



## Faith Formation Session on Scripture & Tradition: LEADER'S GUIDE

# 6 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:**

Members of the Archdiocese of Dubuque value the Sacred Teaching of the Church as the means of transmitting the revelation of Jesus Christ, who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). Many noted these teachings are firmly rooted in Scripture and Tradition. We revere Sacred Scripture as the word of God. We value Tradition as the means of passing on the teachings of Jesus Christ, revealed through Scripture. Members included words and phrases such as "magisterium," "teaching authority of the Church," and the "Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)." We were pleased to read "lifelong formation" and "continuous learning." Some mentioned "religious education," while many appreciate the strong history of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

### **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 and truth of our 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 the gift of Sacred Teaching—Scripture & Tradition.  
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:**

John 14:5-8; 11-14

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John:

Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." .... "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father. And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## Opening Song: (or choose your own)

Creed by Rich Mullins : <http://safeshare.tv/w/hFQlhdbJAh>

### Discussion Question:

How has the Creed formed your faith?

The faith we profess in *The Apostles' Creed* is the faith of the Church, "the oldest Roman catechism" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, CCC, 196). "To say the Credo with faith is to enter into communion with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and also with the whole Church which transmits the faith to us and in whose midst we believe" (CCC, 197). *The Apostles' Creed* remains "a faithful summary of the apostles' faith. It is the ancient baptismal symbol of the Church of Rome. Its great authority arises from this fact: it is 'the Creed of the Roman Church, the See of Peter, the first of the apostles, to which he brought the common faith'" (CCC, 194).

Fourth century, theologian St. Cyril of Jerusalem, wrote of the Creed: "This synthesis of faith was not made to accord with human opinions, but rather what was of the greatest importance was gathered from all the Scriptures, to present the one teaching of the faith in its entirety. And just as the mustard seed contains a great number of branches in a tiny grain, so too this summary of faith encompassed in a few words the whole knowledge of the true religion contained in the Old and New Testaments" (CCC, 186).

Though faith is personal, it is never individual. The Christian faith has been revealed through Scripture and Tradition, and transmitted through the Church. "Whoever says 'I believe' says 'I pledge myself to what we believe.' Communion in faith needs a common language of faith, normative for all and uniting all in the same confession of faith" (CCC, 185).

## Section I: Sacred Scripture

### Video # 1: Faithful of the Archdiocese of Dubuque

<https://youtu.be/FyiX7ijc0Ko>

In perhaps the most highly regarded conversion story of all times, *Confessions*, St. Augustine (354-430) writes of his surrender to Christ when he heard a voice urging him to, "Pick up and read, pick up and read." Picking up the Bible, Augustine heard the Lord speaking to him as Sacred Scripture fell open to Paul's words to the Romans, "Let us then throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh" (Rom 13:12-14).

The Bible, the word of God, holds the power to convert the human heart. We believe God speaks to each person who picks up Sacred Scripture and listens with a holy desire. Jesus Christ, who is God's plan of salvation, is revealed to us through Scripture. "The sacred synod also earnestly and especially urges all the Christian faithful, especially Religious, to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the 'excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ' (Phil. 3:8). 'For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ'" (*Dei Verbum*, 25). There is power in the living and active word of God, which accomplishes the purposes for which it was sent. "So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me empty, but shall do what pleases me, achieving the end for which I sent it" (Is 55: 11).

To grow in our faith, we are encouraged to pray daily with Scripture, especially through *Lectio Divina*. "It is especially necessary that listening to the word of God should become a life-giving encounter, in the ancient and ever valid Tradition of *lectio divina*, which draws from the biblical text the living Word which questions, directs and shapes our lives" (Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 39). Another primary place of encounter with the living word of Christ occurs at Mass, where the word of God is proclaimed in and throughout the Liturgy.

Though human beings wrote Scripture, we believe the Holy Spirit inspired them. “The books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach [the] truth. . . . Written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author” (*Dei Verbum, Word of God, DV*, 11). Though without error, we do not read or interpret Scripture literally. “The Catholic Church teaches the Holy Spirit inspired the biblical authors to write what God wanted us to know for our salvation. . . . Catholics understand that the Bible is without error in communicating what God wants us to know for salvation without having to be historically and scientifically correct in every detail” (*The Catholic Faith Handbook for Teens*, 28). To guard against fundamentalism, Christians are encouraged to be “attentive to the content and unity of the whole Scripture” by reading it within “the living Tradition of the whole Church” (CCC, 112, 113).

Please break into small groups after watching this video presentation to discuss the following questions.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- a. What is your favorite Scripture verse or passage? Why?
- b. When and how did Scripture first start to speak to you?
- c. What is the best homily you can remember?
- d. What do you think of when you hear the term “fundamentalism” or “literalism”?

## **Section II: Sacred Teaching: Scripture & Tradition**

**Video #2:** Faithful of the Archdiocese of Dubuque

<https://youtu.be/jCkmY1IBDTo>

Tradition is the passing on of Scripture from the time of Christ and its oral transmission to the current age. This transmission is the interpretation of Sacred Scripture, which belongs not to any single person, but to the Church: “But in order to keep the Gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the Apostles left bishops as their successors, ‘handing over’ to them ‘the authority to teach in their own place.’ This sacred Tradition, therefore, and Sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testaments are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything, until she is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face (see 1 John 3:2)” (*DV*, 7).

Scripture and Tradition are not two separate entities; tradition serves the word of God and together they contain the deposit of faith. “Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church. Holding fast to this deposit the entire holy people united with their shepherds remain always steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the common life, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers (see Acts 2, 42, Greek text), so that holding to, practicing and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the bishops and faithful a single common effort” (*DV*, 10).

On April 12, 2013, Pope Francis, in a meeting with the members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, explained **the Church’s role** in the interpretation of Scripture, “Sacred Scripture is the written testimony of the divine Word, the canonical memory that attests to the event of Revelation. However, the Word of God precedes the Bible and surpasses it. That is why the centre of our faith isn’t just a book, but a salvation history and above all a person, Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh.”

Giving credence to the beauty of Tradition and Scripture working together are the writings of the Church Fathers. The “Church Fathers” wrote homilies or apologetics from early Christianity through the eighth century: Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Irenaeus, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, etc. These writings aid our understanding of how Tradition interprets Scripture and keep us close to the original teachings of the early Church. The study of the recently discovered writings of the Church Fathers is known as patristics. These beautiful writings have informed our Sacred Teaching and allow us to peer into the faith and practices of the early Church. This text from the

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives insight to the celebration of the Eucharist from the second century:

“As early as the second century we have the witness of St. Justin Martyr for the basic lines of the order of the Eucharistic celebration. They have stayed the same until our own day for all the great liturgical families. St. Justin wrote to the pagan emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161) around the year 155, explaining what Christians did:

On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits.

When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things.

Then we all rise together and offer prayers\* for ourselves... and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation.

When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss.

Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren.

He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks (in Greek: *eucharistian*) that we have been judged worthy of these gifts.

When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying: ‘Amen.’

When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those whom we call deacons give to those present the “eucharisted” bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent.”

“Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine wellspring, come together in some fashion to form one thing and move toward the same goal” (*Dei Verbum*, 11). The goal of all Sacred Teaching, passed onto us throughout the centuries is to remain close to the teachings of the apostles, which lead us to proclaim Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior and Redeemer of the world.

Please break into small groups after watching this video presentation to discuss the following questions.

**Discussion Questions:**

- a. Why is Tradition important for interpreting Scripture in our modern world? What issues are we facing within the Church? Within society? How does the Magisterium of the Church help us in dealing with these issues?
- b. What is the beauty of having the Tradition of the community interpreting Scripture throughout the centuries?
- c. When listening to John Robbins, reflect on the following questions: How is our experience of Church similar to, or different from, the early Church?
- d. Describe a time when the hearing/reading of Sacred Scripture and Tradition has compelled you to proclaim Jesus Christ in some way.

## Section III: The Importance of Faith Formation

**Video #3:** Faith Formation Leaders from around the Archdiocese of Dubuque

<https://youtu.be/eC-I22T5-gA>

Sacred Teaching guides the entire Church and is meant to inform the lives of all Christians. Therefore, in light of the Second Vatican Council, the Church promulgated the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), in 1992 to guide us with the truth and beauty of the faith. The Catechism begins by explaining the crux of our faith, found in *The Apostles' Creed*. "The principal task entrusted to the Council by Pope John XXIII was to guard and present better the precious deposit of Christian doctrine in order to make it more accessible to the Christian faithful and to all people of good will. For this reason the Council was not first of all to condemn the errors of the time, but above all to strive calmly to show the strength and beauty of the doctrine of the faith." John Paul II wrote, "In reading the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* we can perceive the wonderful unity of the mystery of God."

Sacred Teaching serves as the foundation of all faith formation, whether in Catholic schools, parish religious education or formation of children in the domestic church. According to the National Catholic Education Association, "The formal term for faith education and formation is 'catechesis.' The Catholic Church identifies all those with delegated responsibilities for leading faith education in the name of the church as 'catechetical leaders.' Catechetical leaders serve in many roles, including parish directors of religious education, Catholic school principals, diocesan directors of catechesis, and superintendents.

Education and formation in the Catholic faith is a lifelong, multi-dimensional process (National Directory for Catechesis, USCCB, 2005). No matter the setting or role, the goal is the same: helping each person to know and love Jesus Christ, and inviting deeper intimacy and communion with him in and through the Catholic Church. Faith education in the twenty-first century also involves helping learners understand their own faith so they can confidently and respectfully engage with people of other religions or beliefs in ways to reflect God's love and plan for the world."

Catechesis means to "echo the faith" from generation to generation. Children's catechesis remains one of the critical methods for the transmission of faith. Parents are primary teachers of their own children, yet catechetical leaders play a vital role by supporting parents, as "the future of evangelization depends in great part on the Church of the home." Parish catechetical/sacramental programs, as well as Catholic schools, aim to validate parents in their essential role as leaders of the domestic church. The Archdiocese of Dubuque has a strong tradition of supporting both avenues of transmission with catechetical programs in every parish/cluster and schools for preschoolers through college.

With the Bishops document, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*, the focus of catechesis has steadily refocused to adult formation—to discipleship: "In response to God's call to holiness, our faith and life as adult disciples are grounded in developing a personal *relationship with Jesus*, 'the Holy One of God' (Jn 6:69, Mk 1:24)." Catechesis, faith formation, is meant to be lifelong and ongoing for each and every person. We can never fully grasp the mysteries of our faith nor plunge the depths of our relationship with God, who *IS* infinite Love and Truth. In 1885, the *Baltimore Catechism* asked, "Why did God make you?" Its answer continues to ring true: "God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next.

Please break into small groups after watching this video presentation to discuss the following questions.

### Discussion Questions:

- What has been your experience of Catholic schools or religious education programs (RE)?
- Who was instrumental in passing the faith on to you and how was that person effective?
- How has the term "lifelong" or "ongoing" faith formation changed your idea of religious education?
- How has the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* informed your faith?

### Conclusion:

Please be sure to make time for large group discussion: What did you learn about Sacred Teaching: Scripture & Tradition? 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 in one's faith life to believe in Sacred Teaching: Scripture & Tradition?

**Closing Song (or choose your own):**

*Because He Lives (Amen)* by Matt Maher : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBvU7arNhOs>

**Prayer in Thanksgiving for the Gift of Sacred Teaching through Scripture and Tradition:**

Loving God, you have called each of us to be formed in your image.

Thank you for the gift of your living presence in Sacred Teaching.

May we grow closer to you by reading, praying, and knowing Sacred Scripture.

May we be blessed by following the Sacred Teachings passed onto us from Christ.

Give us the strength to live as faithful disciples.

Help us to believe and together pray the great Amen!

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.

OR:

*The Apostles' Creed*

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ,  
his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the  
power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended into hell.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge  
the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

**Additional Resources:**

To find additional resources (including books, DVDs, online resources, and more) on Scripture and Tradition, please contact the Education Resource Center (ERC) of the Archdiocese of Dubuque at 563-556-2580, ext. 214, or [dbqcm1@dbqarch.org](mailto:dbqcm1@dbqarch.org).