

Lesson Plan Format

Topic _____

Intercessor(s) _____

Lesson Goal _____



Preparation

What does this lesson have to do with Jesus?

Sacred space set up: Bible, Crucifix and/or Sacred Art. What will be the opening Scripture?

Proclamation

What is the statement of truth (major point) for the teaching that should stay with them? (1 short sentence of proclamation) Answers the question: "What did you learn today?"

Explanation/Exploration of this Truth

What are the three ways you are going to help students to 'draw out' the meaning of the truth of Christ that you just proclaimed? What questions or Scripture meditation will you use to awaken a desire for students to want to receive this teaching because it answers questions to life issues? In what manner will they be led to encounter Christ, be open to His personal address and recognize His call? What can I ask the students to memorize?

Application/Appropriation into Life

What does this teaching mean? How can I help them to make it their own? What does this Truth call forth from us? How will we respond to Christ by cooperating with His grace? How will I witness this truth to the students? –conversion story, life of a saint, Scripture story/meditation.

Celebration

How can we thank God and acclaim His wonderful truth together by ending in prayer? The prayer of celebration is to further develop our attitude of gratitude toward God. (suggestion – song/hymn, a Psalm, the Liturgy of the Hours, silent reflection, litany, spontaneous prayer, etc.)

Remember to:

Evaluate: methods to determine student comprehension of the lesson:

Prepare Home Connection: (parent page/aids to encounter Christ at home)

The Five-Step Teaching Process: *Catechesis that Changes Hearts*

In teaching the Faith, it is appropriate to imitate God's way of drawing us to Himself. When God reveals something to us in the Scriptures, through a homily or in prayer, He showers us with actual grace so that we can understand. He then waits for us to make a response of faith. When we respond, He reveals more. God repeats the process with each person, over and over again, so that we come to know Him more deeply.

We have the example of Jesus continually drawing Peter deeper in his faith through this process. After Jesus calls Peter to come and follow Him, Jesus reveals many things to him: Jesus cures his mother-in-law, calms the storm, feeds the five thousand and walks on water. Jesus then asks Peter Who He is. Peter makes the response of faith: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Peter did not just figure this out but responded to God's grace in seeking understanding to Jesus' identity. Jesus' next remark allows us to know this: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father Who is in Heaven."

In teaching situations, we can follow God's methodology in a five-step process: **the Preparation, a Proclamation, an Explanation, an Application into Life, and a Celebration.**

The first step, the **Preparation**, is to pull the young people out of their busy lives, to disengage them from all worries and concerns and draw their focus to Jesus Christ. Being ready for them when they arrive by knowing their names (which means not being preoccupied) and asking about their week is essential.

A "sacred space" as a focal point in the room with a Bible, crucifix and/or sacred art that depicts the teaching allow the people to know that they have entered something different than a class on math or science. The opening prayer, which is to be a reading from the Bible (possibly followed by a Psalm response for older students), places the Scriptures as the driving force for the teaching. Beginning with Scripture also allows the session to begin with the power of grace being given by reading God's Word. The purpose of this step, therefore, by disengaging them from their preoccupations, is to create the conditions for the deepening of God's Word in their hearts. "Praying with Scripture" (lectio divina) is a highly recommended resource that can be used in the Preparation Step (or in the closing Celebration Step). "Praying with Scripture" can also be found on the Diocesan website.

The second step is the **Proclamation**, which is the announcement of the truth to be examined, learned and assimilated. One brief statement stated boldly and clearly gives the overall thesis statement for the session. The truth of the Faith is rolled out right in front for everyone to hear. The purpose of this step is to clearly proclaim the truth to be taught. It does not take long at all, but following a well-crafted proclamation, everything else follows more closely. It's like saying, "This is what we are doing today." When young people leave your classroom, they know what they learned! Therefore, the announcement must not be ambiguous or delivered as an apology. This is the central step of the method. All of the other steps come to relate to this one. Jesus made proclamations frequently: "I am the Bread of Life. . . if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever" (John 6:48, 51b).

The Diocesan Religion Curriculum provides the statements that can be used as the Proclamation. Each specific number under the Creed, Sacraments, Life in Christ and Prayer contain several sentences from which a Proclamation can be crafted or provide ideas to mold the Proclamation to fit the chapter from the textbook. For example, a Proclamation about creation for the fifth grade could be: God creates each person out of love. Or, God created each person with an immortal soul so that we may know Him and love Him. A proclamation about the Church for the eighth grade might sound like this: Jesus founded the Catholic Church as the means to reunite God and man separated by the Original Sin. It would then be explained in the next step that we are united with God through receiving sanctifying grace in the Sacraments.

The third step is the **Explanation/Exploration**, which fleshes out what was said in the Proclamation. The proclamation signals the opportunity to examine this "good news" which was just presented. In addition to presenting the catechesis in a straightforward manner, the explanation can be creative in order to draw the students in, helping them to come to a deeper personal understanding and assimilation of the teaching of faith. Some examples could include asking a few questions to engage the students and to see what they already know; sharing a testimony; showing and discussing various sacred art renderings of the truth being taught; opening up the meaning of a prayer or looking up Scripture verses pertinent to this teaching; reading some or all of the chapter in the textbook; using audiovisual aids; role-playing; personal research; writing that is adapted to the capacities and abilities of the learner. This is the step in which students' questions and doubts need to be honestly addressed. The important thing is to explain the truth well but in simple points they can remember (no more than 3 or 4), so that even if the truth reaches to the heights of transcendence it is reasonable and wonderful. Truth, clearly explained, does not insult intelligence. Rather it informs and inspires the heart to deeper conviction.

In the explanation, it is vital for those listening to understand the Faith as a precise unity, in which all truths are part of God's love for us. We then come to understand better who God is and His plan for us. This is accomplished by organizing each teaching around the foundational truths of the Faith. These foundational truths are: 1) the Blessed Trinity, 2) the Person of Jesus in His divinity and humanity, 3) the Paschal Mystery (Jesus' Suffering, Death, Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven), 4) the Holy Spirit and the Church and 5) the dignity of the human person. The foundational truths can be weaved into the teaching using very simple statements: God is one in three Persons who created us to be in relationship with Him. Jesus is a Divine Person and became man to save us from our sins and reunite us with the Father. This reunification was necessary due to our separation from God through the Original Sin. The Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to empower the Apostles to publicly manifest the Catholic Church. Each person has inherent dignity by being created in the image and likeness of God: having an intellect, will and the ability to be in communion with God.

The faith lesson that is being explained should also be connected to the other three pillars of the Catechism through activities that are age appropriate. The four pillars of the Catechism are the Creed (what we believe), the Sacraments (how we are able to be faithful to what we believe by receiving sanctifying grace through the Sacraments. Sanctifying grace is a participation in God's life), Life in the Holy Spirit or the Moral Life (how we respond to God's love in the choices we make in living according to God's laws of love) and Prayer (our relationship with God). In the Catholic School, the teaching is to be connected to one pillar each day of the week, with the

connection to prayer being made every day. In the religious education program, the teacher will be able to connect the doctrine with one, other pillar due to time constraints. This interconnectedness will link the four aspects of the Christian life for the students, helping them to see faith as a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and living the teachings of the Catholic Faith as a response to this relationship.

The role of memory should always be part of the process. The statement(s) made in the Proclamation, a key sentence(s), words that are defined, and/or Scripture verses could be chosen for commitment to memory. Memorization helps to assist in the assimilation process and can greatly assist in providing the words for future conversations on faith topics. A common religious vocabulary is needed for students to be able to understand the truths about God in order to grow in their relationship with Him. Quoting C.S. Lewis, a renowned Christian writer: "Once a person has lost the right word for a thing, very soon he loses the thing."

The fourth step is the **Application/Appropriation into Life**. Even if the proclamation was just right and the teaching was superb, if the young people do not have the chance to specifically apply this truth to their life by making a response of faith, the session was not worth teaching. Appropriating this truth into their life is necessary because conversion is the point of the process. Conversion involves a response, a change of heart in order to follow Christ more closely.

Having a classroom discussion, praying a *lectio divina*, or breaking up in small groups with well-crafted questions are good ways to draw forth faith responses that help students to integrate the teaching in a personal way. Well-phrased questions are a key to the group(s) to avoid small talk and to help the young people articulate how this will impact their life. If the teaching was on faith, the first question should be "What is faith?" Other questions could include "How can we increase our faith?" "How can we lose our faith?" One of the last questions should be "How will you personally respond to this teaching - How is God calling you to respond to His grace and deepen your faith?" We need to allow time for a response to the teaching. One example of the opportunity to respond to a teaching about Jesus' death on the Cross is to give each student a small crucifix to hold in silence for a few minutes and then to write down a response to Christ's perfect love for him/her.

The other benefit of the application step is to help the teacher to keep a pulse on the spiritual life of this particular group. It is necessary to know if each person has accepted or is not yet ready to embrace this teaching. The Application step can also be a gauge to determine if the teachings are being presented at an age-appropriate level.

The Application step intends to draw forth the truth and conviction of the earlier steps and to bear fruit. It will enlighten personal experience and open the door to the ramifications of the lesson: for example, to deepen their love for Mary (or begin to let go of their resistance to her). We see the manner that Jesus used in drawing forth a response from the Apostles. In His teaching on the Eucharist, Jesus used a direct question. After speaking about the Bread of Life, many of His followers left. Jesus asked Peter if he was going to leave Him. Peter responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life" (John 6:68).

If catechesis is to achieve its noble end, the deeper knowledge and love of God, then the catechized must be invited and encouraged to respond actively to God's love for them

throughout the week. Some of the forms of active participation are: being faithful to daily prayer times, being a witness to the Person of Jesus through lifestyle and sharing the “Good News” with those who do not know Christ, participation in the Sacraments, above all Sunday Mass and regular confession (monthly confession is a good habit to develop), being involved in service to others through works of justice and peace (especially the poor) and by seeking to develop the virtues.

The final step is the **Celebration**. In this step, all are given a chance, with the community of the students, to respond with prayerful gratitude and praise to God. This prayer of celebration is to help us to develop further an attitude of gratitude for all the “wonderful things” God has done for us. Most importantly, in Creation and Redemption He has saved us from our sins and reunited us with Himself. This celebration of thanksgiving and praise allows each person a way to respond to the grace that God is giving to those who are seeking greater understanding of His teachings. A lesson on Mary may end by praying the Litany of Loretto, the Memorare, or teaching them to pray a decade of the Rosary (encouraging them to do so every night for their special intention, i.e. a grandparent or a friend who is in trouble), and/or by simply asking Mary to help them come closer to her Son.

The fifth step could be to honor and celebrate a saint that was connected appropriately to the teaching session. Reading a condensed version of the life of the saint and speaking about the symbol for this saint can serve as a role model for the students.

The five-step process of **Preparation, Proclamation, Explanation, Application and Celebration** imitates God's own manner of teaching in which He desires to draw us closer to Himself. Moreover, the five steps naturally allow the process of conversion to unfold as hearts are changed in coming to understand better who Jesus is and what He has done for us and responding to this truth, the Truth of Christ “that sets us free” (John 8:32).

The five step teaching process is based upon The "Ecclesial Method", as presented in the book, *The Mystery We Proclaim* by Msgr. Francis Kelly (Our Sunday Visitor Books, 1999).