Faith Formation Session on the Universal Church: LEADER’S GUIDE
#10 on the Archdiocese of Dubuque’s Top Ten Gifts of the Catholic Faith!

*Faith Formation Leaders: Please review all materials and select those most effective for your presentation. You may copy and distribute any of the materials.*

**Introduction:**
The members of the Archdiocese of Dubuque appreciate belonging to the Universal Church. We are, of course, catholic, which means universal. Yet people described universal in a variety of ways. Some simply wrote the word “worldwide,” while others expressed the joy of attending Mass in any country, in any language—knowing it is the same liturgical celebration. Some described universal as the diversity and colorfulness of the expressions of our faith. Others noted that all are welcomed in the Catholic Church—no matter one’s race, language, culture, country, or economic status.

**Opening Prayer:**
Loving God, send your Spirit to open our hearts to Jesus. Guide us to a deeper conversion. Grant us a greater appreciation of the beauty of our Catholic faith. Give us the courage and confidence to joyfully share our faith with others. May your Church be a beacon of light for all who seek your loving presence. Be with us now as we explore our faith as universal—for all people of all times! Mary, faithful Mother of God, intercede for us. We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

**Scripture:**
Ephesians (3:2-3a, 5-6)
A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians.
You have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation. It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.

The Word of the Lord:
**Thanks be to God.**
Opening Prayer:

One God, forever and ever. Amen.

We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, and to welcome the gifts and contributions of everyone, in order to create a joyful symphony of praise to God for his goodness, his grace, and his redemptive love. — Pope Francis, October 8, 2013

Opening Song: (or choose your own)

**Lord, Every Nation** by Jesse Manibusan: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2C41x2rp7o

Section I: The Church of the Archdiocese of Dubuque as Universal

**Video # 1: The Faithful of the Archdiocese of Dubuque**
https://youtu.be/Dxnld4aym6M

The coming of Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the prophecy that every people would adore the Lord: “The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall offer gifts; the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring tribute. All kings shall pay homage, all nations shall serve him” (Ps 72: 10,11). For the first time, all men and women—of all nations, for all time—were invited into the faith of Jesus Christ. He is the Christ—the One—through whom all things were created and to whom all creation will return. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Our Catholic faith testifies to the unity found in Jesus Christ. We are one Body in Christ through our one baptism. Though we are from all nations, cultures, races, and languages, we profess one faith and participate in the one worship of the Mass. Truly, men and women from every nation on earth will proclaim and adore Jesus Christ!

“In the Creed, we profess that the Church is ‘Catholic;’ in other words, she is universal. … The Church is also catholic because her communion embraces the whole human race, and she is sent to bring to the entire world the joy of salvation and the truth of the Gospel. Finally, the Church is catholic because she reconciles the wonderful diversity of God’s gifts to build up his People in unity and harmony. Let us ask the Lord to make us more catholic – to enable us, like a great family, to grow together in faith and love, to draw others to Jesus in the communion of the Church, and to welcome the gifts and contributions of everyone, in order to create a joyful symphony of praise to God for his goodness, his grace, and his redemptive love.” — Pope Francis, October 8, 2013

In the Archdiocese of Dubuque, we are one body with many of the faithful having ancestors from Ireland, Germany, Italy, France, and more. The archdiocese continues to welcome immigrants and refugees, especially through the work of Catholic Charities. Today’s parishes reflect the universality of the Church with members from Mexico, Central and South America, Bosnia, Vietnam, Syria, the Philippines, Bhutan, Thailand, Burma [Myanmar], and more. Immigrant, refugee, doctor, farm worker, rich, poor, old, young—we are all one in Christ.

We also experience the Universal Church when traveling to other countries when we recognize—and follow—all the parts of the Mass, though spoken in a foreign language. As one student commented when living abroad, “I take my faith with me wherever I go and find a home.” The language, songs, styles, and expressions may differ, but the celebration of the Mass is always the same. Some people may experience the Universal Church by attending Mass or ritual in a culture different from one’s own—perhaps a predominantly Hispanic or African American community—right in our own diocese or country.

Another aspect of the Universal Church is the connection between the local Churches to the larger Church. Immigrants and travelers have a “home” Church when arriving on foreign soil. Adults and adolescents express the joy of connecting with the larger, Universal Church at events like NCYC (National Catholic Youth Congress), World Youth Day, or the Pope’s visit in Philadelphia. We participate in the Universal Church when we support organizations like Catholic Relief, providing for our brothers and sisters throughout the world. We are connected to something SO much bigger than our own parish, diocese, or country—we belong to Christ and His Universal Church!

For more witnesses to the Universal Church, please see the *Ten Gifts of the Catholic Faith*, Session #5, Mary, Our Blessed Mother, video #3. Check out the *Ten Gifts of the Catholic Faith*, Session #7, video #2, as Deacon Bill Hickson speaks about prison ministry and the desire of prisoners to be connected to the larger Church.
Faith Formation Session on the Universal Church: LEADER’S GUIDE

Faith Formation Leaders: Please review all materials and select those most effective for your presentation. You may copy and distribute any of the materials.

Introduction:
The members of the Archdiocese of Dubuque appreciate belonging to the Universal Church. We are, of course, Catholic, which means universal. Yet people described universal in a variety of ways. Some simply wrote the word "worldwide," while others expressed the joy of attending Mass in any country, in any language—knowing it is the same liturgical celebration. Some described universal as the diversity and colorfulness of the expressions of our faith. Others noted that all are welcomed in the Catholic Church—no matter one’s race, language, culture, country, or economic status.

Opening Prayer:
Loving God, send your Spirit to open our hearts to Jesus. Guide us to a deeper conversion. Grant us a greater appreciation of the beauty of our Catholic faith. Give us the courage and confidence to joyfully share our faith with others. May your Church be a beacon of light for all who seek your loving presence.

Be with us now as we explore our faith as universal—for all people of all times!

Mary, faithful Mother of God, intercede for us.

We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Scripture:
Ephesians (3:2-3a, 5-6)

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians:
You have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation. It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.

The Word of the Lord:
Thanks be to God.

Discussion Questions:
a. From what countries are your ancestors? How did this affect the practice of faith in your home?
b. When have you experienced a different expression of the Universal Church? What did you like about it? What did you learn from it?
c. When have you had an experience of the larger Church? What were your feelings?
d. How does your parish welcome immigrants and refugees?
e. How can your parish help everyone feel welcome?

Section II: The Universal Church Displayed in Epworth, IA

Video #2: The witness of men and women studying at Divine Word Seminary in Epworth, IA.
https://youtu.be/oRYWuUgLrTs

“Founded by the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), Divine Word College is the only undergraduate Roman Catholic seminary in the U.S. dedicated to educating men and women for missionary service. It is located in Epworth, Iowa, 13 miles west of the city of Dubuque and within the Archdiocese of Dubuque. Though its primary goal is preparing young men to become Divine Word Missionary priests and brothers, since 2007 the college has also offered its educational resources to religious sisters, other Catholic seminarians and laypersons.”

Tucked away in the small town of Epworth, IA, Divine Word College recently celebrated its Fiftieth Anniversary. Though in the heartland of America, when stepping into Divine Word one immediately notices the diverse languages, races, and cultures. Students attend from all over the planet and then serve in over seventy countries throughout the world. Students study, pray, and live together, sometimes struggling with communication, but always finding unity in their Catholic faith. Many have experienced persecution or repression, and therefore, especially embrace their opportunity to worship openly as one Body of Christ.

Members of Divine Word Seminary are eager to celebrate unity with varied, often colorful, expressions of faith. One such event is the annual Lunar New Year Celebration, which is a “memorable combination of multicultural liturgy, food and entertainment, DWC’s Lunar New Year is one of the largest celebrations of Asian culture this side of Chicago.”

The members of Divine Word Seminary witness to the power of belonging to the Universal Church, where men and women from all nations and languages are united in “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5).

Discussion Questions:
a. What struck you most about the witness of the members of Divine Word Seminary?
b. Father Nam Vu, born in Viet Nam, studying in Epworth, IA, speaks to his experience of serving in Argentina—talk about the universal Church! How does his witness inspire you?
c. Interestingly, we are now receiving “missionary” priests from other countries: Why would North America now be considered a missionary field? How can we begin to nurture vocations among our own young people?
d. We also have many members/parishes/clusters who have participated in mission trips in other countries: What have been some of your (their) experiences?
Conclusion:
Please be sure to make time for large group discussion: What did you learn about the Church as universal? What did you like best about the session? What is one thing you will share with someone at home or in your sphere of influence?

*** What difference does it make to know the Catholic faith is open to all men and women from all backgrounds?

Finish the session by playing the song (or choose one of your own) and by saying the following prayer together:

Closing Song (or choose your own):
Lord, Every Nation on Earth Shall Adore You by John Michael Talbot:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmbMcLwecXM

Closing Prayer in Thanksgiving for the Gift of the Universal Church:
Loving God, you have called each of us to be formed in your image. Thank you for the gift of your living presence in the Universal Church. Grant us a deep desire to receive you and to take your presence into the world. Help us to graciously welcome others—the immigrant, the refugee, the foreigner—into our parishes, communities, homes and hearts. Give us the strength and courage to live as one. Make us into people of thanksgiving. Mary, Blessed Mother of the Word Incarnate, intercede for us. We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Additional Resources:
To find additional resources (including books, DVDs, online resources, and more) on the Universal Church, please contact the Education Resource Center (ERC) of the Archdiocese of Dubuque at 563-556-2580, ext. 214 or dbqmed1@dbqarch.org.