

ONEWITH

OneWith community, OneWith faith, OneWith Christ.

October 25, 2020

Reflection Break Outline Grade 9 ~ Session #2



Session Goals

Scripture Unpacked:

The focus for our first session will be on the Closing Rites. Although it may seem strange to begin with the ending, we must unlock the meaning to the words, signs and actions that follow the Eucharist to better understand all that precedes it.

Learning Outcomes:

- Articulate the meaning of a Scripture passage from the Sunday readings (or homily).
- Reflect on and articulate one or more ways these lessons could apply to contemporary life.
- Commit to one practice of Christian discipleship that corresponds to their own learning.

Catholicism Unpacked:

Creed: In the early centuries of the Catholic Church there were great debates about the nature of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit and their relationship to each other. It is out of these great debates – this deep thinking and searching about the truths of our faith that the core doctrines of Christianity developed.

Catechetical Outcomes:

- Reflect on and articulate personal beliefs about God.
- Collaborate with Discipleship Group peers to create a list of beliefs about God that everyone can agree on.



Ice Breaker Activity / Questions (5-8 minutes)

OneWith format is a very different way of exploring the Catholic faith and experiencing liturgy. Peer-to-peer witnessing is a critical part of the discipleship process – but such authentic sharing does not happen easily. It may take a few or perhaps many sessions for your group to build trust in each other and become comfortable with this new format for exploring their faith.

Take a few minutes to help everyone get to know each other and feel as comfortable as one can, given the current circumstances...

Try some “softball questions” to get them talking... Favorite activity/moment of the week,

Some established groups have a standard faith question that they use as an opener. In addition to creating a known question/topic that the youth can reliably anticipate being discussed, you also build in the expectation that everyone will be expected to share.

- *What was your “God-Moment” since the last time we met.*
- *1-5... On a scale of one (“Where the heck are you?”) to five (“We’re like this!” - side-by-side fingers)... Where are you and God right now?*
- *Who did you bless this week? / Who blessed you?*
- *How did you do on your “Discipleship Commitment” from our last session? (more on that below)*

Catholicism Unpacked (10-15 minutes)

Scripture Analysis Questions

The following questions are important to help our young disciples to learn the process of identifying, clarifying and focusing on the subject for discussion.

Be on the look-out for answers that synthesize “gospel” concepts with “secular” cultural beliefs. This is our (your) chance to correct or put a theological fine point on any misconceptions or perceptions that our teens might have.

Ask questions like...

- *What did you hear in Scripture readings from Mass?*
- *What did you hear in the homily (Fr. Mike’s teaching)?*
- *What do you think was Father Mike/Don's main point?*
- *What is one “practical lesson” or bit of wisdom that YOU can take away from the Bible readings and/or homily?*

Close this part of the lesson by reiterating the teaching focus for the session - see pages 5-6 for more detail and some tips from the experts.

Scripture Application Questions

God's Word is more than "oddly phrased" words that people read during Mass... The wisdom and Truth of scripture are just as alive today as they were when they were first scribed millennia ago... Disciples Do! The "Discipleship Challenge" asks our youth to take the practical lesson/wisdom that they have discerned from the Scripture readings (aka – the Bible) and/or the homily – and apply that in the context of their own lived experience.

Note: We are looking for something specific/concrete for them to commit to. "Being a better person" would be too generic... We also want to stay away from "praying" or "praying for someone" - We certainly want them to pray, but prayer is a separate practice of discipleship. If a youth is having problems coming up with something, start with their learned lesson/wisdom and work from there. The point here is to put faith into action by working up a tangible way for them to become agents of mercy, justice and love in their families, among their friends and in our world.

"Discipleship Challenge"

- What is one thing that you can do in the next two weeks to make the lesson/wisdom a reality in your life?

Catholicism Unpacked (10-15 minutes)

"I Believe..."

The early Christian Church took root in a cultural environment much like our own. Christians lived among people of many different faiths; militant monotheists, polytheists, hedonists, etc. Even among Christians there were great debates about the nature of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit and their relationship to each other. It is out of these great debates – this deep thinking and searching about the truths of our faith, that we discerned the core doctrines of Christianity... The Trinity, the Hypostatic Union (Jesus is fully God/fully human), the Apostle's Creed, and the Nicene Creed.

The word "creed" comes from the Latin word "credo" the same root as credibility. More than marketing spin of a mission statement, a creed is a statement of what is reliable. So as we begin to unpack the Creed and fashion our own, let's start with what we find to be reliable about God...

Make (and keep) an actual list from the following questions...

- What do you believe about God?
- Name some qualities of God?

Looking at your list of things that you believe about God...

- *Is there anything that you would like to add?*
- *Identify those things on which you can all agree.*
- *Work this list to your top 3-5 qualities/attributes that you can all agree on.*

If we are completely honest with ourselves...

- *What effect do these "qualities" of God have on the way you live your life?*
- *What effect should these "qualities" of God have on the way you live your life?*

Keep your list! You will be referring back to it in a few weeks.

Want to Go Deeper?

Answering the question "Why do you believe in God" can be an intimidating and complicated proposition. Since most of us have not formulated a concise answer for that let's start off our discussion with something we CAN articulate - and is no less powerful... our own life experiences.

- *Share one personal example of experiencing God in your life?*

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Addendum: Session Goals/Resources

Sunday Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/102520.cfm>

Resource Videos:

What is the Nicene Creed: *(a short/basic overview of the Nicene Creed)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5afgRuqWbEg>

The Truth about the Council of Nicaea: *(A thorough, but long - 9 min on the history of Council of Nicaea)* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSKBGdvo7nQ>

For Theology Nerds

Homoousios and homoiousios are Greek terms used to describe the divinity of the Son in the Trinity.

Homoousios (homoousion) is the term used by the Council of Nicea. It means "same essence" or "same substance." It means that the Son is of the *same essence/substance* as the Father and thus is co-eternal and co-equal with the Father. The Latin translation of Homoousios is *consubstantialis* (consubstantial in English... or as Fr. Don is fond of saying one-with)!

Homoiousios is the term used by Arians and other heresies that deny that the Son is co-eternal and co-equal to the Father. This term means "of similar substance." It was used by those who believed that Jesus was "adopted" as a "Son of God" or that he was created by the Father as a being greater than the angels but lesser than the Father.

Nerd Alert! Notice that the difference between the spelling of the two words is the letter *i*, or *iota* in Greek. Some think that this is the origin of the expression "not one iota of difference" as an expression for a distinction with little difference (e.g. "splitting hairs").

“Virtual” OneWith Reflection Guide

The Catholic Mass is an inexhaustible Mystery! Not the kind of mystery that you don't know/cannot find the answer to – but a spiritual mystery that continues to open up new layer after new layer... the more carefully you look the more exquisite and profound its meaning. What layer of mystery did you uncover today?

Youth make and use the notes from their “Virtual” OneWith Reflection Packet to help them participate in the following discussions...

Liturgical Reflection

What was the one element of the liturgy that stood out to you? How did it help focus or enrich your experience of Mass.

(See the “Virtual” OneWith Reflection Packet for full details about this reflection.)

- Introductory Rites Reflection:
- Liturgy of the Word:
- Liturgy of the Eucharist:
- Closing Rites:

Scripture Reflection

The ability to listen deeply to God's word and extract its wisdom and meaning for our lives today is vital to the life of a Christian disciple! This part of the reflection is designed to help youth develop the skill set to be able to distill the meanings and wisdom that are found in the weekend scripture AND (with a little help from the priest or deacon – perhaps) apply these lessons/wisdom to our own life. This is not an easy task! Be patient, but persistent – our youth are pretty sharp, and they should be able to borrow from their academic skill set of literature analysis, etc.

Scripture Readings of the week

- Reading #1: Exodus 22:20-26
- Responsorial Psalm: 18:2-4
- Reading #2: I Thessalonians 1:5-10
- Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40

*[A full copy of the readings for the week can be found on the U.S. Bishop's website:
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/102520.cfm>]*

Choose one of the readings used at Mass this weekend...

- *Who is speaking in this passage?*
- *To whom are they speaking?*
- *What is the main “message” from this passage and how might that be applied in your own life? (3-4 sentences)*

What was the main point of the Priest/Deacon's homily (preaching)? How does this message connect to your lived experience? (2-3 sentences)

Gospel Reflection - By Greg Sunter

Like last week's gospel, we again have an example of the Pharisees seeking to 'catch Jesus out' in his interpretation of scripture. The Pharisees were regarded as the great interpreters of the Torah—the Law. To them, ALL the commandments were vitally important, not just the Ten Commandments given to Moses with which we are perhaps most familiar, but the 613 *mitzvot* (commandments) contained within the Torah—the first five books of the Bible. These 613 *mitzvot* governed all aspects of Jewish life. For the Pharisees to ask Jesus about the “greatest” commandment was a blatant challenge to him. Perhaps they expected Jesus to name one commandment and then they could challenge him with a whole series of “What about ...?” questions.

Jesus' answer to the Pharisees highlights their preoccupation with the particulars of the Law contained within scripture. In their over-emphasis on the details of religious observance, they have forgotten about the most basic element of faith: to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. Jesus reminds them that being faithful to God isn't about following precise rules but rather it is simply about loving God. With this one sentence, Jesus undermines the power position of the Pharisees. If the Law is as simple as “Love God,” what need is there of Pharisees to interpret the details of the Law? Having pulled the rug out from under them, Jesus follows up with his reminder that the second most important commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. This is a call to compassion and justice that Jesus practiced freely but was sadly lacking in the religious authorities of his time.

Scriptural context—Quoting scripture

The question and response that we see in this gospel passage was a common form of scholarly debate in the Jewish tradition. The Pharisees ask Jesus which of the commandments is the greatest. Jesus responds by directly quoting the commandment from the ancient scriptures. His reply, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,” comes directly from Deuteronomy 6:4. Further, Jesus' follow up, “you must love your neighbor as yourself,” comes from Leviticus 19:18. Deuteronomy and Leviticus are two of the first five books of the Bible that make up the Jewish Torah, or Law.

Living the Gospel—Compassion

Jesus' words call us to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are called to treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. To be able to do this, we need to picture ourselves in their place—experiencing all that they are experiencing; not imposing our own values and circumstances. To see ourselves in the place of another is the key to responding with compassion. The origin of the word “compassion” means experiencing with. If we are able to truly “experience with” another person perhaps then we can genuinely recognize and respond to their needs.

Gospel Focus – Love your neighbor as yourself

There is an implicit, or understood, commandment within the command to love your neighbor as yourself. That is, we must first love ourselves. Whilst to say someone “loves themselves” is used as a criticism of a person who is a bit too vain, that is not what is intended here. If we are to love others as we love ourselves we must first be content and happy with who we are. It is only when we are comfortable with who we are that we are able to reach out to those around us with compassion.

Questions for Teens

- Q. Why would Jesus' answer have been challenging to the Pharisees?
- Q. How might loving God with all your heart, soul and mind affect the way you live your life?
- Q. In your local situation, who are the “neighbors” not loved as we love ourselves?
- Q. What actions can you take to better love your neighbor as you love yourself?

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