

KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHURCH'S TRADITIONS, TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES

Goals:

- To identify areas where the youth's knowledge and/or acceptance of basic truths and practices needs improvement.
- To help clarify understanding and/or foster greater acceptance in those areas where it is decided more work is needed.

Rational:

To be a responsible, effective member of the faith community, it is necessary to have a basic awareness and acceptance of that community's traditions and practices. Many times we are challenged on these by our own Christian friends so it is important that we know and accept them.

Background:

Obviously, one could study for a lifetime and still not fully know all that could be learned about the Church, its teachings, and its traditions. Therefore, during this session it is good to focus on what can be considered the most basic truths related to being a practicing Catholic. Remember we must know and accept the truths of our faith.

Typically, youth can find it difficult to accept certain teachings of the Church. Hopefully, your candidate will be honest in expressing such difficulties if they exist. For your part, do not be surprised if you do not feel fully equipped to answer some of these challenges. Be willing to seek outside help if necessary.

Outline of Session:

Part 1 –

1. Begin by reading from Scripture Mark 9:14-24. Discuss what this passage means to you and have the candidate discuss what it means to him/her.
2. Review and discuss Activity I – “Basic Belief” Nos. 1-5.
3. Close by summarizing the truths the candidate needs to review.

Part 2 –

1. Begin in prayer.
2. Review and discuss Activity I – “Basic Belief” Nos. 6-10.
3. Review and discuss Activity II – “Essentials.”
4. Close by summarizing the truths the candidate needs to review.

ACTIVITY I: Basic Beliefs

- 1. Read through each of the ten sets of statements together, one statement at a time.**
- 2. Then ask your candidate to explain what the statement seems to mean, using his or her own words.**
- 3. Ask your candidate if he or she has any trouble accepting the truth of the statement. Discuss as necessary.**
- 4. Ask the candidate what he or she feels is the importance of the particular truth in terms of living a full, responsible Christian life.**

Statements:

(1) Revelation

God reveals Himself to humanity through all creation, through the events of human history, especially the history of Israel, and through the Incarnation of His Word and Son, Jesus Christ. God's revelation is recorded in the Bible.

(2) The Church

The Church is made up of those who profess belief in Jesus as Lord and God, and who are baptized into his life. This faith community has three tasks: to worship God together in the celebration of the Mass and sacraments (liturgy); to proclaim what Jesus has done for humanity to all who will listen (share the Good News of our salvation through Jesus); and to work to overcome injustice and care for the sick and needy (service). Jesus remains present on earth through the life of this faith community.

(3) Sacrament

The Church recalls certain actions of Jesus when he walked on earth. The Church does this by means of certain objects, gestures, and words (signs). In doing this, Jesus actually becomes present in and through these signs and touches our lives in the same way he touched the lives of people during his earthly lives.

There are seven such sacraments:

Baptism – we participate in Jesus' death and resurrection, dying to sin and being raised to life in Jesus.

Confirmation – we receive and are empowered by the very Spirit of God who seeks to strengthen, encourage, and guide us in living the life of Jesus to the fullest extent possible.

Eucharist – we celebrate a memorial sacrificial meal which recalls and makes present Jesus' Last Supper, his death, and his resurrection. The bread and wine actually become Christ's body and blood. Through this sacrament, we offer to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit the one sacrifice of Christ, and we share in his sacramental body and blood at Communion. The Mass has four divisions:

- a. Introductory Rites**
- b. Liturgy of the Word (Proclamation of God's Word)**
- c. Liturgy of the Eucharist, including Communion Rite**
- d. Concluding Rite**

Reconciliation (Penance) – upon confession of our sins in sorrow, Jesus forgives us through the ministry of the priest.

Marriage – believing couples enter marriage in the name of, in the presence of, and in union with Jesus.

Holy Orders – persons are introduced into the ordained priesthood of Jesus as deacons, priests, or bishops, being empowered to lead the Church in Jesus' name and to celebrate the sacraments.

Anointing of the Sick - Jesus cares for the sick members of the community, strengthening them spiritually and, in some cases, physically.

(4) Grace

Grace means gift. It means God Himself, the Trinity, present to save us. Just as with revelation, God is present through all creation, events of human history, the history of Israel, and above all, Jesus Christ. God gifts (graces) us through all of these. We receive His friendship. He becomes present to us as friend and shares His very life with us. This only happens to the degree that we are open to receive this gift. We become open through faith and especially through listening to God's revelation and through informed participation in the celebrations of the sacraments. Grace also means the effect of God's friendship upon us; the power it gives us to live a life of love.

(5) Creed

A concise summary and prayerful proclamation of principal beliefs that the Church or faith community holds are found in the Creed professed at Mass.

(6) Personal Immortality and Personal Resurrection

Catholics believe that every person has an immortal soul and that even the bodily dimension of existence will be restored and transformed into perfection after death. In other words, we believe we will live forever in friendship with God and others.

(7) Christian Morality

Jesus revealed to us what it means to be fully human and how fully-human persons act. It can be summarized in this way:

- Honor God
- Respect His creation
- Respect your own dignity
- Respect the dignity and rights of all others

Just what such honor and respect involves is described in the Ten Commandments and summarized again by Jesus in his command that we love God and love our neighbor as ourselves.

(8) Church Authority and Dogmas

Bishops are official leaders of the Church as members of the college of bishops, which continues, in union with the pope, the leadership role played by the apostles in union with Peter. They have two special tasks as teachers: to insure that the revelation God has given us is not corrupted or distorted as it is handed down to each new generation; to help the faith community continue to grow in the correct understanding of what God has revealed. Hence, bishops are considered official teachers. Their official teachings, which all faithful believers accept as true, are called dogmas of the Church.

(9) Salvation and the Church

Salvation is offered to all people by God. The Church is the official, authentic, and formal means through which the salvation of the world through Jesus Christ is offered to humanity. However, people are ultimately judged by God according to whether they have followed their

informed consciences. Those who know Jesus as Savior are not free to reject him. Those who do not know him as Savior must strive to know truth, value, and ultimately, God Himself in keeping with the knowledge, freedom, and forms of grace and revelation available to them.

(10) Sin

Sin is the rejection of grace and revelation. Mortal sin is knowingly, deliberately, and with full freedom acting contrary to what one believes to be true and good; it involves moving one's life in the direction of selfishness, away from love and, ultimately, God. The Church informs the consciences of Catholics and people of good will with moral norms rooted in the teaching of Jesus. Venial sin is sin of a lesser degree; it does not involve a radical directing of one's life away from love and, ultimately, God.

ACTIVITY II: Essentials

Read each of the following statements, asking your candidate to describe his or her present attitude toward it by choosing one of these three positions:

1. I believe it is true, and I think I could explain it to others.
2. I believe it is true, but I do not really understand it that well.
3. I am having trouble accepting it as really true.

Statements:

1. God created and creates the universe and continues to hold it in existence and exercise control over it without interfering with but rather empowering our free will toward the good.
2. All humanity participates in sin to some degree and radically needs God's help to do good and to be saved.
3. Jesus is the only Son of God, fully divine and fully human.
4. It is through Jesus, his teachings, his example, and ultimately, his saving death and resurrection that all people have access to the redemption offered by God.
5. Through all Churches and religions can help people find salvation offered by God through Jesus Christ, the one true Church founded by Jesus upon his apostles subsists in the Catholic Church.
6. Though the Catholic Church has a history that includes faults and weaknesses, it is still the best means I have to know about God and to become the fully-human person God intends me to become.
7. The sacraments have the power to put me in contact with the Risen Jesus and to experience his saving actions just as truly as if I had lived and walked with him two thousand years ago.
8. There is an immortal and risen life after death for everyone.
9. Life after death will be spent either with God and the saved in heaven or with the damned, eternally separated from God in hell.

SUMMARY SHEET NO. 3 – KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHURCH’S TRADITIONS, TEACHINGS, AND PRACTICES

Name of Candidate: _____

Name of Sponsor: _____ Date of Session: _____

- 1. In your discussion and sharing on the topic, how was the information received from you by the candidate?**

- 2. In discussing with the candidate, what areas of traditions, teachings, and practices does he/she seem weak in?**

- 3. What areas of traditions, teachings, and practices does the candidate feel he/she needs to work on?**

- 4. Now that you have completed all three sessions, what is your overall impression of the candidate in their preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation?**

- 5. Your personal thoughts and suggestions on how you were able to present this session.**
