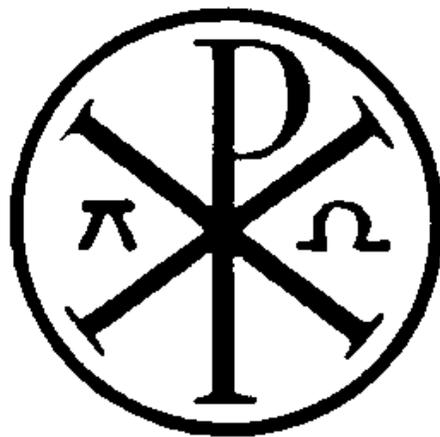


2014 Lenten Adult Education Series

Based on the Sunday Lectionary
Readings (Year A) and the
Catechism of the Catholic Church



Written by
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About This Program

This 2014 Lenten Adult Education Series is provided as a free service.

All Lectionary Readings are taken from the USCCB website: <http://www.nccbuscc.org/>

All points from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* are also from the USCCB website: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/epub/index.cfm>

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This is a free program offered to anyone who wants to use it for faith enrichment.

It is designed to be a six-week program conducted during Lent in 2014 or in any year with the Year A Lectionary readings.

The program is self-contained and requires no special qualifications either to conduct or to participate in.

The sessions are designed to take about an hour and a half to complete. The booklet can be printed off in whole or in part. The sessions can be conducted either before, on, or during the week after the Sunday in question.

The content of the program is based on the Sunday lectionary readings and points of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that seem relevant to them. The two are reinforcing in this way. The Lectionary is drawn from the Sacred Scriptures, which are part of the Deposit of Faith or the entirety of the Divine Revelation entrusted to the Church. The *Catechism* points are particular formulations of authentic Catholic doctrine, all of which are derived from Divine Revelation, as taught by the Magisterium of the Church.

It is designed to be used in a small group of not more than about a dozen participants. Larger groups can be broken into smaller units. The size limit is to due the participatory nature of the sessions. The sharing is important as we can learn from each other through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and our life experiences.

The sessions are designed to move both the head and the heart. The prayer and the shared reflections appeal to the heart while the more intellectual task appeal to the mind.

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First Sunday of Lent - March 9, 2014

Opening Prayer: Please read Responsorial Psalm Ps 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17.

R/ (cf. 3a) Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Activity for Responsorial Psalm

Each person should responds orally to the following question:

- What line of this psalm affects me the most and why?

Please read Reading 1: Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7

Activity for Reading 1

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says the following about the sin of Adam and Eve:

In that sin man *preferred* himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good. Constituted in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully “divinized” by God in glory. Seduced by the devil, he wanted to “be like God,” but “without God, before God, and not in accordance with God.” (CCC 398)

Respond to the following question in writing:

- In the reading from Genesis, how do you see Adam and Eve wanting to “be like God,” but “without God, before God, and not in accordance with God”?

Response to Reading 1:

Share responses with the group.

Please read Reading 2: Rom 5:12, 17-19

Activity for Reading 2

Point 412 in the Catechism of the Catholic Church is:

But *why did God not prevent the first man from sinning?* St. Leo the Great responds, “Christ’s inexpressible grace gave us blessings better than those the demon’s envy had taken away.” And St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, “There is nothing to prevent human nature’s being raised up to something greater, even after sin; God permits evil in order to draw forth some greater good. Thus St. Paul says, ‘Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more’; and the Exultet sings, ‘O happy fault, . . . which gained for us so great a Redeemer!’”

In order to understand this point better, work with a partner to reduce it to one sentence.

One sentence summary of CCC 412:

Share and discuss responses with the group.

Please read Gospel Mt 4:1-11

Activity for the Gospel Reading

According to the *Catechism*,

The Gospels speak of a time of solitude for Jesus in the desert immediately after his baptism by John. Driven by the Spirit into the desert, Jesus remains there for forty days without eating; he lives among wild beasts, and angels minister to him. At the end of this time Satan tempts him three times, seeking to compromise his filial attitude toward God. Jesus rebuffs these attacks, which recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise and of Israel in the desert, and the devil leaves him “until an opportune time.” (CCC 538)

Respond to the following question in writing:

- How do you see Jesus’ temptations as recapitulations of the temptation of Adam in Paradise?

Respond to the Gospel activity:

Closure Activity

What one thing do you feel most moved to say about this “proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ” (all the readings taken together)?

Response to the central salvific meaning of these readings:

Practical Application (for your eyes only):

What one thing do you resolve to do this week, based on this experience?

Practical resolution:

Closing Prayer:

Pray together again the Responsorial Psalm in the light of all you have learned and experienced.

Second Sunday of Lent - March 16, 2014

Opening Prayer: Responsorial Psalm Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

R/ (22) Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Activity for Responsorial Psalm

Each person should respond orally to the following question:

- Even though the words of this psalm were written by an ancient Jew for other Jews, how do they seem relevant to your life today?

Please read Reading 1: Gn 12:1-4a

Activity for Reading 1

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has a lot to say about Abraham, including these two points:

In order to gather together scattered humanity God calls Abram from his country, his kindred, and his father's house, and makes him Abraham, that is, "the father of a multitude of nations." "In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." (CCC 59)

The people descended from Abraham would be the trustees of the promise made to the patriarchs, the chosen people, called to prepare for that day when God would gather all his children into the unity of the Church. They would be the root onto which the Gentiles would be grafted, once they came to believe. (CCC 60)

Respond to the following question in writing:

- God made the promise to Abraham that "All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you." Based on that promise and these Catechism points, how would you say you and your community or nation have been blessed by Abraham?

Response to Reading 1:

Share responses with the group.

Please read Reading 2: 2 Tim 1:8b-10

Activity for Reading 2

Points 2021 and 2011 in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* are about grace:

Grace is the help God gives us to respond to our vocation of becoming his adopted sons. It introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life. (CCC 2021)

The divine initiative in the work of grace precedes, prepares, and elicits the free response of man. Grace responds to the deepest yearnings of human freedom, calls freedom to cooperate with it, and perfects freedom. (CCC 2022)

Discuss the following question with a partner and then write your own response:

What connection do you see between these Catechism statements and what St. Paul says about “strength” and “grace”?

Response to Reading 2:

Share responses with the group.

Please read Gospel Mt 17:1-9

Activity for the Gospel Reading

According to the Catechism,

Christ’s Transfiguration aims at strengthening the apostles’ faith in anticipation of his Passion: the ascent onto the “high mountain” prepares for the ascent to Calvary. Christ, Head of the Church, manifests what his Body contains and radiates in the sacraments: “the hope of glory.” (CCC 568)

Respond to the following question in writing:

- How do you think the Transfiguration strengthens your faith and relates to your experience with the sacraments of the Church?

Response to the Gospel activity:

Closure Activity

What one thing do you feel most moved to say about this “proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ” (all the readings taken together)?

Response to the central salvific meaning of these readings:

Practical Application (for your eyes only):

In Matthew's account of the Transfiguration, God the Father says to the apostles Peter, James, and John, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

What one thing you have learned today seems to be what God wants you to "listen to"?

Closing Prayer:

Pray together again the Responsorial Psalm in the light of all you have learned and experienced.

Third Sunday of Lent – March 23, 2014

Opening Prayer: Responsorial Psalm Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

R/ If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Activity for Responsorial Psalm

One meaning of "harden your heart" is to refuse to think about, let alone do, what God wants. A person can think that God wants to take away from him some great good or even *everything* good. He then rebels against God's will.

For your eyes only, write about a time when you wanted to or even did "harden your heart" against God. Why did you react this way?

Response to Responsorial Psalm:

Please read Reading 1: Ex 17:3-7

Activity for Reading 1

One of the ways Catholics read the Old Testament is typologically or allegorically. An event, a person, or statement in the Old Testament can be seen in a new way in light of the New Testament. This event, person, or statement in the Old Testament is a "type" or symbol of an event, person, or statement in the New Testament.

Thus, in reading the Bible, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says,
Christians ... read the Old Testament in the light of Christ crucified and risen. Such typological reading discloses the inexhaustible content of the Old Testament As an old saying put it, the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New. (CCC 129)

Respond to the following question in writing:

- In the first reading, Moses miraculously provides water for the Chosen People by striking a rock with his staff. Beyond this literal reading, can you see new meanings in it in light of the New Testament?

Response to Reading 1:

Share responses with the group.

Please read Reading 2: Rom 5:1-2, 5-8

Activity for Reading 2

Respond in writing to the following question:

- How would you interpret the second reading from the Epistle to the Romans in light of the psalmist's plea, "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts"?

Response to Reading 2

Share responses with the group.

Please read Gospel (shorter version): Jn 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42

Activity for the Gospel Reading

According to the *Catechism*,

To be human, "man's response to God by faith must be free, and ... therefore nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will. The act of faith is of its very nature a free act." "God calls men to serve him in spirit and in truth. Consequently they are bound to him in conscience, but not coerced.... This fact received its fullest manifestation in Christ Jesus." Indeed, Christ invited people to faith and conversion, but never coerced them. "For he bore witness to the truth but refused to use force to impose it on those who spoke against it. His kingdom ... grows by the love with which Christ, lifted up on the cross, draws men to himself." (CCC 160)

Respond to the following question in writing:

- How do you see this Gospel reading as an invitation for you to conform your life to God freely, without coercion, so you can worship the Father “in Spirit and in truth”?

Response to the Gospel activity:

Closure Activity

What one thing do you feel most moved to say about this “proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ” (all the readings taken together)?

Response to the central salvific meaning of these readings:

Share responses.

Practical Application (for your eyes only):

What one thing do you resolve to do this week, based on this experience?

Practical resolution:

Closing Prayer:

Pray together again the Responsorial Psalm in the light of all you have learned and experienced.

Fourth Sunday of Lent – March 30, 2014

Opening Prayer: Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6:

R/ The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Activity for Responsorial Psalm

Each person should respond orally to the following question:

- What is an example in my life of God being my good shepherd?

Please read Reading 1: 1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Activity for Reading 1

The *Catechism* § 2579 tells us that:

David is par excellence the king “after God’s own heart,” the shepherd who prays for his people and prays in their name. His submission to the will of God, his praise, and his repentance, will be a model for the prayer of the people. His prayer, the prayer of God’s Anointed, is a faithful adherence to the divine promise and expresses a loving and joyful trust in God, the only King and Lord. In the Psalms David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the first prophet of Jewish and Christian prayer. The prayer of Christ, the true Messiah and Son of David, will reveal and fulfill the meaning of this prayer. (CCC 2579)

Respond to the following question in writing:

- Traditionally, David is understood as the primary writer of the Psalms. What clues does Psalm 23 reveal about what God likes in the human heart?

Response to Reading 1:

Share responses with the group.

Please read Reading 2 Eph 5:8-14

Activity for Reading 2

According to the Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes*, “Christ... makes man fully manifest to man himself and brings to light his exalted vocation” (quoted in CCC 1710).

Respond in writing to this question,

- How does this claim apply to the second reading?

Response to Reading 2:

Share and discuss responses with the group.

Please read Gospel [Jn 9:1-41](#)

Activity for the Gospel Reading

According to the *Catechism* § 2466:

In Jesus Christ, the whole of God's truth has been made manifest.

"Full of grace and truth," he came as the "light of the world," he *is the Truth*.

"Whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness."

The disciple of Jesus continues in his word so as to know "the truth [that] will make you free" and that sanctifies. To follow Jesus is to live in "the Spirit of truth," whom the Father sends in his name and who leads "into all the truth."

To his disciples Jesus teaches the unconditional love of truth: "Let what you say be simply 'Yes or No.'" (CCC 2466)

- Based on this Catechism point, how do you see Christ's truth as "light" in this Gospel passage?

Respond to the Gospel activity:

Closure Activity

What one thing do you feel most moved to say about this "proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ" (all the readings taken together)?

Response to the central salvific meaning of these readings:

Practical Application (for your eyes only):

What one thing do you resolve to do this week, based on this experience?

Practical resolution:

Closing Prayer:

Pray together again the responsorial psalm in the light of all you have learned and experienced.

Fifth Sunday of Lent – April 6, 2014

Opening Prayer: Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

R/ With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

Activity for Responsorial Psalm (for your eyes only):

This psalm and the entire Deposit of Faith claim that the ultimate cause of every human suffering is sin. The solution to sin is the Redemption, which includes both the forgiveness of sin and the elevation of human beings to life with God.

Each person should respond in writing for his or her eyes only to this question:

- What personal meaning does this psalm have in your life?

Response to Responsorial Psalm:

Please read Reading: 1 Ez 37:12-14

Activity for Reading 1

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 992,

God revealed the resurrection of the dead to his people progressively. Hope in the bodily resurrection of the dead established itself as a consequence intrinsic to faith in God as creator of the whole man, soul and body. The creator of heaven and earth is also the one who faithfully maintains his covenant with Abraham and his posterity. It was in this double perspective that faith in the resurrection came to be expressed. In their trials, the Maccabean martyrs confessed:

The King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws. One cannot but choose to die at the hands of men and to cherish the hope that God gives of being raised again by him.

Respond to the following question in writing:

- What connections do you see between this *Catechism* point, the first reading, and the responsorial psalm?

Response to Reading 1:

Share responses with the group.

Please read Reading 2: Rom 8:8-11

Activity for Reading 2

The spirit, the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ mean the sanctifying grace we received in Baptism through which we share in God's life. The flesh means our condition before Baptism.

Given those definitions, work with a partner to summarize the argument you think St. Paul is making here.

Summary St. Paul's argument in Rom 8:8-11:

Share and discuss responses with the group.

Please read: Gospel Jn 11:3-7, 20-27, 33b-45

Activity for the Gospel Reading

According to the *Catechism*,

Jesus links faith in the resurrection to his own person: "I am the Resurrection and the life." It is Jesus himself who on the last day will raise up those who have believed in him, who have eaten his body and drunk his blood. Already now in this present life he gives a sign and pledge of this by restoring some of the dead to life, announcing thereby his own Resurrection, though it was to be of another order. He speaks of this unique event as the "sign of Jonah, the sign of the temple: he announces that he will be put to death but rise thereafter on the third day. (CCC 994)

Respond in writing to the following question:

- How would you apply this *Catechism* point to the raising of Lazarus?

Respond to the Gospel activity:

Closure Activity

What one thing do you feel most moved to say about this "proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ" (all the readings taken together)?

Response to the central salvific meaning of these readings:

Practical Application (for your eyes only):

What one thing do you resolve to do this week, based on this experience?

Practical resolution:

Closing Prayer:

Pray together again the Responsorial Psalm in the light of all you have learned and experienced.

N.B.: Because of the length of the Gospel reading for the Mass of Palm Sunday, ask the participants to read the Passion according to Matthew prior to the next, and final, meeting of this Lenten series.

Palm Sunday – April 13, 2014

Opening Prayer: Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

R/ My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Activity for Responsorial Psalm

Each person should respond orally to the following question:

- What is one way that this psalm can be seen as a prophesy of the Passion of Christ?

Gospel Reading at the Procession with Palms : Gospel Mt 21:1-11

Activity for Gospel Reading at the Procession with Psalms

The *Catechism* makes these remarks about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem:

How will Jerusalem welcome her Messiah? Although Jesus had always refused popular attempts to make him king, he chooses the time and prepares the details for his messianic entry into the city of "his father David." Acclaimed as son of David, as the one who brings salvation (*Hosanna* means "Save!" or "Give salvation!"), the "King of glory" enters his City "riding on an ass." Jesus conquers the Daughter of Zion, a figure of his Church, neither by ruse nor by violence, but by the humility that bears witness to the truth. And so the subjects of his kingdom on that day are children and God's poor, who acclaim him as had the angels when they announced him to the shepherds. Their acclamation, "Blessed be he who comes in the name of the LORD," is taken up by the Church in the "*Sanctus*" of the Eucharistic liturgy that introduces the memorial of the Lord's Passover. (CCC 559)

- Write for a few minutes on one of the ideas in this *Catechism* point to understand it better.

Response to Procession Gospel:

Share responses with the group.

Please read Reading 1: Is 50:4-7

Activity for Reading 1

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,

Jesus' violent death was not the result of chance in an unfortunate coincidence of circumstances, but is part of the mystery of God's plan, as St. Peter explains to the Jews of Jerusalem in his first sermon on Pentecost: "This Jesus [was] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." This Biblical language does not mean that those who handed him over were merely passive players in a scenario written in advance by God. (CCC 599)

Respond to the following prompt in writing:

- Interpret Reading 1, taking into account (1) Jesus' suffered willingly according to God's plan and yet (2) those who caused the suffering were responsible for their actions.

Response to Reading 1:

Share responses with the group.

Please read Reading 2: Phil 2:6-11

Activity for Reading 2

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* :

St. Peter [formulates] the apostolic faith in the divine plan of salvation in this way:

"You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers . . . with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake."

Man's sins, following on original sin, are punishable by death. By sending his own Son in the form of a slave, in the form of a fallen humanity, on account of sin, God "made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (CCC 602)

In writing, respond to the following question:

- How would you apply the point of CCC 602 with Reading 2?

Response to Reading 2:

Share and discuss responses with the group.

Please read Gospel: Mt 26:14-27:66

Activity for the Gospel Reading

Answer the following question in writing:

- What is one thing you want to comment on about the Passion and share with others?

Response to the Gospel:

Closure Activity

What one thing do you feel most moved to say about this "proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ" (all the readings taken together)?

Response to the central salvific meaning of these readings:

Practical Application (for your eyes only):

What one thing do you resolve to do this week, based on this experience?

Practical resolution:

Closing Prayer:

Pray together again the Responsorial Psalm in the light of all you have learned and experienced.