

Epiphany of the Lord Unit 4 Family Catechesis Session
“How are we called to be missionary disciples of Jesus Christ?”

Opening Prayer

Stewardship Prayer

*Generous and loving God,
You call us to be disciples of your Son Jesus
and good stewards of your many gifts.
Open our minds and hearts to a greater awareness
and deeper appreciation of your countless blessings.
Transform us through the power of your Spirit
to nurture a stewardship way of life
marked by faith-filled prayer,
service to our neighbor, and generous sharing.
Teach us to be faithful servants of your gifts.
With Mary’s help, may we return ten-fold
the gifts entrusted to us.
We pray thorough Christ our Lord. Amen.*

-Bishop Robert Mornea

Table Talk

Share a snack or meal as you begin this family gathering and as you do talk/reflect about the following information. There are questions to guide you if needed.

There was a recent study done by *The Search Institute* (a company who tracks behavioral tendencies from a religious perspective). In this study the question was asked to a group of college students who were still practicing their faith – “What do your family do that helped you want to continue to make your faith a part of your life?” The results all boiled down to 3 main actions – family traditions, family faith conversations, & family service. Take a moment to think about or create a plan for your family to incorporate these principles. Here are some examples of each:

- Family Traditions:
 - Praying the rosary together as a family
 - Going to Mass together
 - Family Retreat
 - Blessing before bed
- Family Faith Conversations:
 - High/Low from the day during dinner time
 - Asking each other – where did you see Jesus today?
 - What did you learn at faith formation?
 - What did you learn from father’s homily today?
- Family Service:
 - Food pantry
 - Praying for vocations
 - Yard cleanup
 - Visit nursing home

How is your family doing? How can you improve or be more intentional about these aspects? Try asking one of the faith conversation starters now before moving to the next section.

Introduction

Discipleship can be harder to discuss and easier to actually practice. In this family session we hope to provide some resources and ideas for the foundation of discipleship, its religious roots, its applications, and ways this can be done in the context of your family life.

Stewardship

Watch the video, review the information, and then discuss the questions.

One of the key ideas to being a disciple is understanding that all we are and have is a gift from God. So in reality we are borrowing everything from Him. Since we are borrowers it is important to remember that we want to check with Him to see if we are taking good care of things, using them properly, and being responsible with what he offers. In this spirit of thanksgiving for the gifts we want to be generous in our response to God for them. Check out this video to learn more:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lexjUqXYcts>

Here are some key points to consider in understanding stewardship of our time, talent, and treasure.

- Time
 - Our time begins at birth and ends on this earth with death. For most, it is about 25,000 days. Our time is precious and cannot be stored up like grain in a barn. Once a moment passes it is gone forever. God wants all of us to reach heaven; that is why He created us and why He sent us Jesus. Our life on earth is a pilgrimage toward heaven. Each day, each week, each month and each year we must be progressive on our pilgrimage. We cannot do this unless we give some time to God.
 - Through daily prayer, we develop a close personal relationship with God, sharing with Him our successes and failures, and asking for His guidance in our daily lives.
 - Reading Scripture daily helps us reflect on God's word. It also tells of God's great love for us.
 - Assisting individuals and organizations is another way to share our personal time to the glory of God. We also show our love for Him by letting Christ use our feet, our hands, our eyes and our voice.
- Talent
 - All of us have special talents or gifts, which are a sign of the power and majesty of God, who can do all things. These talents and gifts are not given to us just for our own use, but are given to us for the enrichment of the lives of others and so that we can serve God better.
 - If you are singer – to sing at Church and use your voice to praise God
 - If you are good at math – you can tutor your friends/siblings
 - If you like to garden you can help your neighbor
 - St. Peter in his first epistle tells us, "Each one of you has received a special grace, so like good stewards responsible for all these different graces of God, put yourselves at the service of others."
 - Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned
- Treasure
 - There are over 2,300 verses in the Bible about money, possessions and the right use of them. Why is this? Perhaps because God knows our propensity to misuse money or allow it to distract us from keeping our eyes on him.
 - When it comes to financial support of our church family, we should give what we are able, depending on our own financial situation. Our Catholic Church leaders suggest giving a percentage to church and a percentage to charity. In this area of stewardship, one of the most important steps to consider is to become an 'intentional giver'—as opposed to a 'loose change giver.' An intentional giver is one who has the willing diligence to 'do the math,' that is, to look at his/her annual income and then prayerfully and intentionally decide what percentage should be set aside for the support of the church and for charity.
 - Even children are able to give – can we make a sacrifice and offer the money we would have used for Starbucks that morning.

Questions:

- In your own words, what do you think stewardship is?
- Why do you think stewardship is an important part of being a disciple?
- What are some ways that you can individually and as a family give some of your time, talent, and treasure to God?

Missionary Examples

Review the information below, watch the videos, then answer the questions.

Stewardship manifests itself in many ways. One of the ways we are called to do so by our faith is to be missionaries of Jesus Christ.

- What is a missionary?
 - If you look the word up in a dictionary you will see – “a person sent on a religious mission” or “one who is a witness to Christ across cultures”
 - With such a broad definition what does this mean for us or what are some examples of being a missionary?
- Examples of missionaries from our community:
 - Every year Epiphany Youth Ministry sends a group of 40-50 high school students to Laguna/Acoma, New Mexico for a mission trip where they offer a vacation bible school to the local children, do service projects, home visits, and learn about the faith in a different cultural setting. To see some highlights from their trip watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEEIcE-vpKo>
 - Our Associate Director of Youth Ministry, Megan Lass, spent a year living in Africa and started a non-profit with some friends called SALT of Africa. To learn more about the organization she started go to <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1TRDorLKKgCuWkVv0X8Mrnue2fldLZrAc85aQ81UT-8g/edit#slide=id.p>
 - You don't have to go to another state or country to be a missionary. There are plenty of needs within the context of our own Katy area.
 - Every year the youth preparing for Confirmation must complete 2 local service projects (Ballard House, Catholic Charities, Oakmont Nursing Home, Rebuild Houston, etc.)
 - Our parish outreach center has a huge variety of ministries that are offered regularly. (Check out the attachment for complete details)
 - Each on campus faith formation class has a different service project they complete by grade level. (Contact the appropriate director for more information on how to help or do these at home)

Questions:

- What did you learn about being a missionary from the examples we shared?

- What is easy or exciting about being a missionary, what is challenging?
- How can you be a missionary?

Epiphany Opportunities

Review the information below, then answer the questions.

While discipleship has this missionary outreaching quality there is also an aspect of the call that challenges us to take care of our home. The Church is your spiritual home and just like you have chores or ways you help care for your personal home, there are things we can do to help take care of our spiritual home. There are lots of different ways this can be done at Epiphany such as:

<https://d2y1pz2y630308.cloudfront.net/3033/documents/Administration/volunteerform.pdf>

Other opportunities include:

- Angel Tree
- Coffee/Doughnuts
- Epiphany
- Family Fun Nights

Questions:

- What is one way our family can help take care of our spiritual home?

Easter Egg Mission Activity

Review the following information then complete the activity.

- In our Church year we are only a few days away from Holy Week, and just a little over a week from Easter. This important Holiday which has great significance in our faith life has other secular connotations which also accompany it – the Easter Bunny and Easter Eggs. We want to have a little fun with these traditions and incorporate them into your family’s life of faith:
 - While there is no mention of an Easter Bunny in the bible or story of Jesus’ resurrection, bunnies are seen and recognized historically to be a symbol of new life. The Easter events of Jesus’ passion, death, and resurrection provide new life for all Christians.
 - Easter Eggs usually contain some type of fun gift such as candy, a small toy, stickers, money, etc. However, there are other gifts that can be given that do not fit into eggs – gifts that are more important than toys/candy. We are talking about the gift we give by loving our neighbor.
- Each person in your family should think of one tangible action they can do to practice and live out this love of neighbor as a disciple. (This can be as simple as doing someone else’s chore,

giving something to charity, helping a neighbor, sharing a talent of theirs, calling a grandparent, etc.)

- This can be discussed or kept a surprise.
- Once the action has been decided then take a quarter or half sheet of paper and write/color/decorate the paper with the action you've chosen.
- Place that piece of paper in an empty Easter Egg.
- Open the Easter Egg on Easter morning and remember to follow through with the action when the proper time allows.
- Talk as a family about what this experience was like, how did it feel to help another, and how can this become a part of your family life.

Discipleship Challenge

Being that this family session is on discipleship, we want to give every family the opportunity to put their own discipleship into practice. We were going to ask you to bring food items for our parish food pantry. However, due to the coronavirus, the local decree to stay home unless it's necessary to leave, and health concerns we feel it would not be appropriate to do so. We aren't even meeting on campus for this gathering. Unfortunately, our original plan has changed but we would encourage you as a family to find a way to live out your spirit and call to be disciples. Some ideas or suggestions are:

- As you begin your spring cleaning in your home collect items such as clothes, toys, dishes, shoes, craft supplies, etc. and donate them to a local charity
- Donate non-perishable food items to a food pantry
 - You could also bring supplies or groceries to an elderly neighbor who cannot leave their house due to the virus.
- Help a neighbor with yard work

Closing Prayer

Oh Lord, giver of life and source of our freedom, we are reminded that Yours is "the earth in its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it." We know that it is from your hand that we have received all we have and are and will be. Gracious and loving God, we understand that you call us to be the stewards of Your abundance, the caretakers of all you have entrusted to us. Help us always to use your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously. May our faithful stewardship bear witness to the love of Christ in our lives. We ask this with open hearts as we pray using the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola who said, "Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will, all I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace; that is enough for me." Amen.