

# BLESSED/BENDITO

"HOLINESS...IS AN ENCOUNTER BETWEEN YOUR WEAKNESS AND THE POWER OF GOD'S GRACE."  
 Pope Francis

Summary	We are <b>BLESSED</b> to attend the pilgrimage of NCYC. Removed from our daily life, we will be set apart these 4 days to encounter God. Our sacramental life has a ripple effect on the world.
Objective	<p>A pre-trip participant/chaperone session on the first theme of NCYC featuring a game, reflection/catechesis and prayer.</p> <p>Participants will be able to...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) learn about the first movement in our Eucharistic prayer (taken/chosen/blessed.)</li> <li>2) reflect on the role of a pilgrimage and sacraments as a way of receiving God's blessing which does not go away.</li> <li>3) discuss the source of discipleship, an encounter with Christ, which also blesses others.</li> </ol>
Administrative Tasks	If this session is completed between June and September, you may have additional housekeeping items to take care of such as collecting final payments, late registration paperwork, chaperone training/introductions, etc.
Supplies Needed	Packing List and (Draft) Travel Itinerary, Paperwork, Participant Journals, if desired. For the game, you will need 9 hula hoops, 9 bean bags and teams of 1-6 people.

## LESSON PLAN

WELCOME	<p>Introduce yourself to the group and allow time for group introductions (20 minutes). If you are using small groups for the conference, announce the groups so they can introduce each other and sit together.</p> <p><b>Allow former participants to share a powerful experience of sacraments/Church they had at a previous NCYC.</b></p>
OPENING PRAYER	<p>All powerful and ever-living God,          Thank you for choosing us to attend NCYC.          Help us open our hearts and step nearer to you.          May this pilgrimage be an encounter with your grace.          Lord, we are unworthy to be called your Chosen People, but you have fashioned us together nonetheless out of your merciful love.          May this NCYC form us as a blessing to the nations.          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.</p>
ICEBREAKER	<p><b>Human Tic Tac Toe (from WikiHow.com)</b>  <i>Objective: Socialization. For a more catechetical game that ties into the Blessed theme, see page 4.</i></p>

*Supplies Needed: 9 hula hoops, 9 bean bags, teams of 1-6 people, even number of teams to compete against each other*

“Lay out your hula hoops in a three by three grid, just like a tic tac toe board drawn on paper. The hula hoops should be positioned so that there is little to no space between the hoops.

- If you’re playing this game inside on hard floor, use masking tape to create your human tic tac toe board. On cement, you can draw the board with chalk.
- Check for holes, dangerous garbage (like broken glass), and other hazards, like roots or rocks, to prevent these from causing an injury while you play.
- If you’re playing this game with many people, you might want to set up several game boards. This game works best with one to three players per team.

Select the starting team. Use a coin toss to determine which team goes first. You could also have teams select a captain and have the captains play rock, paper, scissors to choose the starting team. The starting team will go first as the X’s, the opposing team will follow as the O’s.

- To add a more physical aspect to this game, have teams race to a location and back again. Award the first move to the team that wins the race.

Play until a team gets three squares in a row. Hand each team four bean bags, with each team having a different color so you can tell X’s apart from O’s. Teams should take turns placing bean bags on the game board until one team wins or the game ends in a draw. For teams with more than one member, rotate through members until the game ends.

- Reset the board by removing the bean bags and play again. You may want to shuffle teams so players don’t get bored playing the same people over and over again.

## MESSAGE

### THE RIPPLE EFFECT

Option A. If Using the Participant Journal, have the participants turn to Page 1 and read the following paragraphs together.

Option B. If not using the Participant Journal, read aloud:

**The heart of this year’s NCYC is the Eucharistic Spirituality of our Church. We believe in the true presence of Christ in the bread and wine of Christ – not a symbol, or a sign, but that Christ is truly present, and faith helps us live this mystery even “when our human senses fail” (St. Thomas Aquinas.)**

**We also believe that we become His Body in the world upon receiving the Eucharist: blessed, broken and given. This encounter with Jesus – receiving Him into our own body and blood – has a Ripple Effect on the whole world. He takes the bread, blesses, breaks and gives it to us for our salvation. Because of this great love, we are able and miraculously willingly to take our own lives, allowing them to be blessed, broken and given out of love.**

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## II. Youth Witness

In the first part of the Eucharistic prayer in Corinthians, the bread is taken and blessed. We become the Body of Christ in the world as we step out of our comfort zone and daily routine to attend NCYC. This is an important step in discipleship (following Christ) as we are removed from our ordinary walk to make ourselves available to God. As James 4:8 tells us, “Draw near to God and God will draw near to you.”

**[If possible, consider having a former NCYC participant share a brief witness on their deepened experience/understanding of Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Eucharist at a previous NCYC.]**

## III. Reflection

*(Group leaders should be prepared to share a summary of the following information with their participants. It is best not to read it all word-for-word, but to deliver the information in an informal, casual way.)*

Chosen as God’s people, we are richly blessed as recipients of the sacraments of the Church. We are also blessed to be witnesses of the National Catholic Youth Conference; ‘taken’ from our communities so that we can see God alive in the young Church. We will receive the sacraments in a powerful way. The Youth Catechism (YouCat) tells us, “We need sacraments in order to outgrow our petty human life and to become like Jesus through Jesus: children of God in freedom and glory.” (YouCat 172 [CCC 1129].) Gathered with other teens who are just like you, you will witness how we all come to God with our weakness to be strengthened, and go out to give light to the world.

This is what holiness really is: facing God with our doubts, failings and struggles. “The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.” (Pope Francis)

To be blessed, or to be holy, is not about our merit or how we deserve God because we are such a good person. Pope Francis tells us, “The believer is essentially one who remembers.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 14) We prepare to bring our prayers, needs, brokenness to God. The mercy and love we find there becomes our source of discipleship.

Furthermore, “whenever we encounter (the mercy of God), we become convinced that it is exactly what others need, even though they may not recognize it.” (Pope Francis, Acts 17:23) We receive grace in the sacraments as a ripple effect: his mercy and love drop into our lives unmerited and we cannot help but want to share this with others. This encounter is more than just a fun experience: it is the greatest treasure. St. Ambrose reminds us to guard this gift that we have received (CCC 1303). We are united with God in a way that, as long as we remember how he was taken and blessed us, we cannot be separated from him.

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8: 38-39

**SUPPLEMENTAL QUOTES**

- The liturgy and sacraments are gifts from God for us to encounter Him and become like Him. (YouCat, 182 summ.)
- All of us are called to offer others an explicit witness to the saving love of the Lord, who despite our imperfections offers us his closeness, his word and his strength, and gives meaning to our lives. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 121)
- "Let the grace of your baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness" (*Gaudete Et Exsultate*, 15)
- "In the midst of all the peoples on earth, there is one people that is like no other. It is subject to no one but God alone. It is supposed to be like salt, which adds flavor; like yeast, which permeates everything; like light, which drives away the darkness. Anyone who belongs to the People of God must count on coming into conflict with people who deny God's existence and disregard his commandments. In the freedom of the children of God, however, we have nothing to fear, not even death." (YouCat 125 [CCC 781-786])
- To respond to God means to believe him. Anyone who wants to believe needs a heart that is ready to listen (1 Kings 3:9). In many ways God seeks contact with us. In every human encounter, in every moving experience of nature, in every apparent coincidence, in every challenge, every suffering, there is a hidden message from God to us. (YouCat 20 [CCC 142-149])
- "The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacrament life ... makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). (CCC 1129)

**REFLECTION/DISCUSSION** (*Found in Journal, Page 9*)

"Christian initiation is accomplished by means of the sacraments which establish the *foundations* of Christian life. The faithful born anew by Baptism are strengthened by Confirmation and are then nourished by the Eucharist." Compendium 251

The sacraments have a ripple effect through us in the world. Born a new in Baptism, strengthened in Confirmation, nourished by the Eucharist, we are able to make the world new, strengthen the world and nourish the world with love. Receiving Christ, we become His body and bring His truth, joy and mercy to others. Our encounter of Christ and the Church at NCYC should not remain stagnant.

Reflect on the story of St. Peter at the Beautiful Gate. (Acts 3:1-10)

Who blessed Peter? Where did St. Peter receive his power to heal others? (Hint - Acts 1:8)

Where else in scripture do you see this ripple effect? (*No right or wrong answers. Examples could be the Evangelists, everyone who is healed/encounters Jesus in the New Testament, The Samaritan Woman, even the people Israel after the crossing of the Red Sea called to be a blessing to the nations in Exodus/Deuteronomy.*)

Have you seen this in your own life, the last time you ended NCYC or another retreat?

NCYC is a pilgrimage, a spiritual journey. How do our spiritual journeys bless others?

Have you and your friends ever been a blessing to others?

**Optional Video**

“What does it mean to be Blessed?” Fr. Mike Schmitz, Ascension Presents  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMetEGQOVdM>

**Optional Game**

Blessed: A Game on the Call of God’s Imperfect People.

*Objective: The point of this game is to remember that most of the people in the Bible – perhaps all – were not blessed because they were perfect. They were blessed simply because they “allowed” God to bless them even in their imperfection.*

*Supplies: Utilize trivia below however you see fit! The same trivia questions are also available on Kahoot! here: <https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/476f38ea-e70e-4156-a7ce-ba9ef2446364>.*

1. Who was a murderer before he was chosen from God’s people to lead the Israelites out of Egypt? (Moses)
2. Who was offered to God by his mother before he was born to be a prophet and blessing for the Israelites? (Samuel)
3. In which book of the Bible do we find this our call to be “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light?” (1 Peter 2:9)
4. Who ran away from God rather than bless the people of Ninevah with God’s message? (Noah)
5. Which prophet is known for being really moody? (Elijah)
6. Who did not believe in the Resurrection until he had touched Jesus’ wounds? (Thomas)
7. Who persecuted Christians before becoming the most prolific writer in Sacred Scripture? (St. Paul)
8. Who had had 6 husbands before Jesus went out of his way to meet her at a well and offer his Living Water? (The Samaritan Woman)
9. Name 2 of the patriarchs or leaders from the Old Testament who were blessed by a personal and communal covenant with God (Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob/Israel, Joseph, etc.)
10. Who prayed the following prayer, ““Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed.” (The centurion in Matthew 8:8).

**Optional Bible Studies**

“Solitude” from Thursday’s Blessed section in the Participant Journal  
 Daily Readings from November 21 in the Participant Journal

**Optional Reflection**

A Note from the Vocations Director, Page 4 of Participant Journal

**CLOSING PRAYER**

All powerful and ever-living God,  
 We are ready to listen to you.  
 We pause now to remember all the times we have encountered you.  
 You’ve entered our lives through people, experiences, sacraments.  
 Help us to identify those moments now when we have already been so Blessed.  
 As we go forth, remain with us, Lord. Give us the strength to remain in you.

Through these months of preparation, may we come to better represent you and who you really are to the world.

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.