Catechism* are classic categories that have been used throughout the tradition of catechisms in the church. And the categories have been so widely used because they allow us to deal with the broad expanse of Catholic belief and practice in a reasonable, organized way.

This course deals directly with three of the pillars of Catholic faith: the creed, the sacraments, and the moral vision of the church. The fourth pillar, prayer, is *implicitly* included in the course through all the prayer experiences that open and close the sessions. The theme of prayer is also *explicitly* treated in other Horizons courses: in a level 1 minicourse on prayer, in a level 2 minicourse on meditation, and in a level 3 minicourse on praying with the Scriptures.

The wisdom, works, and worship structure of this course is attractive for other reasons as well. It is easy for the young people to comprehend. With the addition of an opening session and a closing session, it provides a clean structure for a five-session course. And finally, it allows for an organized presentation of the church’s key teachings and practices, and fa-

cilitates a structured discussion of young people’s questions about those areas.

Perhaps most important, the structure of *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* allows us to connect the content of the course with the real life of the young people by focusing on religious and faith questions that can truly engage their interest: What do Catholics believe? How does the church determine what is right or wrong? Why do Catholics worship the way they do? By focusing on such questions in creative ways, this course attempts to be in touch with the real world of young people and responsive to their hungers for an intellectual understanding of faith and a closer connection to the community of faith.

This Course and Evangelization

In *The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization*, evangelization is described as “the initial effort by the faith community as a whole to proclaim through word and witness the Good News of the Gospel to those who have not yet heard or seen it, and then to invite those persons into a relationship with Jesus Christ and the community of believers” (National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry [NFCYM], p. 3). Evangelization is also the ongoing witness of the community of believers and, as such, the basis and energizing core of all the ministries in the church.

The Horizons Program is grounded in a commitment to evangelize young people effectively. Each course reflects that commitment in both content and methodology. All the courses, even those on topics that do not appear overtly “religious,” explore the connection between the lived experience of the young person and Jesus’ proclamation of the Good News. All the courses employ strategies that actively engage the whole person, demonstrating that religious education can be not only informative but life-giving and even fun! In other words the Horizons Program tries to be “good news” not just proclaim the Good News.

The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship—precisely because it is so explicitly focused on the meaning, the defining characteristics, and the potential relevance of the church for young people—must be particularly attuned to the principles of effective youth evangelization. The young people are likely to transfer to the church itself the attitudes generated by their involvement in this course. That is, if the course is boring, overly didactic, heady,

or out of touch with the real life of young people, the participants will likely (and perhaps quite reasonably) characterize the church itself along similar lines. By the same token, a course on the church that is invitational, lively, engaging, and connected to the life experience of young people will help the participants see the church in the same positive light. This can be the case even if the parish is not particularly inviting or supportive of its youth. In other words, a well-designed and effective course on the church can help offset negative experiences with the church that the young people may have had previously. It is our firm conviction that young people experiencing this course can find it highly enjoyable and even fun. The key agent in whether that will be so is, as always, the teacher.

As the teacher, do not hesitate to speak of your own faith convictions. Young people need adults who can speak openly and freely about their faith. However, this must be done in a way that does not alienate the young people by implicitly or explicitly judging their personal positions. When we create a safe and nonthreatening environment for the participants, our own faith convictions become more appealing, attractive, and worthy of the young people’s serious reflection. When we try to impose our convictions on them, we only create impenetrable walls of resistance.

Evangelization is more of a heart-to-heart than head-to-head activity. The sincere care, openness, and Christian convictions of the teacher can make the material in this course come alive. And the individual teacher must remember as well that she or he represents for the young people the entire local community of faith. *The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelization* states it well:

This witness [of individual believers] . . . is observed by young people, often unbeknownst to the faith community. Young people do indeed watch us, checking to see if our faith truly “works” for us and if faith helps us find meaning in our own lives. Therefore, the life and practice of the community give witness to the presence of the Spirit active in all its members. (P. 14)

This course will be “good news” for the young people if, and only if, the Good News of Jesus has taken root in the heart of its teacher.

On Teaching This Course

A Video Resource for Teachers

The information presented in this section identifies the elements requiring special consideration when leading *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship*. The creators of Horizons developed an informative video to prepare teachers to lead any of the courses in the program. The video is accompanied by a guide that summarizes the content of the tape, offers additional tips for teaching adolescents, and invites the teacher to track her or his experience with the program.

Both the video for teachers and its companion guide are included in the resources developed for coordinators of the Horizons Program. Contact the program coordinator in your parish for further information.

Like all courses in the Horizons Program, *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* is based on an active learning approach that balances teacher presentations with reflection time, simulations, prayer, and other activities to help the young people grasp the concepts and internalize the messages in each session. And because the course does not *presume* a personal faith commitment on the part of the young people, it is designed to be invitational, engaging, evangelizing, and therefore enjoyable for both the young people and the teacher.

Whether or not you are an experienced catechist, working through the detailed session plans in this manual should not be a problem. However, to experience a high degree of success, you will need to prepare yourself and the learning environment. The following information is intended to help you do that.

Preparing Yourself

Before teaching *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship*, read the entire course. Using marginal notes, identify particular topics or exercises that you think might be especially challenging or problematic. Examples would be an exercise that does not seem to play to your personal strengths as a teacher, or the discussion of a church teaching or practice with which you have struggled. If necessary, begin to plan in advance how you might handle such situations, perhaps reviewing some of the resources recommended at the end of this introduction.

Perhaps more important, spend some time before teaching the course reflecting on your personal experience as a Catholic. If you have been a lifelong member of the church, try to recall your own adolescent experience of the beliefs and practices of Catholicism, in part to get in touch with what *might* be the experience of your students. Or if your experience of the church when you were young appears dramatically different from that of people who are young today, reflect on the implications of that fact, both positive and negative, for teaching this course. On the other hand, if you joined the Catholic community as an adult, try to articulate what attracted you to it, and imagine how you might share that experience with the young people. Finally, in preparing to teach each session in the course, continually ask yourself, What has happened in my life as a Catholic to make this material significant and personally meaningful? Such reflection will often surface stories of life experiences that when shared with the young people, can bring the course alive for them and for you.

Preparing the Learning Environment

The effectiveness of a course such as *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* depends, in part, on the physical surroundings and community environment of the group. High school students are likely to respond more positively if the space is comfortable and different from typical school surroundings and the atmosphere is conducive to sharing. Here are two suggestions for creating that type of environment.

Create a good physical atmosphere. You will need a physically comfortable space with sufficient room for the participants to move around. Some sessions require the participants to spend reflection time alone. It will be easier for them to resist the temptation to visit with other participants if they have enough room to separate from one another. Comfortable furniture and living-room lighting will help create a homey feeling. An easel with a pad of newsprint or a flip chart will be helpful for many of the activities. The traditional classroom is the least desirable situation. If such a room is your only option, try using music, candles, icons, or other sensory devices to create a more inviting environment.

Clarify expectations. At the beginning of the course, establish among the participants an atmosphere of mutual respect. Stress the importance of listening to one another and of refraining from hurtful remarks or put-downs. When necessary remind the participants of these rules. Even a brief cruel remark can ruin the experience for a young person with an already precarious self-image.

Preparing the Material

Before each session read through the session plan and try to picture the processes happening in your group. You may need to make some adjustments based on your knowledge of the participants and the physical setting. Some of the activities will require preparation. This could range from making an outline of a presentation on newsprint to asking people to be part of a panel discussion. Allow yourself adequate time to get ready.

All the sessions include brief periods of teacher input. Some of these presentations are informational, but most are intended to bring closure to a part of the session so that the participants might understand the connections between life and faith—between themselves, the church, and God. The session plans offer guidelines for these brief talks. Spend time putting these presentations together so that they are clear and hold the attention of the participants. Where it is helpful and appropriate, do not be afraid to share parts of your own story with the young people.

Sharing Your Own Story

Every course in Horizons connects elements of the Christian faith with the life experiences of young people. As an adult you have much to share from your own life that will be of value to the young people. Your willingness to share your experiences will enrich this course. It will also send the message to the young people that telling one's personal story in the group is okay. When you share your experiences with the young people, you show that you trust them enough to speak from your heart. And without saying it, you also invite them to do the same.

Some commonsense guidelines can help you share your story in a way that adds to the understanding of the participants, but does not distract them from their own life story:

- Be brief and to the point. Remember, the young people are there to reflect on their own life story, not yours.
- Talk about your experiences as a teenager without preaching or moving into the fatal “When I was your age . . .” mode.
- Share only the things that young adolescents are emotionally prepared to handle.
- Be realistic. Talk about your struggles, triumphs, and growth over the years. This will let the participants know that self-knowledge is indeed a process. Do not mislead them into thinking that adults have all the answers. It is also unfair to suggest or imply that adolescents have no answers.
- Be honest and sincere. The young people will see through you if you are not, and your effectiveness as a teacher will be diminished.

Using Music

Some of the activities in *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* suggest using music. No activities in this course *require* music or suggest specific pieces of music, because cultural preferences and individual tastes differ and specific tapes, CDs, or needed equipment may not be available. But music is a central part of the world of most adolescents, and you are thus encouraged to use it in the suggested places as well as in other activities where you think that it might be appropriate.

Background music for prayer. All the musical recommendations for this course are in conjunction with prayer experiences. Some groups are easily distracted by the sounds around them. If your group has a hard time concentrating in silence, consider using background music to help the participants focus. Even for people who do not have trouble concentrating, music can alter their mood and contribute to a sense of peace, inner silence, and solemnity. Use slow, soothing instrumental music, preferably something that is unrecognizable to the group. Labels such as Windham Hill and Narada are known for their alternative adult-contemporary recordings, which are particularly useful for this purpose. Some classical music can also help to create the type of environment you need. Or use recorded natural sounds. Most music stores have recordings of ocean surf, rain forests, or running streams. Such music is particularly appropriate for some of this course's prayer rituals related to baptism.

Popular music and liturgical music, for reflection. Even though you are never specifically directed to do so, you may want to add a reflection song to certain activities. The song you choose may be one that is currently popular among youth in your area or a liturgical song that has particular significance for your parish. If you are not certain about what might work in prayer activities for your group, ask a few young people for their advice well in advance of the session, so that they can listen for songs that will be useful. You might even consider forming a music advisory group of participants, whose job it is to listen to music and make recommendations to you. Besides helping you, it could be an affirming experience for the young people, who are generally thought of as learners and are not usually consulted for their expertise.

Using Journals

Keeping a journal, or simply writing an occasional journal exercise, is a good way for young people to internalize learning, record the events of their life, keep track of feelings, or explore a topic further. Most of the courses in the Horizons Program, including *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship*, offer suggestions for including an optional journal component. In some cases the journal suggestions are designed to be included in the session itself; in others they are intended for use by the participants between sessions.

Journal activities present an opportunity for one-to-one ministry to young people. A young person might write something in a journal that he or she would not feel comfortable sharing in a group or even talking about at all. If you do assign journal activities, we strongly encourage you to take the time to read the young people's responses—with *their permission*—and then write in comments or words of encouragement or affirmation. Your personal attention might make a big difference to a young person who is struggling, searching, or just growing up.

Though we strongly encourage you to consider using at least some of the journal activities in *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship*, they are not an integral part of the course. In fact, some practical reasons can be given for *not* including the journal component. First, if *every* teacher of *every* course in the Horizons Program chose to include journal keeping, the young people would quickly tire of the activity. Second, the process of journal keeping is time consuming and energy consuming for teachers.

Teachers of multiple courses could become frustrated, if not exhausted, by having to monitor a large number of journals. Finally, some people simply do not like to keep a journal. It is better to encourage journal writing as a form of personal exploration for young people than to demand it of them.

Carefully assess whether the journal option is a good one in your particular situation. Consult the program coordinator and teachers of other courses. If you decide to incorporate journal activities into your course, some nitty-gritty questions must be answered: What materials are required? Will you respond to journal entries, and if so, in what way? What will you do if a young person reveals in a journal concerns or issues that demand a response beyond your ability or your authority as a teacher? For helpful information on these and other issues related to journal keeping, consult your program coordinator.

Using This Course as a Retreat

Some of the courses in the Horizons Program can effectively be adapted to a retreat format. Other courses do not lend themselves to reformatting because of the content or intensity of the material.

If you are thinking about providing a retreat experience for the participants based on this course, consult the program coordinator. The first consideration must be the readiness level of the young people themselves. Then think about your own or other adults' ability to adapt this material into a retreat format and lead an effective experience for young people. Finally, consider the following advantages, disadvantages, and option:

Advantages

A retreat format allows for a very integrated and intense presentation and discussion on the central characteristics of the Catholic church. It also suggests a greater stature, if you will, for the content; the sense is conveyed that this material is so important that you are going to devote an entire retreat to it.

A recurring option in three of the five sessions in this course is a panel discussion involving invited guests who dialog with the young people about their personal questions regarding the church. A retreat setting is particularly conducive to such an activity, allowing for a more extended panel discussion than is possible in any one session. On a prac-

tical level, it requires logistical arrangements for only one, rather than multiple, discussions.

Of particular significance, perhaps, is that the retreat environment by definition lends itself to personal and communal prayer. As mentioned earlier, *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* incorporates creative prayer experiences and rituals as essential components in each of the sessions. A retreat environment enhances the likelihood that the rituals will have their desired effect.

Finally, a retreat format allows for the inclusion of sacramental celebrations, especially the Eucharist. It is difficult to imagine a more truly "Catholic" addition to the course than an effective celebration of the Mass, the source and summit of the church's worship. Of course, such a celebration could be added to the course even outside the retreat format, but perhaps not as effectively.

Disadvantages

The primary disadvantage in adapting *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* to a retreat format is the content-heavy and complex nature of much of the material. This is a very rich course, one that is reasonable and manageable when taken in small bites. However, it may be too daunting—for both participants and teachers—if experienced in an intense retreat format. For the same reason, providing the young people adequate time between sessions for the material to sink in may well result in deeper and more lasting learning. Finally, each of the sessions, when guided individually, requires substantial preparation on the part of the teacher. Completing *all* such preparation for a single event may prove to be unrealistic.

An Attractive Option

The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship, because of the unique flow of themes and strategies, suggests an optional schedule that may be quite unique in the Horizons Program. The course could be organized as follows:

- The first *two* sessions could be offered as part of a daylong retreat or "twilight" retreat or day of reflection. Those sessions lend themselves well to such an arrangement, and the unique schedule would signal the special importance of the course without requiring all the extra preparation of a full-blown retreat.

- Sessions 3 and 4 could be scheduled as conventional sessions.
- Session 5 would conclude the course, perhaps with the addition of a eucharistic liturgy and a meal or party.

If you are seeking a way to make both this course and your total program a bit more special and appealing to the young people, such an approach to *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* may prove particularly helpful.

Special Preparation Needs

Two elements in *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* require considerable planning and preparation. Depending on how you choose to handle these matters, you may need to make some arrangements well before actually teaching the course. Carefully read the following information, as well as the related material from the session plans, and plan accordingly:

Panel Discussions

As mentioned previously, *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* uses the strategy of panel discussions to facilitate reflection and conversation by the young people on church-related issues of personal significance to them. In session 1 the participants brainstorm a wide variety of questions categorized according to the church's wisdom (beliefs), works (moral principles and teachings), and worship (sacramental and communal prayer life). Following that session the teacher collates all the questions and consolidates them into a manageable number of major questions. In session 2 time is set aside to process with the young people those questions related to the church's wisdom. In sessions 3 and 4, similar discussions on the church's works and worship are included as *options only*. That is, if the discussion activity that is required in session 2 proves effective, you may decide to repeat it in sessions 3 and 4. However, those two sessions also offer alternative activities for those who do not wish to repeat the panel discussion technique.

The term *panel discussion* is frequently used to identify this teaching strategy. However, a number of approaches to these discussions are available to you:

- A *conventional panel* would ideally involve three or four members who represent a variety of viewpoints and perspectives. Prospective members might be a parish priest, a representative parent, a youth minister, and perhaps an older adolescent, for instance, a high school senior.
- Instead of a panel, you might prefer to invite a *single guest speaker* who would offer insights into the questions generated by the young people and engage in dialog with them. Again, various persons might fill such a role: a parish priest or other pastoral leader, a youth leader who has good knowledge of Catholic theology and a reputation for working well with young people, a teacher of theology from a local Catholic high school or college, or a diocesan leader. One obvious advantage of opting for a single speaker instead of a panel is the relative ease of recruitment. Additionally, one speaker might more easily provide an integrated and coherent response to the young people's questions. A disadvantage of this approach, of course, is that one person is expected to capture and hold the attention of the group, whereas a panel discussion has an innate quality of intensity and interest generated by multiple personalities.
- A third option, and probably the easiest one to manage, is to *guide this discussion yourself*. Only you can judge the relative advantages and disadvantages of this approach. Do you have the theological background required for the activity? Will the young people be missing a valuable opportunity to be exposed to other leaders? Is this a good opportunity that would be missed for involving the parish priest(s) in an appropriate and reasonable way?

Regardless of the approach you choose for the discussion activities, a major dilemma you will face in guiding them is the limits of time. That concern might become real in a variety of ways: (a) the number and variety of questions raised by the participants might force you to eliminate questions you would like to explore; (b) the recruitment of a speaker or speakers for such a limited amount of time may be difficult; (c) a speaker may become too wordy or may respond to questions at a greater depth than is necessary. The last predicament would force you either to cut the speaker off or to lengthen the time allotted for the discussion, thereby jeopardizing other parts of the session.

Such circumstances offer no pat, simple solutions. Assess your situation carefully and think through in

advance as precisely as you can how the activity is likely to unfold in your case. Prepare as well as possible, and be alert for lessons you can learn from your experience so that you can retain them and pass them on to other teachers.

Special Prayer Experiences, Rituals, and Activities

The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship includes a variety of prayer experiences and rituals, as well as an occasional learning activity, that require careful preparation and, in some cases, practice. By reading the entire course in advance, you should be able to identify situations that might require such preparation. For your convenience a list of special preparation needs precedes the detailed plan for every session.

This Course and Total Youth Ministry

Additional Youth Ministry Program Suggestions

The Horizons Program includes a manual entitled *Youth Ministry Strategies: Creative Activities to Complement the Horizons Curriculum*. It contains a variety of activities and strategies organized into thematic categories and cross-referenced according to the courses in the curriculum. It includes suggestions for shortened and extended programs, off-site events, intergenerational gatherings, parish involvement, and prayer and liturgical celebrations.

This valuable resource can enhance the young people's experience of the Horizons Program and help your parish fulfill a commitment to total youth ministry. Contact your program coordinator about the availability of the manual.

Parish Program Connections

A religious education curriculum is, ideally, just one component of a total parish program in which all those responsible for the formation of young people work together with the entire parish to meet the holistic needs of its youth. In some cases a parish will provide youth ministry options in addition to—

and, unfortunately, sometimes in competition with—the religious education curriculum. The Horizons Program advocates that all the efforts of the parish to reach out and respond to the needs of young people be mutually supportive and even complementary. *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* can provide a valuable context for other youth ministry experiences in the parish. Such experiences might include the following:

- Perhaps the central defining characteristic of Roman Catholicism—at least in terms of its public expression—is the church's liturgical life. Regardless of when during the calendar year you offer this course, try to incorporate within it some connections to the parish's liturgical life. For example, you might include in your session prayers some Advent or Lenten prayers or practices, or encourage the young people to join in other parish events associated with major liturgical seasons. When doing so, stress that we become more deeply Catholic by living out the daily and seasonal practices and celebrations of the community.
- Encourage or challenge the participants to develop a presentation or event for younger children, related to the life of Catholics. For example, the participants could develop their own version of the stations of the cross, to be offered to middle school youth. This would require the participants to study the origins and spiritual value of the stations and to reflect on how the stations might be made more relevant to today's young people.
- Invite the young people as a group to experience one or more elements of parish life. For example, they might attend and celebrate together the same weekend liturgy, participate in a parish Thanksgiving basket drive, or attend together Good Friday or Easter Vigil services. Such activities can enhance both their sense of community with one another and their connectedness with the broader parish community.
- Many parishes celebrate annual or seasonal events intended to enhance the spirit of community among parishioners. Examples are an annual parish bazaar and a summer picnic. Find ways to include young people in such events in a leadership or service capacity.

Family Connections

In addition to broadening parish connections, *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* lends itself to forging links with the family life of the participants. Here are some options to consider:

- Send a description of the course to the parents of the young people, perhaps identifying the theme of each session. Encourage the parents to share stories with their daughter or son about how they, the parents, experienced various dimensions of the church when they were the age of their child. For example, parents might describe how they experienced the Mass as children, or explain a life experience through which they learned the importance of particular church teachings.
- Invite parents to participate in the first session of the course. The opening and closing rituals and the identification exercise on the characteristics of Catholic identity are engaging and non-threatening activities that can be comfortably participated in by parents and children together.
- Encourage families to become involved in liturgical ministries. Many parishes welcome families to minister as greeters or to take responsibility for setting up the worship space before a Sunday liturgy.

Goals and Objectives in This Course

Why Use Goals and Objectives?

Curriculums take on greater clarity, direction, and purpose if they are described in terms of their goals and objectives. This observation is based on a commonsense principle: We have a difficult time getting somewhere if we do not know where we are going. Educators who design learning experiences must identify their destination as a first step in determining how to get there. The statement of goals and objectives is a practical way to identify the desired outcomes for a program.

In the Horizons Program, goals and objectives are used in the following ways:

Goals. Goals are broad statements of what we wish to accomplish—learning outcomes we hope to achieve. The coordinator's manual for the Horizons Program provides the goals for the entire curriculum. Each course within the total program also includes a statement of its goals. The goals often have an idealistic quality, inviting the teacher to reflect on how the course relates to the personal and faith development of the young people. At the same time, the course goals are realistic, measurable, and attainable. As a teacher, at the end of the course, you should be able to look back and determine if you have in fact achieved the course goals.

Objectives. Objectives are statements that define how to get to the goals. They name the specific tasks that must be accomplished if the goals are to be achieved. Each course supplies a clear statement of objectives for each session in the course.

The Goals and Objectives of *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship*

Goals

This course has four goals:

- That the leaders briefly review with the young people several key concepts from level 1 of the Horizons Program
- That the young people examine the traditions, beliefs, and practices that distinguish Catholicism and serve as a basis of the religious identity of Catholic Christians
- That in addition to growing in intellectual understanding of the church's beliefs and practices, the young people grow in their personal sense of belonging to the community of believers
- That they leave the course with a deeper respect for the Catholic church and an increased desire to participate in its communal life

Objectives

Each session has its own objectives, which help realize the four course goals. The objectives of *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* follow:

Session 1

“The Characteristics of the Catholic Church”

- To review with the young people the key concepts about faith, religion, and Catholic Christianity presented in earlier Horizons core courses
- To invite them to embrace the meaning of their baptism as Catholic Christians
- To initiate their reflection on and discussion of the wisdom, works, and worship of the Roman Catholic church

Session 2

“The Wisdom of the Catholic Church: Seeking to Name Our Experience of God”

- To explore with the young people the central beliefs of Catholic Christianity
- To summarize the defining characteristics that together constitute Catholic identity
- To awaken the young people to the rich history and significance of the Nicene Creed

Session 3

“The Works of the Catholic Church: Living the Vision and Values of Jesus”

- To help the young people identify their primary values and evaluate how those values affect their daily decisions and behavior
- To review with them the vision and values of Jesus
- To guide them in reflection on the central characteristics of a Gospel view of the moral life
- To examine the roles of the church as servant and herald and to explore its focus on ministry and justice

Session 4

“The Worship of the Catholic Church: Celebrating with Symbols and Rituals”

- To awaken the young people to the meaning, purpose, and power of symbols and rituals
- To help them reflect on the nature of the church's sacraments, and to deepen their appreciation of those sacred rites
- To help them understand that their encounters with Jesus in the sacraments are reflections and indicators of all the other ways in which Jesus comes to meet us

Session 5

“Being Catholic, Being Church: Living Out Our Baptism”

- To provide an opportunity for the young people to reflect on and summarize what it means to them to live as a Catholic Christian
- To challenge them to imagine the life of the parish as they would like it to be, and to commit themselves to help make it so
- To guide them to understand some of the dynamics of the spiritual journey and to make them aware of the personal and communal resources needed to sustain it
- To bring the course to a prayerful close

Suggested Resources

As an overview and summary of the beliefs, moral vision, and sacramental life of the Catholic church, *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* offers the possibility of virtually endless questions about our Tradition. Those questions may be generated by the participants or by your own efforts to prepare and lead the sessions. In developing this course, a number of resources were particularly helpful, if not at least occasionally indispensable. You may find the same resources useful when the inevitable questions arise.

Catholic Update and *Youth Update* (Cincinnati: Saint Anthony Messenger Press). These two excellent periodicals offer short, solid articles on a wide variety of Catholic issues. The former is geared for adults, the latter for high school youth. Both can be purchased in bulk at very reasonable prices, so that a particularly helpful issue could be purchased and distributed to all the leaders or young people. For information about each periodical and a list of available articles, call toll free 800-488-0488.

Dues, Greg. *Catholic Customs and Traditions: A Popular Guide*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1993. This reference work provides brief but accurate explanations of a wide variety of points of interest related to Catholicism's beliefs, liturgical practices, and more. A handy index makes this book particularly useful.

Hays, Edward. *Prayers for the Domestic Church*. Easton, KS: Forest of Peace Books, 1982.

Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Translated by the United States Catholic Conference (USCC). Washington, DC: USCC, 1994. This resource should be readily available and should be the first source to which you turn when seeking definitive church teaching.

McBrien, Richard. *Catholicism*. New ed. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994. Very thorough and highly readable, this resource is regarded by many as the most helpful summary available of contemporary Catholic theology. Its glossary of terms and index are particularly useful in tracking down quick and balanced responses to nearly all theological questions that are likely to emerge in your work with this course.

National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB). *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*. Washington, DC: NCCB, 1988.

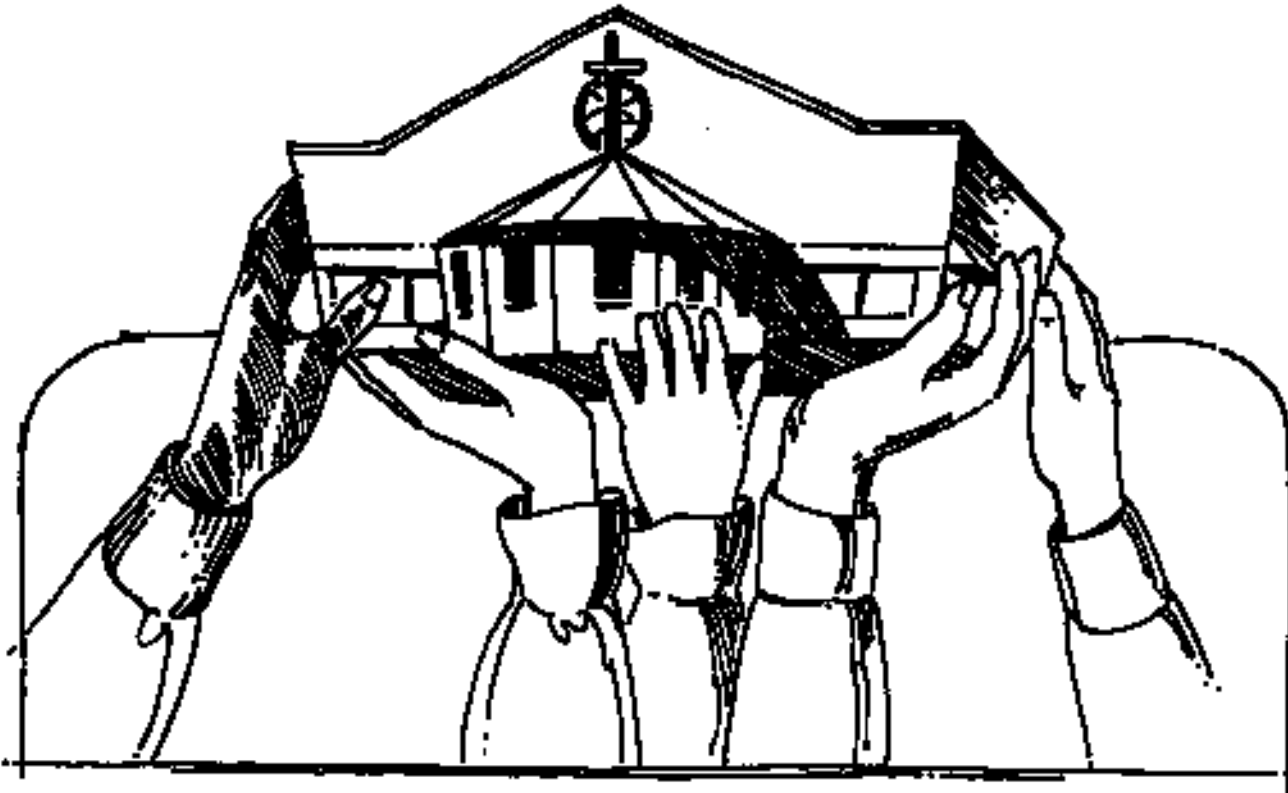
Rice, Wayne. *Play It!* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1986.

Rydberg, Denny. *Youth Group Trust Builders*. Loveland, CO: Group Books, 1993.

Turpin, Joanne. *Catholic Treasures New and Old: Traditions, Customs, and Practices*. Cincinnati: Saint Anthony Messenger Press, 1993. This small book is intended to help young Catholics and those new to the church to understand many of the unfamiliar customs and practices that help make up the fabric of Catholic communal life.

SESSION 1

The Characteristics of the Catholic Church



Objectives

- To review with the young people the key concepts about faith, religion, and Catholic Christianity presented in earlier Horizons core courses
- To invite them to embrace the meaning of their baptism as Catholic Christians
- To initiate their reflection on and discussion of the wisdom, works, and worship of the Roman Catholic church

Session Steps

- a welcome, review, and focusing exercise (25 minutes)
- an opening prayer ritual (15 minutes)
- a review of key concepts (10 minutes)
- a break (10 minutes)
- an identification exercise on the wisdom, works, and worship of Roman Catholicism (35 minutes)
- a brainstorming exercise on the participants' questions about Catholicism (15 minutes)
- a closing prayer ritual (10 minutes)

Background for the Teacher

The first session of *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* is designed to be a rich, exciting, and potentially moving introduction to the topic of Catholic identity. But it can also be a complex and challenging session for both you and the young people. The session is filled with activities that engage the participants and provide a framework for the discussion of Catholic Christianity. Rituals open and close the session so that you are able to introduce the topic in a thoughtful and prayerful way. Our hope is that the session can awaken the young people's hearts and minds and spark their enthusiasm for what lies ahead. So prepare to work hard, but know that the rewards can be wonderful!

The first half of the session engages the participants in reflection on the remarkable richness of Catholic Christianity. The second half offers a framework within which subsequent sessions on the wisdom, works, and worship of the church can be fruitfully explored. A combination of creative activities and short presentations conveys this material to the participants.

The session begins with two icebreakers. The first one helps the young people focus on their own experiences as Catholics. The second icebreaker stretches the imagination and helps the young people think about the nature of church. A ritual prayer on initiation follows, as well as a review of the key concepts introduced during the two core courses in level 1 of the Horizons Program: *Growing in Wisdom, Age, and Grace* and *Jesus: His Message and Mission*.

The major portion of the second half of the session is devoted to an identification exercise on the wisdom, worship, and works of the Catholic church. In this exercise the young people have an opportunity to brainstorm questions regarding any aspect of Catholicism. These questions will be addressed in later sessions.

Of particular significance are the prayer experiences that open and close this session. Drawing upon the theme of baptism and the rich symbolism of water, the experiences include ritual actions that engage the young people intellectually, emotionally, and even physically. Prayer in this session, therefore, is pivotal in both capturing and holding the young people's attention and in clarifying for them some of the major content of the session.

Allow yourself plenty of time to get ready for this session. One activity in particular—the identification activity on the wisdom, works, and worship of

Catholicism—can require considerable preparation. Read the entire session plan as far in advance as possible, and then schedule your time accordingly. Thorough preparation will be rewarded with a particularly significant learning experience for both the young people and you.

Preparation

✓ Materials Needed

- a candle and matches
- a Bible
- a glass or clear plastic cup for each participant
- pitchers of water
- a glass bowl, large enough to hold at least 1 gallon of water
- a tape or CD player, and a recording of reflective music (optional)
- newsprint
- felt-tipped markers, dark colors
- a white card for each item on resource 1–A, “The Wisdom, Works, and Worship of Roman Catholicism”
- a box for the cards
- masking tape, two or more rolls
- four color-coded signs on newsprint or poster board
- index cards, parallel in color to the four signs, at least ten for each small group
- two pencils for each small group
- two towels
- a cup with a pour spout or a ladle

✓ Other Necessary Preparations

Prepare to lead this session by doing the following things and checking them off as you accomplish them:

- For step A.* Collect a variety of common household objects, in boxes or bags. You will need one box or bag of items for every four or five participants. Examples are included in the explanation under step A.
- For step B.* Read through the notes on logistics and music or sound and carefully reflect on how you will conduct the opening prayer, especially the distribution of water, given the size of your group and the limits of your facilities.

- ❑ For step B. Practice the commentary that accompanies the prayer ritual.
- ❑ For step C. Prepare for the presentation on key concepts introduced during the first two core courses.
- ❑ For steps E and F. Create and label a white card of the appropriate size for your needs, for each item from resource 1–A, as described in step E.
- ❑ For steps E and F. Prepare four signs identifying the choices available to the young people when posting their cards, as directed in step E.
- ❑ For steps E and F. Carefully think through the directions for the identification activity in step E, and try to anticipate the kinds of questions and comments that might be triggered by it in step F.
- ❑ For step G. Prepare comments on the nature and characteristics of water outlined in step G.
- ❑ For step G. Memorize the short blessing that accompanies the washing ritual.
- ❑ Determine if you wish to change this session by using one or more of the alternative approaches described at the end of this session plan.

Opening Teacher Prayer

God enlightens everyone who comes into the world. Through all of creation, God makes known the unseen wonders of love so that we may learn to give thanks to our Creator.

You have followed God's light. Now the way of the Gospel opens before you, inviting you to make a new beginning by acknowledging the living God who speaks words of truth to us all. You are called to walk by the light of Christ and to trust in his wisdom. He asks you to submit yourself to him more and more and to believe in him with all your heart. This is the way of faith on which Christ will lovingly guide you to eternal life. Are you ready to enter on this path today under the leadership of Christ? (Adapted from the first promise of the rite of the catechumenate, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults [RCIA]*, no. 76.)

Though your own baptism may be an event of your infancy or a distant memory, every day of your life God asks for an answer to the question posed above: *Are you ready to enter on this path today under the leadership of Christ?* Reflect for a few moments on what that question means to you today as you prepare to teach *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and*

Worship. If you are part of a team of teachers, discuss your reflections with one another. Close with the following invocation or your own spontaneous prayer, and the sign of the cross:

Provident God, bless me with all that I need to serve you in truth.
In the name of
God, the source of all wisdom
Jesus, the teacher of truth
and the Spirit, who helps us live in truth.
Amen.

Procedure

Welcome, Review, and Focusing Exercise (25 minutes)

The purpose of this series of activities is to provide an initial welcome and, beyond that, introduce the topic of Catholic identity and help the young people begin to focus on their own experience of Catholicism. These activities also set the tone for the remainder of the course, sending the message that *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* will be an active and thought-provoking experience.

Before the session. Collect a variety of common household objects, in boxes or bags. You will need one box or bag for every four or five participants. Items could include things like a coat hanger, string, a bandage, tape, an extension cord, a toy block, a battery, a television schedule, a vase, an aspirin bottle, a calendar, and so forth. Use your imagination. Raid your junk drawer. Try to include at least five different items in each box or bag, varying the items between boxes or bags.

1. Warmly greet the young people as they arrive. If you have separate areas set aside for learning activities and prayer experiences, invite them to gather in the area that will be used for learning activities. This will allow you to move to the prayer area for the opening ritual that follows the introduction and icebreakers.

2. If the participants do not already know you, begin the session by formally introducing yourself and telling the participants a little bit about yourself. Announce that they will get a chance to meet

one another in various ways during this opening activity and the rest of the session. Then explain that you will read a number of statements. If they can provide the information you are asking about in a particular statement, they are to stand. If they cannot provide the information, they are to sit down.

Begin reading the statements listed below. If you think it is necessary, ask the young people to introduce themselves when they stand for the first time. Ask different people to respond to different statements. Not all statements need responses, and not everyone who stands needs to say something. You may want to choose some of the statements rather than reading them all.

- Stand if . . .
 - you know the month and year you were baptized
 - you can name the church where you were baptized
 - you can name both of your godparents
 - you have your baptismal candle
 - you were not baptized as an infant
 - you can remember the priest who heard your first penance
 - you can remember what your family did to celebrate your first Eucharist
 - your parents have your first eucharistic liturgy on video
 - you can remember what you wore on the day of your first Eucharist
 - you have ever been to a worship service in a church that was not Catholic
 - you have good friends who are not Catholic
 - you have always been a member of [name of your parish]
 - you are Catholic

Note: If the participants have already been confirmed, consider adding some similar statements about confirmation after the ones concerning their first Eucharist.

It is likely that everyone will stand in response to the last statement. While they are standing, divide them into smaller groups of four or five people. Do this in a nonthreatening way by using a grouping activity. For example, you could divide the participants into groups according to the season of the year in which they were baptized (or for those who do not know their baptismal date, the season in which they were born).

(The “Stand if . . .” activity is adapted from Sawyer, *The Risk of Faith*, p. 22.)

3. Give each small group an object box or bag that you prepared before the session. Ask each group to select one item from its box or bag and to come up with a one-statement slogan that compares that item to the church. For example, if the participants choose a coat hanger, they might say something like “The church is like a coat hanger: if you use it, you will have fewer wrinkles in your life.”

Allow the groups about 5 minutes to come up with their slogan. When time is up, ask them to share their slogan with the large group.

(The slogan activity is adapted from Lynn, *More Junior High Talksheets*, p. 44.)

4. Make a brief presentation to the participants, introducing them to the course. Cover the following points in your own words:

- The first two core courses in the Horizons Program, *Growing in Wisdom, Age, and Grace* and *Jesus: His Message and Mission*, presented an opportunity for the young people to reflect on and discuss their past and current experiences and understandings of religion, faith, God, Jesus, and the church. In those two courses, the young people had an opportunity to begin assessing what it means to be a follower of Jesus.
- In *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship*, the emphasis is on what it means to live out the Christian life specifically as *Roman Catholics*. This course offers the young people an opportunity to explore the church they were baptized into, so that they might come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of their Catholic heritage.
- *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship* consists of a series of sessions centered on the primary beliefs, values, and practices of the Catholic community. The participants will have a chance to hear about the characteristics of Catholicism and to ask their own questions about different facets of church life. The course also includes many opportunities to experience the rich prayer life of the church.

5. Invite questions or comments from the young people. Then direct them to move into the prayer space for the opening prayer service. If you do not have a separate area for prayer, ask the participants to help you set up a place at one end of your gathering space.

B Opening Prayer Ritual (15 minutes)

The logistics for this prayer service depend on the size of your group. Read through the entire plan carefully and then prepare accordingly.

Before the session. Set up a prayer space, preferably apart from the area where the group gathers for activities. Use a Bible and a candle. You might also include a nice cloth and a religious artifact such as a cross or an image of Jesus. Also, gather the following materials: a glass or clear plastic cup for each participant (including adults), pitchers of water, a large glass bowl, and reflective music if desired. The pitchers of water and glasses or cups can be set aside; place the large bowl among the Bible, candle, and other items in your prayer space.

A note about logistics. Three steps make up this ritual prayer, the last of which will happen at the end of the session:

1. The participants are given glasses or *clear* plastic cups that are then filled with water. For the purposes of this explanation, the use of clear plastic cups will be assumed.
2. The participants pour their individual cups of water into the large glass bowl.
3. Later, in the closing prayer for this session, the participants experience a ritual washing of hands, using the same water.

The size of your group affects your planning for this ritual in two ways. First, at the end of the session you will need a bowl with enough water to effectively perform the washing ritual. That means that the participants must receive and then pour into the bowl sufficient water to equal about 1 gallon. If your group is small, with say ten or fewer members, you will need to find cups that can hold almost a full pint of water. A larger group, naturally, will require smaller cups. One way to determine the appropriate size is to fill the large bowl with the desired amount of water. Then pour the water into smaller cups, dividing it equally, until you find the size of cups you will need for the number of participants in the group.

The second consideration involving the size of your group is the manner in which you distribute the water to the participants at the start of the ritual. If your group is small, consider beginning by giving each participant an empty cup and then ritually

and prayerfully filling the cups from pitchers. Make sure the total amount of water in the pitchers equals the amount you will want in the large bowl for the closing prayer.

If your group is large, you may need to handle the distribution of water differently. Consider filling the individual cups in advance and displaying them on trays or a table. The participants could approach the table and be presented with a cup, or leaders could carry trays of cups among them.

A note on using music or background sounds. Consider including appropriate music or background sounds in the service. Many liturgical songs include the theme of water and its multiple meanings. A recording of the sounds of water might be used as background *throughout* the prayer service—that is, even at a reduced volume during the Scripture reading and your commentary. Most music stores have recordings of babbling brooks, ocean waves, falling rain, and so on. Experiment with various options and choose sounds in keeping with the effect you wish to create.

1. After the group is settled in the prayer space, ask one of the participants to light the candle. Then lead the group in a deliberate and prayerful sign of the cross. Share a brief personal prayer thanking God for the opportunity to gather in the name of Jesus, who promised that wherever two or more are gathered in his name, he is present in a special way.

2. Introduce the service by commenting on the significance of the sacrament of baptism as the first step of the process of initiation into the Christian community. Recall Jesus' own baptism, which is studied during the core course on Jesus. You may either briefly retell the story of that event or read it from Mark 1:9–11. Remind the young people that Jesus himself accepted the waters of baptism as a sign of his willingness to live as we do. Note that the Scriptures then tell us that as Jesus emerged from the waters of the Jordan River, “the Spirit, like a dove, [descended] upon him” (Mark 1:10, NAB). This linking of the waters of baptism and a special encounter with the Spirit of the Holy One—that is, the Holy Spirit—is a recurring theme in the Gospels.

3. Explain the entire ritual action that follows, thoroughly enough so that all can participate in it without further instructions once it begins:

- Tell the participants that each person will be given a clear cup to hold water. The cups represent the participants as individuals, and the cups filled with water represent them as baptized Christians filled with the Spirit.
- Explain that they will be invited to pour their individual cup of water into the large glass bowl. This action symbolizes their acceptance of their baptism as infants and their desire to learn more about the church into which they were baptized as part of the community that includes all the participants in *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship*.
- Strongly emphasize the need for everyone to perform the various movements and actions as reverently as possible.
Begin the ritual.

4. After all the participants have emptied their individual cup of water into the large bowl and are settled once again, close the prayer service by sharing these thoughts in your own words:

- Explain that in the life of the early church, new members of the Christian community experienced one complex, integrated, and powerful initiation rite. That rite included the three sacraments we now know as baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist.
- Remind the young people that as modern-day Catholics, they also were initiated into the community through the waters of baptism, most of them in infancy. In common practice today, that initiation is strengthened in the Eucharist. It is also later embraced in its fullness in the celebration of confirmation, the final sacrament of initiation, as a response to the invitation of Jesus to be born of both water and the Spirit.
- Briefly note that in the closing prayer for this session, the participants will experience a ritual washing of hands using the same water that they just poured into the bowl. That gesture will be a reaffirmation of their baptism and a sign that they truly want to open their heart to God's Spirit today. With a mind and a heart that is focused on God, they can begin the process of learning about how the church lives out Jesus' command to love.

Having made these comments, ask the group to join you in prayer, responding as they would at the weekly liturgy and listening to the prayer from the feast of the Baptism of the Lord:

- *Leader.* The Lord be with you.
All. And also with you.
Leader. Lift up your hearts.
All. We lift them up to the Lord.
Leader. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All. It is right to give God thanks and praise.
Leader. Let us pray.
Almighty, eternal God,
when the Spirit descended upon Jesus
at his baptism in the Jordan,
you revealed him as your own beloved Son.
Keep us, your children born of water and the Spirit,
faithful to our calling.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
All. Amen.
(Adapted from *The Sacramentary*, pp. 372, 72)

C Presentation: Review of Key Concepts (10 minutes)

The primary intent of this presentation is to review a number of the key concepts covered during the first two core courses that play a significant role in the content of *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship*. The 10 minutes allotted is considered to be an average length for an effective presentation to young people. Your presentation may be slightly shorter or somewhat longer if you decide to incorporate additional reflections in this session step. However, do not allow your presentation to exceed 15 minutes.

Before the session. You may find it helpful to create an outline of the presentation on newsprint to guide you in your comments. It should be necessary to list only the italicized words from the presentation notes below.

1. Introduce this short presentation by emphasizing the importance of several concepts, most of which were presented and discussed in earlier core courses but some of which may be new to the participants. All the following ideas now serve as a foundation and structure for this course on Catholic identity. Identify these key concepts, using your own words.

- **Faith and religion.** Faith involves the understanding that each person has of God, and the way that person views life in terms of that understanding. Simply stated, to have faith means to have a personal relationship with God. Faith is private and mysterious; it defies description and analysis. To some extent faith is unique to each person—not because God is different but because people are. Religion, then, is a way for people to express outwardly their inner experiences of God. It is the attempt by people to share and make public their faith relationship with God, using external signs, gestures, rituals, and statements of belief. Each culture, given its own understandings of God, develops its own religious expressions.
 - **Wisdom, works, and worship.** In the church the classifications of wisdom, works, and worship are an attempt to define our relationship with God. Doctrinal statements, or creeds, capture the *wisdom* of church teachings. Religion also involves the development of a code of ethics and prescriptions for Gospel-centered behavior. All these come under the heading of the *works* of the church. Finally, the church's prayer and ritual practices fall under the heading of the *worship* of the church.
 - **The Scriptures and Tradition.** God's self-revelation to humankind is expressed through both the Scriptures (the *written* transmission of the word of God) and Tradition (the *active* transmission of the word of God). These are two expressions of the one revelation in Jesus Christ. These expressions are handed on to each generation of believers, forming a single reality. Together and equally, the Scriptures and Tradition form the basis of the Catholic church's faith convictions and religious practices.
 - **Bishops and pope.** The bishops and, in a special way, the pope are the church's authorized leaders, charged with the task of discerning and preserving the Catholic church's central beliefs and practices.
2. Based on the makeup of your group, consider incorporating within your remarks the following additional insights related to the concepts of wisdom, works, and worship. Individuals with a more advanced understanding of the church might find them helpful. Offer these comments in your own words:
- The development of a particular religion's wisdom, or creed—its fundamental system of beliefs—is a response in part to the human drive to seek and possess the truth. This desire for truth is a great gift of the God who created us, and it is a profoundly important human characteristic, one greatly respected and generally protected within the Catholic church.

However, when taken to an extreme or when allowed to become unbalanced, the drive to seek and possess truth can be unhealthy. It can degenerate into an attempt to control reality through the accumulation of knowledge, or into the acceptance of often oversimplified, partial, and even false beliefs. This perspective or mindset is often referred to today as *fanaticism* or *fundamentalism*.
 - The desire to act in accord with certain moral guidelines and principles is also a profoundly and uniquely human trait. The vast majority of people are born with at least a capacity to understand the difference between right and wrong, and most people yearn to do what is right and good in life.

However, when expressed too rigidly or without personal freedom or full awareness, the desire for some sense of direction regarding right and wrong behavior can degenerate into *minimalism* (the desire to do just enough to get by or just enough to “get to heaven”) or *legalism* (the excessive need to “follow the letter of the law” without regard to the principles and values that undergird those laws).
 - The human need to express and celebrate with awe and wonder the presence of God through symbols, rituals, liturgical dance, song, and so on is a particularly creative and energizing dimension of religion.

However, when these religious expressions are believed to possess a power or value within themselves, apart from the God they should be pointing to, they can degenerate into mere *superstition* or *magic*.
 - The point here is this: Religion *in general* is neither good nor bad, and it can be dangerous. For evidence of the second half of this truism, one need only look at the existence of numerous cults and the frequent historical cases when religion has been used to justify horrific violence. Our concern must be the development of a religious sense and identity that is healthy, balanced, and life-giving. Our conviction is that when lived authentically and in accord with the

Gospel, Christian religions in general, and Roman Catholicism in particular, reflect such characteristics.

3. At the conclusion of your presentation, welcome questions or comments. But limit extended discussion by noting that the concepts you have mentioned, especially as they relate to and are expressed in Catholicism, will be the focus of the rest of *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship*.

D Break (10 minutes)

Make any last-minute preparations for the identification exercise that follows.

E Identification Exercise: The Wisdom, Works, and Worship of Roman Catholicism (35 minutes)

This learning activity takes a considerable amount of preparation, so be sure to allow enough time before the session to get ready. Ample preparation can result in a fun and reliable learning experience. However, if you would like to consider using a less complex process, consult the alternative approaches at the end of this session plan for another option.

Before the session. Prepare a white card for each item on the list in resource 1–A, “The Wisdom, Works, and Worship of Roman Catholicism.” Though the list contains more than one hundred items, you may want to include others. The cards should be large enough that they can be clearly read when posted on the wall, that is, the larger the meeting area, the larger the cards will need to be. Each item from the list should be printed on a separate card, with a *dark* felt-tipped marker, to ensure legibility. Mix the cards up and place them in a box.

In addition, create four signs, each containing one of the following statements:

- The Wisdom of the Catholic Church: What We Believe
- The Works of the Catholic Church: The Actions and Values We Treasure
- The Worship of the Catholic Church: The Way We Celebrate and Pray
- We Have No Idea What This Is!

The first three signs must be color coded to match the colored index cards used in the brainstorming activity that follows the identification exercise. You may wish to select three colors for the index cards first, and then prepare the signs on colored paper to match. The fourth sign, which is not used in the brainstorming activity, can be prepared on any color paper or poster board you wish.

If it is possible to do so before the session, post the signs high on one or more walls in the room. They should be spaced far enough apart (at least 3 feet) to allow several people to work at the same time, taping the cards under the appropriate signs.

1. When you are ready to begin the exercise, post the four signs if you have not done so already. Several feet in front of the signs, place the box containing the white cards (each labeled with an item from resource 1–A) and two or more rolls of masking tape.

2. If you have twenty or fewer participants, randomly divide them into pairs or, if you prefer, allow them to choose their own partner. If the group is larger than twenty, you may wish to divide them into triads.

3. Explain to the participants that the box contains cards naming numerous items related to the wisdom, works, and worship of the Catholic church. Their task is to approach the box with their partner(s), randomly select one of the cards from the box, and then, using these criteria, decide together where to post the item on the wall:

- Is the item related to a Catholic belief or formal teaching? Then it belongs under the sign for the *wisdom* of the church.
- Is the item related to an ethical guideline or moral position supported by the church? If so they should tape it under the sign for the *works* of the church.
- Does the item relate to the public and community life of Catholics or to their private and personal prayer life? In that case they should tape the card under the *worship* sign.
- Finally, if the partners *cannot with reasonable certainty* decide where an item belongs, they should tape it under the sign indicating that they do not know where to put it.

Emphasize that the participants should not simply take a wild guess, but that they are to spend no more than 10 seconds on any item. If after that

time they cannot decide whether a card belongs in the wisdom, works, or worship category, the card should be posted under the last sign.

Note: A number of the items can legitimately be understood as belonging in more than one category. That is, some of the items have no absolute “right” answer. The point of the activity is not rigid accuracy but stimulation of reflection and discussion.

4. Ask the young people to form two (or three) parallel lines to approach the box, with partners standing next to each other. Encourage them to work as quickly as possible. Tell them that as soon as they post an item on the wall, they should go to the back of the line, and they should be prepared to repeat the task as often as required until the box is emptied of all items.

If other adult leaders are present, ask them to monitor the process, silently noting especially items that may seem to be improperly placed. They will be invited to share their observations at the end of the activity.

5. When all the items have been posted, focus for a moment on the “We Have No Idea What This Is!” sign. Read each of the cards under the sign and ask the young people if anyone can (1) define or describe what the item is, and (2) suggest under what sign it belongs. If someone gives a suggestion that is correct, move the item to the appropriate place.

If none of the young people can correctly identify where a particular item under the “No Idea” sign belongs, invite any other adults present to respond. If no other adults are present or those who are present do not know, you may choose to do this identification on your own. Remember, however, that time is tight and it is not necessary to complete this activity during this session. Subsequent sessions will allow you to clarify this information.

6. Ask the participants to identify any items under the other three signs that they think are improperly placed. This may provoke or even require some discussion of various items, because many of them can be interpreted in a variety of ways. For example, does the Mass belong under worship as one of the sacraments or under works as a church law and a response to the third commandment? Avoid getting into nit-picking about such distinctions. Simply acknowledge that multiple answers can be

correct depending on one’s point of view. This illustrates the complex nature of religion and the limitations of any single model used to understand or explain it.

7. Close the activity by noting that the next three sessions will be devoted to the wisdom, works, and worship of the church, respectively. Tell the participants that after this session you will select items from this activity that appear to require further explanation or discussion and will try to incorporate further exploration of those items into the upcoming sessions. Then note that the next activity is also intended to define more clearly the focus or emphasis of those upcoming sessions in light of the particular needs of this group of young people.

F Brainstorming Exercise: Questions, Questions, and More Questions (15 minutes)

1. Ask the participants to divide into the same groups they worked in for the previous activity. If they were working in pairs, combine pairs to create groups of four. Distribute colored index cards—keyed to the color of the signs in the previous identification activity—and pencils, making sure that *each group* gets about *three cards of each of the three colors* and at least *two pencils*.

2. Direct the young people to scan the wall that is now filled with cards identifying various elements of Catholicism. Then invite the small groups to brainstorm questions related to any of those items that they would like answered or discussed at some point during the course. Stress that the only “bad” or “dumb” question is the one that goes unasked. Note that there is no limit on the number of questions they may ask, but each small group must generate *at least three questions for each of the categories* of wisdom, works, and worship. They should print each question on a separate card, making sure that the color of the card matches the color of the category of items from which that question comes. If they choose to ask questions about any of the items under the fourth sign—the category representing items they could not identify—they can write those questions on any color card they wish. Emphasize that they should write *only one question on each card*, to make it easier for you later to sort out and organize the questions.

3. If the participants complete their task very quickly, you may choose to open the floor to any immediate questions that were triggered by the brainstorming. Then collect the written questions.

4. Close this brainstorming exercise by mentioning (if in fact it is the case) that an expert or a panel of experts in the area of Catholic theology will be attending the next three sessions to respond to some of the questions raised during this session. Then invite the participants to join you in the prayer space for a closing prayer ritual.

G Closing Prayer Ritual (10 minutes)

The logistics of this ritual will depend on the size of your group and your assessment of the participants’ starting point. For larger groups, you may wish to have two or three adults lead the ritual. However, even if you have multiple leaders, use only one bowl of water, as a sign of unity.

You may also vary the manner in which the participants approach the bowl. If the group is small (numbering twenty or fewer) and the participants are clearly and fully engaged in the process to this point, you may simply invite them to step forward one at a time as the Spirit moves them. If the group is large, you may want to make the ritual more controlled and uniform by asking the young people to form a line and come forward one at a time.

If it is possible to do so, make the final preparations for this prayer service while the participants are brainstorming their questions in the previous exercise.

Before the prayer. If your prayer space has remained as it was for the opening prayer (that is, with the large bowl of water available near the candle and Bible), you need only add to it two or more towels and something with which to pour water over the hands of the participants, such as an attractive cup with a pour spout, or a ladle. Also, cold water adds to the effect of this experience. If it is convenient, add some ice to the water before the prayer service.

If other adults are involved in the service as co-leaders, they should be prepared to repeat the prayer that accompanies the washing ritual: “[Name of individual], recall your baptism and embrace the gift of faith, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the

Holy Spirit.” If you are the only person leading the ritual and saying the prayer, any other adults present might assist you by simply providing towels with which the young people can dry their hands.

You may wish to include appropriate reflection music or nature sounds with the service, perhaps repeating the background sounds used in the opening prayer.

1. After the participants are settled in the prayer space, invite one of them to light the candle. Remind them of the use of water in the opening prayer, particularly emphasizing its connection to baptism. Explain that the closing prayer also focuses on water and their baptism into the Catholic community of faith.

2. Stand next to the large bowl of water. Repeatedly dip the cup or ladle into the water and pour the water back into the bowl. Do this slowly and in such a way that the participants can see the action and hear the water as it is poured into the bowl. Each time you fill the cup and pour the water, identify for the group one of the multiple meanings and uses that come to mind when we think of water.

A list of some of those meanings and uses follows. Do not read these to the group. Rather, try to identify them in a prayerful tone of voice as they come to your mind.

- Water makes up 90 percent of our body. We simply cannot exist without it.
- It is essential to *all* living things, including plants and animals. Water is life-giving and life-sustaining.
- Water can be calming and tranquil—like waves slowly lapping at the shore of a lake.
- It can be raging—like mighty ocean waves or thunderous waterfalls.
- Water runs, trickles, drips, floods, refreshes, gurgles, bubbles, rushes, boils, steams, freezes, rains, puddles, pours, and splashes.
- We use water to drink, swim in, bathe in, wash clothes with, cook with, tend plants with, sail on.
- In the Hebrew Scriptures, we hear amazing stories involving water, among them the great flood that was survived by Noah and his ark, and the parting of the sea by Moses.
- Jesus used and taught about water and its rich meaning: he turned water into wine, he healed by the side of a pool, he calmed a raging storm, he walked on water, and he washed the feet of his disciples.

- Water, therefore, is a wonderfully rich symbol of our faith. In various church services, we use water to bless ourselves as we enter church, we experience several kinds of sprinkling rites, and the priest uses water as he washes his hands during the Eucharist.
- Finally, in baptism, water is used as a symbol of the cleansing of original sin, of dying and rising with Jesus, of a welcoming into the church, and as a promise of future salvation.

3. Inform the participants that you will be inviting them to approach the bowl of water one at a time (or, in large groups with multiple co-leaders, two or three at a time). When they reach the bowl, they are to extend their hands over it. As they do, you (or another leader) will slowly pour water over their hands. They should feel free to slowly turn their hands under the flowing water and to try to experience the feel and sound of the water as fully as they can.

Inform the participants that while you pour the water, you will say words that connect them with their baptism long ago. At that time, as the priest baptized by pouring water over their head, he said, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Their parents and godparents then said on their behalf "Amen," as a sign of the acceptance of God's graces in and through the sacrament.

Explain that in this closing prayer, as you pour the water over their hands, you will say, "[Name of individual], recall your baptism and embrace the gift of faith, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Then the participants, now speaking on their own behalf, will say "Amen," meaning that they truly want to open their heart to the prompting of God's Spirit in their life today. After drying their hands on the towels that will be on either side of you (or provided by adults), they can then return to the group and be seated while the other participants complete the ritual.

4. When all the participants have performed the ritual and returned to their place, close by leading the group in the Lord's Prayer, perhaps inviting them to hold hands as a sign of their unity. Then make the sign of the cross together. Share any concluding announcements and dismiss the group.

Reminder. Before taking down the cards and signs used during the identification exercise, note any questions or issues the exercise raised that you think

should be directly addressed during the next four sessions. Note as well any items, along with the question cards generated during the brainstorming activity, that must be reviewed, collated, and presented in advance to the expert or panel of experts that you gather for the discussions in subsequent sessions.

Finally, save the cards and posters. You will need them for a summary activity in the final session of *The Church: Its Wisdom, Works, and Worship*.

Alternative Approaches

After reading the session plan, you may choose to do some things differently or to make additions to an activity. Consider your time limitations first and then these alternative approaches:

For step B. If the participants have been confirmed, use the following prayer from the Rite of Confirmation in place of the prayer from the feast of the Baptism of Our Lord. This prayer is said by the bishops and priests during the laying on of hands.

Leader. All-powerful God . . .
by water and the Holy Spirit
you freed your sons and daughters from sin
and gave them new life.
Send your Holy Spirit upon them
to be their Helper and Guide.
Give them the spirit of wisdom and
understanding,
the spirit of right judgment and courage,
the spirit of knowledge and reverence.
Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe
in your presence
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
(No. 25)

All. Amen.

For step E. If you have limited preparation time, consider this optional approach for presenting the identification activity. First, create and post the four signs as described in the session plan. Then tape to the wall under each of the four signs at least two sheets of newsprint or poster paper. Make a photocopy of resource 1–A, enlarging it if possible, and cut it apart so that each item on the list is on a separate slip of paper. Mix up the slips of paper and place them in a box in front of the posters on the

wall. In addition, have large felt-tipped markers available, preferably in colors that match the posters.

In this case the pairs or triads approach the box and randomly select an item. Together they discern under which sign it belongs, and then on the newsprint under the appropriate sign, print with a marker the name of the item selected. Encourage the candidates to print legibly and in a size that can be easily read from the back of the group. Be aware that one disadvantage with this approach is that during discussion it will be more difficult to move items from one category to another. You will need to cross out the item in one place and write it in another.



Family Connections

Type or print the list of items in the "Stand If . . ." exercise in step A. Make copies and send the list to parents, suggesting that they use it as the basis of family storytelling and memory sharing. It might be an opportunity to look at old family photographs and videos, interview grandparents to find out how they would respond to the statements, or search through drawers and attics for forgotten treasures. Ask the young people to bring a particularly interesting item or piece of information to the next session.

Closing Prayer and Evaluation



Closing Teacher Prayer

Gather your thoughts in silence for a few moments. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for a gift you have received from God or a prayer of petition for someone who needs God's care. Conclude with the following ancient prayer from our Catholic tradition:

Holy Spirit Prayer of Saint Augustine

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit,
That my thoughts may be holy;
Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
That my work, too, may be holy;
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,
That I love but what is holy.
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,
To defend all that is holy;
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit,
That I always may be holy.

(Klein, ed., *Catholic Source Book*, p. 24)



Evaluation

Shortly after leading this session, reflect on the following questions about your experience. Jot down any changes that you would make in leading the session in the future. If you are working with other adults, you may want to meet and discuss the results of your individual evaluations.

1. The session is a very complex one with a wide variety of activities and probably a diversity of starting points among the participants. Begin by assessing the general flow and effectiveness of the session as a whole.
 - a. Were you able to complete all elements of the session?
 - b. In the future, would you recommend abbreviating or even deleting some portions of it? If so, which ones?
 - c. Did some activities require more time than that allotted? If so, how might you adjust the session to gain more time?
2. The prayer and ritual elements in this session are potentially very rich and meaningful, but they also require a supportive physical environment, the cooperation of the participants, and thorough preparation by the leader. Evaluate both the opening and closing prayers along these lines.
 - a. Was the physical environment conducive to prayer? If not, how would you change it?
 - b. Were the participants cooperative? If not, what might have made it easier for them to enter into the spirit of prayer?
 - c. Were you adequately prepared? If not, what could you have done differently?
3. Finally, the identification exercise, along with the brainstorming activity that follows it, has the potential to raise an incredible number of questions and concerns among the young people regarding concepts of great theological and pastoral complexity. Such an experience can be either very exciting or almost overwhelming—for everyone! Assess your experience with those activities.

If you think that the identification and brainstorming activities must be simplified, consider eliminating some of the items on resource 1–A. Which ones would you eliminate in the future?

The WISDOM, WORKS, and WORSHIP of ROMAN CATHOLICISM

To conduct the exercise, create a white card for each item on the following list. Make sure that all the cards are the same size so that the participants are given no hints as to where they belong. The items are listed here within their respective categories primarily to help you sort out which items belong in which categories.

Feel free to adjust the list as you see fit. You may wish to eliminate some items that you think are either superfluous or too theologically complex for your young people. And, of course, you can add items that you think ought to be here and are not.

<i>Wisdom</i>	<i>Works</i>	<i>Worship</i>
Scriptures	Ten Commandments	baptism
Incarnation	abortion	confirmation
Resurrection	birth control	Eucharist
Nicene Creed	euthanasia	reconciliation
life after death	suicide	penance
angels	Beatitudes	holy orders
revelation	Sermon on the Mount	matrimony
pope	Christian service	anointing of the sick
Assumption of Mary	commitment to justice	Lent
bishops	sin	Advent
theology	chastity	Christmas
Trinity	forgiveness of sin	Easter
Reign of God	honoring parents	stations of the cross
parables	keeping Sabbath holy	Lord's Prayer
miracles	not stealing	meditation
Mary, mother of God	telling the truth	contemplation
communion of saints	jealousy	chrism
doctrines	conscience	Pentecost
dogmas	stewardship	sacrament

Wisdom

redemption
encyclicals
grace
divinity of Jesus
Jesus born of a virgin
Immaculate Conception
inspiration of the Bible
Tradition
canonization
Second Coming of Jesus
Ascension of Jesus
hierarchy
gifts of the Spirit
Body of Christ
papal infallibility

Works

works of mercy
divorce
ethics
free will
living by the Spirit
discernment
dignity of person
legalism
materialism
virtues
bigotry
Act of Contrition
racism
sexism

Worship

devotions
rosary
Holy Thursday
Ash Wednesday
liturgy of the word
Mass
Good Friday
Easter Vigil
liturgical year
altar
crucifix
deacons
priests
liturgy of the Eucharist
sign of the cross
holy water
paschal candle
Hail Mary