

RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Vatican Splendors

A Journey through Faith and Art



Over the centuries, the Catholic Church, specifically in the museums at the Vatican, has served as keeper of many objects of art. These objects are not kept for the wealth or the reputation of the Church itself. They are kept in the Vatican museums for the entire world to be educated, to be inspired by and to experience beauty, history and faith. This particular exhibition, which is visiting only two venues in the United States, provides many opportunities for Catholics to be enriched, to better understand their faith and to evangelize. The items in the exhibition do not stand alone; they present a broader picture of our faith and what has brought us to this period in time as the Catholics we are today.

The lesson plans provided in this resource are for use in parish religious education programs and religion classes in Catholic schools. There is also a lesson for adults, which can be used in parish sessions, teacher in-services, small faith communities and numerous other settings. The topics are not exhaustive, but hopefully will inspire visits to the exhibition to take on new and deeper meaning as a result of faith formation discussion.

This exhibition is a wonderful opportunity for evangelization of many. Students can bring their families to a clearer understanding of the Catholic Church when they discuss what they have experienced during an exhibition visit. Adult Catholics can take friends from other faiths to the exhibition and then invite questions which can be discussed among them. Youth groups might set up activities with other parishes or other faith groups and engage in one of the lesson plans developed for their age group. Our faith is a gift from God and we are charged with going out to tell the Good News to all. The Vatican exhibition provides a fresh and exciting context for us to tell the Good News to others who might not otherwise be interested in our faith.

Contents

Vestments and Vessels.....2

Grades: 4 & 5

Faith Theme: Liturgical Items

Saint Peter: Our First Pope.....4

Grades: 4-8

Faith Theme: Church

The Holy Door.....10

Grades: 6-8

Faith Theme: Church

Inspired by Faith – The Sistine Chapel Frescoes.....13

Grades: 6 - 8

Faith Theme: Introduction to the Bible, Jesus, Church

Selecting a Pope.....16

Grades: 9-12

Faith Theme: Catholic Life & Belief

Saints, Relics and Our Call to Holiness.....21

Grades: 9-12

Faith Theme: Church Doctrine, Church History

Infallibility and the Magisterium.....24

Grades: Adult

Faith Themes: Church Doctrine, Ecclesiology

Portrait of a Cherub (1742), G. Zoboli



"Vatican Splendors: A Journey through Faith and Art" is organized and circulated in conjunction with the Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli of the Vatican City State. The exhibition is produced by Evergreen Exhibitions. Object photos © Città del Vaticano.

These lesson plans have been prepared by members of the Office of Continuing Christian Education, Diocese of Galveston-Houston in Texas. (Updated March 2010.)

Contributions from:

Anne Comeaux, Director

Mark Ciesielski

Charleen Iannucci

Marianne Strzelecki

Michael Way

Margaret Altinger (non-staff contributor)

Photo (top): Mosaic from the Oratory of John VII
8th Century
Photos © Citta del Vaticano

Vestments and Vessels

Faith Theme: Liturgical Items



Above:
*Chasuble of Cardinal Borghese
(1734-1782)
White "lamina" and gold
embroidery
Basilica of Saint Mary Major*

Catechist Background:

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal and other resources give us answers as to why and how certain clothes or objects are used during liturgical celebrations and services. One reason is that they enhance the beauty and solemnity of the service. Approximately 1300 years ago, ministers started wearing certain vestments (a word meaning clothes) during Mass and other religious ceremonies. By the 9th century, Church leaders had decided on specific vestments that would be worn by each minister at Mass. Many of these garments are designs based on those used during the early Christian centuries. They still symbolize the diversity of ministries present and their specific functions during various liturgical services.

Saint Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2:20-21, "there are vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for distinguished and others for common use." Just as every home has a variety of dishes, with certain ones to be used for special occasions, the Church too makes use of certain special vessels for its celebrations of Christ. Items such as the chalice, paten and ciborium are referred to as sacred vessels and hold a place of honor because they are used in direct contact with the Blessed Sacrament. The vessels used in worship symbolize the role of the Christian, shared by all members, making the Church a chosen vessel of God.

*Chalice of Saint John Paul II
2001
Gilt silver, vitreous gems
Private Collections, Vatican City State*



Learner Objectives:

The learner will

1. Gain knowledge of correct terminology for various liturgical items and sacred vessels.
2. Gain additional knowledge regarding the history or usage of various items.
3. Have a hands-on opportunity to view vestments and vessels being studied.
4. Be challenged to expand their knowledge of additional liturgical items' terminology and usage.

Materials:

- Various liturgical items; alb, stole, chasuble, paten, chalice, ciborium, sacramentary, lectionary or other items available from your church sacristy.
- [The Liturgy Documents, A Parish Resource](#), LTP Publishing.
- [The Catholic Source Book](#), Brown-Roa Publishing.
- [Why Do Catholics...?](#) Brown-Roa Publishing.
- Other resources that contain definitions and explanations of liturgical items.

VESTMENTS AND VESSELS

Catechetical Lesson Plan and Activity

Place liturgical items in various locations around the classroom, or if possible, a larger meeting room.

Begin lesson plan by asking students to discuss occupations that they know of where uniforms and certain items are used specifically for that profession/vocation. Some students may have parents or relatives in such positions, or know someone in the military. Allow students to share with the entire class what they know about such specifics of various positions. Use this discussion as the bridge to explain some background information and history regarding liturgical vestments and vessels.

Using resources listed above, or others available in your parish, **have students work together in small groups of 3-5 persons**, researching the correct terms and definitions for the various items at each location. Have multiple copies of information from various resources available to aid each small group of students in their work. Each student will create their own paper with the names of definitions of each item written down.

When each small group has successfully completed gathering the correct information for every item, they should **continue to work together to write a brief (1-2 page) creative story using ALL of the terms** that they have just learned. Each group will have an opportunity to “teach the class” about these items by reading their finished written assignment.

Bonus: by using provided resources, each group will attempt to incorporate any one additional item and its meaning into their creative story assignment.

Assessment:

1. Create ‘Jeopardy,’ ‘Wheel of Fortune’ or ‘Pictionary’ type games using items and definitions listed above that the class can play in small or large groups.
2. Students will write a story utilizing all of the liturgical terms learned.
3. Students will match a drawing or a picture of a liturgical item to the correct liturgical name.
4. When shown a photo, or the actual item, students will be able to correctly write or state the name of the item.

Prior to touring the Vatican exhibit provide students with a list of items to look for among those displayed within the exhibition that they will be learning about in this lesson. Extra credit could be earned by taking notes of various details of items and sharing that information with the class in a follow up lesson. The list could include the following:

- the chasuble of Cardinal Scipione Borghese
- cope of Saint Charles Borromeo (1538-1584)
- the chalice and paten of Pope Pius IX
- the ciborium of Saint John Paul II, and
- Roman Missal with Silver Binding.

Alternative Suggestions:

- Have similar items displayed in your parish sacristy and altar area and take your class on a tour of your own church while they do the same activities.
- Challenge students to locate as many additional items as they can to identify on their individual papers.
- Have a priest or deacon visit the class to display and explain some of the vestments and vessels seen and used during Mass.

Other Suggested Activities:

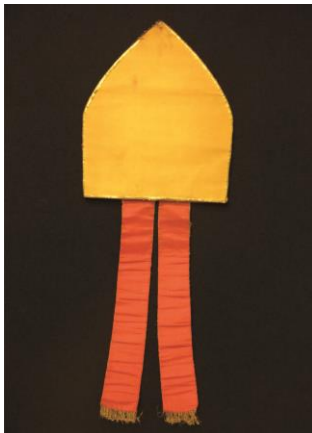
- Contact the sacristan at the Cathedral or Co-Cathedral in your diocese and schedule a guided class tour to view many items used by the Bishop that are not available in your own parish.
- View portions of the videos ‘Come On In!’ – Part 1 & 2 (Twenty-Third Publications), and discuss what they saw and heard that they did not know before.
- Allow students to create a stole with fabric remnants and fabric paints or design one on paper with colored markers or fabric scraps or create a chalice using clay or other available materials.



Chalice Given to the Basilica
by Pope John XXIII
(1958 – 1963)
Gilt Silver
Basilica of Saint Paul Outside-
the-Walls



Dalmatic of Saint Pius V
(1566-1572)
Brocade silk, silver threads,
chevrons, red silk and gold
Basilica of Saint Mary Major



Miter of Saint Pius V
(1566-1572)
Cloth with gold thread
Basilica of Saint Mary Major

Terms

Alb: (means white) the full length loose fitting white tunic, symbolic of the garment worn by someone newly baptized, indicating a sign of the purity of heart the priest, bishop or server seeks in preparing for the Mass.

Stole: the long, narrow strip of cloth, the same color as the chasuble. It drapes over the shoulders, reminding the wearer that Christ's yoke is easy and his burden is light (Mt. 11:29-30). It is a sign of priestly office and is worn by priests and deacons. The priest drapes it around his neck and allows it to hang loose in front. The deacon drapes it over his shoulder, crosses it to the side and fastens it.

Chasuble: the outer, poncho-like garment, the color of the liturgical season or celebration, worn by the celebrant of the Mass.

Crosier: the symbolic shepherd's staff [the Good Shepherd – John 10:11] carried by a bishop, as the one who is to lead, guide and protect his flock – the people of his diocese.

Mitre (also Miter): a tall hat with peaks in the front and back, worn by a bishop at liturgical services.

Zuchetto: the skullcap worn by the Pope (white), Cardinals (red) and bishops (purple).

Paten: the plate that holds the hosts that will become the Body of Jesus.

Chalice: the cup that holds the wine that will become the blood of Jesus. Formerly required to be made of precious metals, it currently must at least be made of a non-porous material of suitable dignity. Eight inches is the traditional and common height. Christ's Last Supper chalice is the subject of medieval Holy Grail legends.

Ciborium: the cup that holds consecrated communion hosts, traditionally resembling a chalice, except for its cover. It is kept in the tabernacle.

Sacramentary: the book used by a priest that contains all the prayers of the Mass.

Lectionary: the holy book that contains all the readings from Scripture that we hear proclaimed at Mass. This book is carried up to the altar during the opening procession. It contains three years' worth of readings. When completed, we start again at the beginning.

Tabernacle: a permanent cabinet or safe structure located in a place of prominence in the church, sometimes at a side altar or a separate chapel, where consecrated hosts are kept. The reserved Eucharist is used primarily for bringing Communion to the sick.



PART TWO

Saint Peter: Our First Pope

Faith Theme: Church

Statue of Saint Peter
Late 18th – early 19th century
Statue of Saint Peter, Gilt metal
Congregation for the
Evangelization of Peoples,
Vatican City State

Saint Peter teaches us a great deal about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. There is more written about Peter in the four gospels than about any other apostle. His Hebrew name was Simon, but he was also known as Cephas, which means, “rock.” Jesus said to Simon in Matt. 16:18-19, “And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” The Catholic doctrine of the papacy is rooted in Sacred Scripture, and is derived from the evident primacy of Saint Peter among the apostles.

Peter was the bishop of Rome. Sacred Tradition tells us that he was martyred in 64 AD by being crucified upside down. He is recognized as our first pope, and he is known as the Patron of Popes. His transformation from Simon to Peter reminds us that we too are called to be transformed. In Romans 12: 2, it says “Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.”

The bones of Peter himself have been found. Archaeologists confirmed that the remains found beneath the Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome have been traced to the Prince of the Apostles, Simon son of Jonah, the fisherman named Peter. Who is this man Peter, who was so revered by early Christians, that the Church would build its first basilica on his tomb?

Grades 4 - 8

Learner Objectives:

The learner will

1. Use the Sacred Scriptures to learn about Saint Peter.
2. Use the Catechism of the Catholic Church to learn how both Scripture and Tradition teaches us about the primacy of Peter and apostolic succession.
3. Explore how the life of Saint Peter teaches and inspires Christian discipleship.

Materials:

- Bible
- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Poster board and markers
- Chalkboard and chalk

SAINT PETER: OUR FIRST POPE

Catechetical Lesson Plan and Activity



Peter Saved from the Water (detail), School of Giuseppe Ghezzi, 1715 – 1725, Oil on canvas, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Vatican City State

Catechist Teaching: Use the Catechist Background section above to teach the students about the discovery of Saint Peter's bones beneath the Basilica of Saint Peter's in Rome. Then, to help the students learn more about Saint Peter ask a different student to read aloud each of the following stories about Peter as found in Sacred Scripture. After each story is read, ask the students what they learned about Saint Peter from that Scripture story and write their comments on the chalkboard.

- **The call of Simon the fisherman-** *Luke 5: 1-11*
- **Name changed from Simon to Peter-** *Matthew 16: 13-20*
- **Peter sees Jesus Transfigured-** *Matthew 17: 1-8*
- **Jesus and Peter walk on the water-** *Matthew 15: 22-33*
- **Peter's denial is foretold-** *Luke 22: 31-34*
- **Jesus and Peter-** *John 21: 15-19*

Emphasize to the students that these and other scriptures show that the Church is truly built upon the "rock-like faith" of Peter, and that he is recognized as the first pope. (When you attend the Vatican Exhibit, be sure point out the following and remind the students of the Scripture stories: Statue of Saint Peter, Oil painting of Saint Peter being rescued from the water, Oil painting of Christ giving the Keys of the Kingdom to Saint Peter)

After the class has read the above Scriptures, engage them in the following activity:

For grades four and five: Have the students divide into groups of three. Assign each group one of the stories about Peter listed below. Give each group 20 minutes to create a poster that depicts the Scripture story selected. Afterwards, ask each group to present their poster to the class and share their story.

John 13: 5-10, Mark 15: 66-72, Acts 3: 1-10, John 20: 1-10, Mark, 14: 32-38

For grades six-eight: Instruct the students to break into groups of four and spend thirty minutes creating a newspaper article for your local Catholic newspaper on the "Primacy of Peter in the Catholic Church." Use the following sections of the Catechism of the Catholic Church to help write the article about Saint Peter: CCC #552-553, CCC #862-863, CCC #880-884. Afterwards, have each group read their newspaper article to the class.

Draw the lesson to a conclusion by emphasizing the following: When we think about the life of Saint Peter, we find that he teaches us much about being a disciple of Christ. His beginning faith, his fall, his repentance and conversion story reminds us of our own "journey of faith." Peter's mistakes remind us we don't have to be perfect to be a saint. His bravery makes us want to be like him.

Conclude the class with a prayer for the well-being of the Pope and your local bishop asking the students to spontaneously provide intercessions based on what they have learned about Saint Peter.

Other Additional Activities:

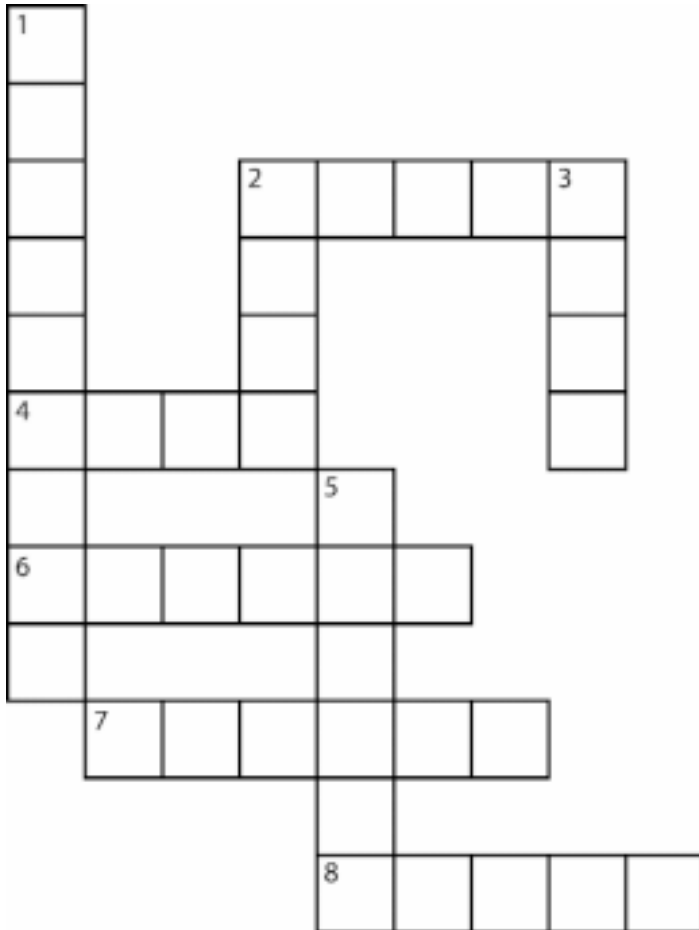
Another fun way to learn about Saint Peter is to have the students complete puzzles:

Fourth-fifth grade students: Complete the following Saint Peter Crossword Puzzle. Instruct the students to use the clues that refer them to references in Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church when working on the puzzle.

Sixth-eighth Grade Students: Complete the following "Saint Peter Word Search Puzzle." Instruct students to find and circle the following hidden words in the puzzle. Hint: Hidden words can be written forward or backward, in straight lines or at angles.

SAINT PETER CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Complete the following Saint Peter Crossword Puzzle. Use the clues that refer them to references in Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church when working on the puzzle.



Across

2. You are ____ and on this rock, I will build my church. Matt:16:18

4. The bishop of the church of ____ is also known as the pope. Read CCC #936

6. Who was Peter's brother who was also an apostle? John:1:41

7. Peter was the first ____ of Rome. Read CCC#882

8. Peter's name before it was changed by Jesus. Read Luke 5:1-4

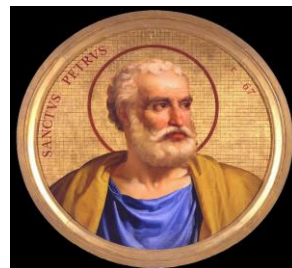
Down

1. What was Peter's job before he became an apostle? Luke 5:5-10

2. The ____, the bishop of Rome, is Peter's successor.

3. You are Peter, and upon this ____, I will build my church. Read Matt:16

5. Peter's name in Greek. John:1:42



*Painting of Saint Peter
Raffaele Capo
19th Century
Oil on Canvas*

SAINT PETER WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Complete the following Saint Peter Word Search Puzzle. Find and circle the following hidden words in the puzzle. Hint: Hidden words can be written forward or backward, in straight lines or at angles.

**APOSTLE
BASILICA
BISHOP**

**CEPHAS
MARTYR
PETER**

**POPE
ROCK
ROME**

**SAINT
SIMON
VICAR**

R	I	E	O	I	C	T	I	R	H	U	T	G	N
D	L	A	A	F	E	V	R	G	I	P	A	U	R
N	R	K	T	K	L	Y	Y	O	D	P	M	B	S
O	U	E	T	J	T	X	A	O	S	Q	R	J	E
B	J	C	T	R	S	V	T	Y	X	Z	P	K	N
I	U	J	A	E	O	B	W	F	P	E	L	A	Q
B	N	M	L	T	P	M	T	J	I	K	B	D	O
Y	S	J	Z	K	A	O	E	N	Q	C	R	K	V
X	I	I	S	D	C	D	P	N	E	O	N	U	K
B	B	G	Z	V	I	S	O	P	N	R	M	W	N
D	T	L	L	C	L	M	H	F	A	F	X	N	V
Z	F	I	T	N	I	A	S	C	Z	R	N	Q	R
M	S	W	N	S	S	F	I	F	J	F	P	Q	M
D	Q	D	H	Z	A	V	B	Q	W	H	N	N	R
Y	Y	P	N	B	B	L	R	N	N	E	M	P	F



*Plaster fragment cast of the "red wall" in the Vatican Scavi, with graffito "Petros eni" (Peter is here)
The Reverenda Fabbrica of Saint Peter, Vatican City State*

These words were found on a fragment of the wall under Saint Peter's Basilica during archaeological excavations in 1950. Dating to the 2nd Century, the inscription substantiates the claim that Constantine built the first basilica over the actual tomb of the apostle.

Assessment:

Give the answers to the puzzles and ensure that all students understand the correct answers. Assess the quality of the posters and/or newspaper reports given.

Terms

Sacred Scripture: Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. (CCC# 81) The Sacred Scriptures contain the Word of God and, because they are inspired, they are truly the Word of God. (CCC# 135)

Holy Tradition: Holy Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God, which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. (CCC# 81)

Apostle: Apostle comes from the Greek word “apostellen,” to send. An apostle is someone who is sent by Jesus to carry out His mission in His name. The twelve apostles were a group of men chosen by Jesus from among a larger group of disciples, because “He named twelve as his companions whom He would send to preach the good news.” (Mark 3:14)

Bishop: The “ordinary” of a diocese with personal jurisdiction as a successor of the apostles over people within his diocese.



Processional Cross

First half of 19th century

Gold and silver

Basilica of Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls

PART THREE

The Holy Door

Faith Theme: Church



Commemorative Brick
from the Holy Door
1983

Catechist background:

Our lives as Christians are marked, beginning with our baptism, with a continual passage of our dying to sin and our rising to new life in Christ. **The holy door** serves as a symbol to represent Christ. The door is a reminder and a significant sign of the jubilee [cf. Incarnationis Mysterium, #8]. To focus upon the holy door of Christ is to recall the responsibility of every believer to cross its threshold. Jesus said, “I am the door” [Jn.10:7] in order to make it clear that no one can come to the Father except through him [IM #8].

To pass through this door, we are called to the “courage to leave something behind” [IM #8]. It will be a door to a new start – a new beginning for ourselves and our relationship with God and our neighbor. We are invited to open the doors of our hearts to Christ, to seek a relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life [cf. Jn. 14:6]. Crossing the threshold serves as a confession of faith and proclamation of the Gospel as a missionary act. While putting our faith in Christ to heal where we have failed to love, we put our hope that He can help change our stony hearts into loving hearts of flesh. In Christ, with Christ, and through Christ we bring others to the Father and thus reconcile the world to God.



*The holy door of the Basilica of
Saint Peter, Reverenda Fabbrica
of Saint Peter, Vatican City State*

Grades 6 – 8

Learner Objectives:

The learner will

1. Become familiar with the history and purpose of the holy door in the context of Holy Years and the Great Jubilee.
2. Create a holy door which reflects his/her “closing or leaving something behind” and “opening something anew” as a follower of Christ.
3. Use prayer to celebrate Christ’s love which enables a change of heart.

Materials:

- Two pieces of colored construction paper per person
- Extra white sheets of paper & envelopes
- Newsprint or posterboard for attaching individual panels
- Magazines with pictures
- Colored markers
- Gluesticks
- Crucifix
- Plain brown box

THE HOLY DOOR

Catechetical Lesson Plan and Activity

This activity will take two class sessions.

Preparation: Tell the students that they will be participating in a prayer activity which emphasizes letting go of something no longer needed or of value and finding something of hope to take its place. In preparation for the first session, ask each student to bring an object of something that he or she once valued [but which has lost its value]. Explain that the objects will be placed in a box to be used as part of a prayer service after they return from the Vatican exhibit.

For the first session [about 15-20 minutes], bring your own object that you once valued but which no longer holds much value [e.g. an old vinyl record]. Also, bring something that is of value today [e.g. CD]. Describe how the object once held value and share how its value changed over time. Explain how you had to let go of that before you could use the new item of value. Ask for a few volunteers to share what they brought that has changed in value over time. Explain that the exhibit of the Holy Door is about turning over to Christ the things we need letting go of in our lives because they no longer hold value. Emphasize that this letting go is necessary so that we can find in Christ something of lasting value, something that will give us hope and life. Invite them to place their objects in a box which will be stored for the prayer activity after visiting the Vatican exhibit. Instruct that part of the Vatican exhibit will have a representation of the Holy Door. Explain the purpose of the Holy Door in the context of the Holy Years and the Great Jubilee. Learners should be instructed to pay attention to one particular part of the exhibit, “Liturgical Objects” [includes the Holy Door]. Have them pay special attention to the panels on the Holy Door. Instruct that every person will be asked to design such a panel for a holy door when he or she returns as a way of closing some door to one’s past and opening oneself to living more closely with Christ.

After visiting the exhibit, begin the second session [about 60 minutes] by asking the group to describe what they saw or experienced regarding the Holy Door. In particular, focus on the panel scenes on the Holy Door. Have them explain the significance of each. Remind them that the Holy Door is about a closing of the old and an opening to something that gives new life. Then ask: “What did Jesus have to let go of so that he could have the abundant life that He promised us?” After they are finished responding, explain that the class is going to make their own holy door with a reenactment ritual for opening the door. Explain that it will consist of panels made by everyone that reflect two components:

1. One panel for something they want to let go of.
2. One panel for something that will give them hope or new life.

Explain that the door itself will represent Christ. State that one side of the door will hold the “letting go” pieces and the other side will represent the “things hoped for” pieces. Explain that both will be offered to Christ in a prayer service. Each student can represent his or her panels by making a collage, a drawing, poem, or letters & envelopes [for those who want a little more privacy]. Instruct them how to attach their completed work to a door that you have previously designated to serve as the group’s Holy Door. [Allow 30 minutes for this part.] For larger groups, when the Holy Door is covered with panels, arrange additional panels on the wall on either side of the door.]

When the Holy Door has been completed with everyone’s panels or attachments, close it. Invite everyone to take a few minutes to examine the side of the door with things “that need closing” [if there are any envelopes, they should remain sealed]. [If the box with old objects from the first session was done, place it solemnly at the foot of the door.]

Then offer the following prayer: “Dear Father, we give to Jesus the things of our lives that are burdensome, our selfishness, the hurting places in our hearts. Let us pause to recall those things we placed on the door which we want you to help us close.”

PAUSE for about 1 minute. Then continue with:

“As we open and walk through the door, let us remember how Jesus invites us to open our hearts to him so that he can transform our lives into ones that offer hope and new life to the world.”

Have a predesignated person tap three times [SOLEMNLY] on the door.

Proclaim: “Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” [John 14:6.] With Saint Matthew we pray, “Lord, Lord, open the door for us.” [Mt. 25:11.] [If musical instruments were brought, cue the students that now is the time to play them.] Instruct the person who tapped on the door to open [SOLEMNLY] the door. Let the lead person carry a crucifix as he or she passes through the Holy Door. Invite everyone to walk through the gateway. After they have completed the passage, close the door and invite them to look at their images of hope.

After a few minutes, continue with: “Lord, let our images of hope rest in you to encourage us on our journey of faith. Help us to be faithful to you so that others may see your love in us and return to the Father. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

Alternative suggestions:

Use a ribbon or tape to signify the door. Create two spaces on the walls to hang the “giving up” and “hope-filled” creations. Cut the ribbon or tape as a sign of opening the door.

After the second session, consider decorating the Holy Door with flowers or fragrances [e.g. spray the student panels with a potpourri].

Invite students to bring musical instruments such as horns, tambourines or drums and cue them to mark the joy and invitation of crossing the threshold of hope [as they pass through the Holy Door the second time].

Other follow-up suggested activities:

After the second session, invite persons to share what they closed and opened in Christ. Brainstorm how the class might do something concretely to make the world a place of hope.

Ask families to create a family holy door. One side would represent areas needed for reconciliation or change. The other side would represent hope or things needed to make a more loving home. Persons could verbally choose to state these things or visualize them through writing/drawing. Use the prayer to guide the activity. Following the prayer, the family may want to discuss specific ways as a family that they could make Christ’s love more visible for others. [This could also be done with a group of families.]

Assessment:

Review with the class after the experience, what they remember about the Holy Door and its purpose.

Examine the panels to see how they reflected the two parts of “leaving something behind” and “opening something new in Christ.”

In the large group, the catechist/teacher could reflect his or her observations of the student panels in relationship to the Vatican exhibit of the Holy Door.

Terms

Holy Years: Every twenty-five years since 1300, the Catholic Church has celebrated special years of reconciliation and redemption called “holy years.”

The Great Jubilee: This marks a special recognition of the Holy Year 2000 since its significance marks two thousand years since the birth of Christ and the passing of the millennium. It was marked in Rome from Christmas Eve 1999 through the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6, 2001.

Holy Door: One of the traditional symbols of the Holy Year. There is a holy door in the four major basilicas in Rome – Saint Peter’s, Saint Mary Major, Saint John Lateran, and Saint Paul’s. Basilicas are churches granted certain ceremonial rites. Since 1423, the holy door has been a traditional sign of the Year of Jubilee. Pope John Paul II opened and closed each of the basilicas’ four doors during the period of the Great Jubilee.

*See additional Internet Links for “The Holy Door.”

PART FOUR



Inspired by Faith: The Sistine Chapel Frescoes

Faith Theme: Introduction to the Bible, Jesus, Church

Catechist Background:

Visitors will feel as if they are on the scaffolding Michelangelo used to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel when they enter its reproduction at the Vatican Splendors exhibit. This portion of the exhibit offers a mural graphic of the interior of the chapel. In addition, the exhibit shows a depiction of Pope Sixtus IV and narrative on Pope Julius II, who were instrumental in commissioning the building and frescoing of the Sistine Chapel.

The Sistine Chapel, located in the Vatican Palace in Rome, contains some of the greatest artwork ever produced in the Western world. The artists who frescoed the Sistine Chapel were effective interpreters of the saving Word of God that comes through divine inspiration. Artistic rendition of Scripture stories was popular in the Middle Ages, as a means of educating the faithful, since most people were unable to read it for themselves, even if Bibles had been readily available to them. The Sistine Chapel offers testimony to the power of visual image to remind and teach us lessons of faith. Perhaps this is why chief papal ceremonies take place in the Sistine Chapel, and why cardinals vote for a new pope within its walls.

The entire history of salvation as recounted in the Bible is magnificently displayed on the walls and vault, or ceiling, of the Chapel. The lateral walls depict and show the parallels between the lives of Moses and Christ. On the vault, Michelangelo creatively depicted major episodes in salvation history: God as Creator, humanity, and the life of Noah. Lastly, there is a series of images depicting God's renewal of promises throughout the history of Israel. Each image dramatically demonstrates how God intervenes in extraordinary ways to renew His people's faith in redemption. The final fresco by Michelangelo, which sits behind the magnificent altar of the chapel, depicts The Last Judgement. Christ is at the center with Mary at his side. He is casting out the evildoers with his left hand, and welcoming the just with his right. The Last Judgement powerfully conveys the possibility of redemption in light of the Resurrection.

Grades 6 – 8

Learner Objectives:

The student will

1. Become familiar with the Bible by locating passages in the Old and New Testaments.
2. Use maps to locate and recognize key biblical sites in the Holy Land.
3. Become familiar with the overview of salvation history as depicted in the Sistine Chapel.

Materials:

- Bibles
- Maps of Holy Land (use map in Bible, religion text, atlas, geography text or other)
- Props for dramatizations (optional)
- Copies of Luminous Mysteries (optional)
- Copies of your diocesan newspaper
- Art books detailing the artwork contained in the Sistine Chapel

INSPIRED BY FAITH

Catechetical Lesson Plan and Activity

Depending upon class size, have students form research groups and assign one or more the following topics:

1. The Life Cycle of Moses - Exodus 12:37-42, Exodus 2-4, Exodus 14:10-31, Exodus 19-25, Numbers 16, Deuteronomy 34.
2. The Life Cycle of Christ - Matthew 3, Matthew 4:1-11, Matthew 4:18-22, Matthew 5-7, Matthew 16:13-20, Matthew 26:17-30.
3. God as Creator - Genesis 1:1-19
4. Humanity - Genesis 2-3
5. Noah - Genesis 6-8
6. The Last Judgement - Matthew 25:31-46

Before visiting the exhibit:

Have students locate and read their assigned Scripture passages. Ask them to discuss and summarize the Bible stories among themselves. Without looking at reproductions of the Sistine Chapel, have them collaboratively determine how they would illustrate the Scripture if they were artists, identifying the essential elements that they would expect to depict. Be sure to have the students use maps to locate and plot events from their research group's findings.

While visiting the exhibit:

Have students focus on their group's research topic and consider the following: What is the central idea of the scene? Who is shown in the scene? What is happening? Where does it take place? How has the artist conveyed the central meaning of the story? Is the image the artist depicted what you imagined? Why or why not? Be prepared to explain your conclusions.

After visiting the exhibit:

Have students collaboratively plan a presentation that answers all of the questions they were asked to consider at the exhibit and present it to the class in one of the following formats:

- a dramatization
- a newspaper article (use your diocesan newspaper as a model)
- a news program (use the format of a local news or talk radio program).

Encourage the "audience" to ask questions and summarize what they have seen or heard from the presentation.

Additional Activities/Resources:

Have students locate the following passages in the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church that describe the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary:

Mark 1:9-11	CCC536
John 2:1-10	CCC1335
Matthew 4:17	CCC545
Matthew 17:1-3	CCC556
Luke 22:19-20	CCC1337

In small groups, have students discuss and summarize Jesus' values, intentions, motives and attitudes in each of these events. Then ask the students to artistically represent the scenes of the Luminous Mysteries.

Assessment:

Evaluate the project presentation to ensure that it accurately highlights the important elements of the Bible stories.

Evaluate the "audience's" questions and discussions to ensure they have understood the main points that have been presented.

Timeline:

- 1477: Pope Sixtus IV initiated building the Sistine Chapel.
- 1480 - 1483: Lateral walls of the chapel were frescoed by the greatest artists of the time, including Botticelli, Signorelli, Ghirlandaio and Perugino.
- 1506: Saint Peter's Basilica building begins.
- 1508 - 1512: Michelangelo was commissioned by Pope Julius II to fresco the vault of the chapel with figures of the Apostles.
- 1537 - 1541: Michelangelo was commissioned by Pope Paul III to fresco the wall behind the altar with The Last Judgement.
- 1994: Restoration of works of Sistine Chapel.

Evaluate the "audience's" questions and discussions to ensure they have understood the main points that have been presented.

Terms

Fresco: painting made on damp, freshly laid plaster using pigments mixed with water. This technique required the artist to work quickly before the plaster dried.

Vault: arched ceiling.

Scaffolding - temporary system of platforms for painters to stand on when working at a height above the floor himself, Michelangelo was as gifted a painter as he was a sculptor.

Additional Resources:

[The Sistine Chapel](#), Renee C. Rebman

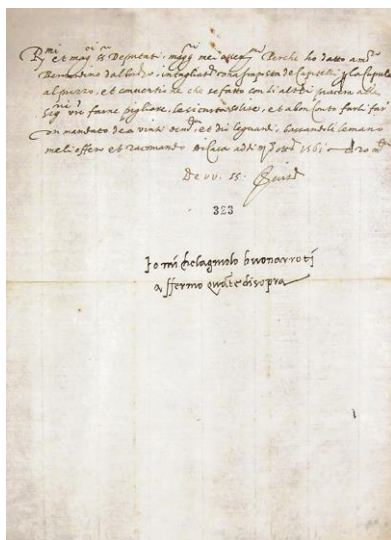
www.vaticanpatrons.org

[Michelangelo, The Last Judgement and Michelangelo, The Sistine Chapel Ceiling](#) by Loren W. Partridge

[The Sistine Chapel: a Glorious Restoration](#) by Carlo Pietrangeli

[The Agony and the Ecstasy](#) video

National Geographic [Inside the Vatican](#) video



Document Signed by Michelangelo Buonarroti

16th Century

The Reverenda Fabbrica of Saint Peter, Vatican City State

PART FIVE

Bust of Saint John Paul II
Enrico Manfrini

Selecting a Pope

Faith Theme: Catholic Life and Belief

Catechist Background:

The Pope's teaching authority pertains to the spiritual and promoting the Christian virtues in all matters of justice and charity. As the head of the Church on earth, he can teach the faithful the purpose of leading the faith of Catholics. The Pope exercises the **Magisterium** [the official teaching authority] infallibly in matters of faith and morals when he speaks from the chair of Saint Peter. He speaks under the authority of the Word of God in Jesus Christ. This has been exercised twice in the dogmatic revelations of the Immaculate Conception and Mary's assumption into heaven. The **extraordinary magisterium** can also be exercised in communion with the bishops throughout the world. This teaching authority proposes truths to be believed by all the faithful in matters of faith and morals and when their intention binding the whole Church is sufficiently evident. The Ecumenical Councils are one example of this teaching practice. This does not necessarily make such teachings infallible (without error). It does make a presumption of truth.

Grades 9 – 12

Learner Objectives:

1. To describe the role of the Pope and his teaching authority in the life and mission of the Church.
2. To understand the process of a conclave for electing a pope.
3. To examine and discuss critical issues facing the church today.
4. To reenact a papal conclave by "electing a pope" responsive to the needs of the life and mission of the Church today.

Materials needed:

- Catechetical resources for examining critical issues facing the Church today.
- Four index cards/person. One pen/person. These will be used as ballots and for voting in a simulated papal election.
- A white and black piece of construction paper. This will be used to indicate papal election results.
- A plate [e.g. paten] used for collecting papal ballots and a bowl [e.g. chalice] for placing the ballots from the plate.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 892

The Pope, like the bishops, may exercise the *ordinary teaching magisterium*. The Pope may teach the faithful through encyclicals, sermons, pastoral letters, explanations, and liturgical documents. Popes have taught in addressing the colonization of peoples, the right to own property, on international violence, the indissolubility of marriage, on just wages and conditions of the working person. The ordinary magisterium may propose teachings on matters of faith and morals when it is unanimous [universal agreement] in their teaching. One example of such a truth of faith is “The Church is the Body of Christ.”

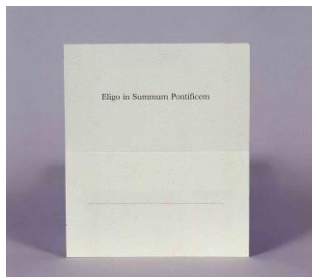
The conclave represents the electoral process for selecting a new pope.

All cardinals under 80 years old will remain, under locked doors, until they choose a new pope. The voting proceeds without speech or debate. Each cardinal receives a ballot and inscribes a name. A two-thirds majority is needed for election. Each completed ballot is placed on an open paten, then dropped into a chalice. If the two-thirds majority is not reached, the ballots are burned in a stove with a chemical to emit black smoke. White smoke signals the election of a new pope. Balloting occurs twice a day until a pope is elected. The presiding cardinal approaches the elected for his consent. If he accepts, he chooses a papal name. He then dresses in white [cassock and zucchetto] and is announced to the world from the balcony above Saint Peter’s Square.

Instruments of the Election



Urn for the Conclave (voting)
[Not currently on display.]



Ballot used for the election of the Pope
[Not currently on display.]



White smoke-producing cartridge used for the Conclave of 2005
[Not currently on display.]

SELECTING A POPE

Catechetical Lesson Plan and Activity

This will consist of a preparation session before visiting the exhibit and a post-exhibit catechetical session.

I. Pre-exhibit visit preparation [20 minutes]

The catechist should explain to the students that they will be involved in a simulated papal election. Each person will serve as a cardinal in the College of Cardinals for the election. The catechist should explain that the following preparation will be necessary before the election can take place.

Instruct learners to pay special attention to the Section 2: The exhibit: “The Work of the Pope.” This will help the learners better understand the process for electing a pope.

The catechist should use the “Catechist background information” to explain the meaning of the terms conclave, papal authority [Mt. 16:17-19], and the process for a papal election.

The catechist should emphasize that although no actual debate is allowed during an actual election in a Papal conclave, the cardinals need to be prepared by knowing the “candidates.”

Explain that any of the cardinals can be elected but that there are usually a handful of cardinals who seem to be gifted to lead the Church as Pope.

Explain that for the purpose of the simulated class papal election, the class will need to choose five candidates who demonstrate some leadership capability. Inform the class that these 5 candidates will be asked to discuss one or two critical issues [see list below] facing the Church today.

Explain that every person will be given material to review reflecting these issues but the candidates themselves will be given 3-5 minutes to give their informed views on the issues. Indicate that there will be an additional 10-minute period for anyone else to respond to the selected issues. After this, all debate will terminate and the papal election will begin. In addition, two persons will serve to count and tally the votes. They will serve to hold up the respective white card when one candidate has received a 2/3 + 1 majority [votes required to elect a pope] or black card [insufficient 2/3 + 1 majority].

The catechist will designate a cardinal dean. [Upon receiving the necessary number of ballots, the cardinals counting the ballots will give the name of the selection to the cardinal dean.] The cardinal dean’s role will be to ask the selected candidate if he will accept the nomination for pope and if so, ask what name the person wants to have as Pope.

If the candidate accepts the results of the election, the cardinal dean will then announce this person to the class.

The catechist will complete the election process by leading the class with a simple prayer of support to serve Christ through their collaborative fidelity with the new Pope and the people of God.



Portrait of Pope Benedict XVI

Igor V. Babailov

2008

Oil on canvas

Private Papal Storehouse,
Vatican City State

SPECIAL ISSUES

Saint John XXIII called us to dialogue on issues facing the Church [Second Vatican Council, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World”]. The class should select ONE of the following suggested issues facing the Church today and use a catechetical resource to prepare their response on the issue. Other issues, not listed, can be selected.

1. **How should the Church be involved in creating a more just world (e.g. alleviating poverty, assisting the oppressed, respecting the dignity of human life)?** [see *Your Life in Christ, Foundations in Christian Morality*, Michael Pennock, Ave Maria Press, 2001, pp. 212-216 and website: <http://www.catholic.org/pfl/> or *Church History, A Course on the People of God*, Sadlier’s Faith & Witness series, 1998, pp.168-171].
2. **How can the Christian community bring [evangelize] Jesus’ message of love more alive for the world?** [see *Creed, A Course on Catholic Belief*, Sadlier’s Faith & Witness series, 1998, pp.175-181].
3. **What can the role of women be for today’s Church?** [see selected sections from *People of God, The History of Catholic Christianity*, Anthony Gilles, Saint Anthony’s Press, 2000, pp. 183-185; 189-195].
4. **How should papal authority be exercised today?** [see selected sections from *People of God, The History of Catholic Christianity*, Anthony Gilles, Saint Anthony’s Press, 2000, pp. 183-185; 189-195].
5. **How should Catholics be in relationship with non-Catholics today?** [see selected sections from *People of God, The History of Catholic Christianity*, Anthony Gilles, Saint Anthony’s Press, 2000, pp. 183-185; 189-195].
6. **What does the Church say about war and terrorism?** [see *Your Life in Christ, Foundations in Christian Morality*, Michael Pennock, Ave Maria Press, 2001, pp. 208-210 and websites:
The Human Rights Web at: <http://www.hrweb.org/>
Amnesty International: <http://www.amnesty.org/>]

***For any of these or additional issues** go to the website: <http://www.americancatholic.org/>

Note: After selecting the issue, distribute or direct students to appropriate study resources. Then let the class select the papal candidates. It can be fewer than 5 if the class is fewer than about 25.

The Little Room of Tears

Immediately upon acceptance of his appointment, the new pope is led into a small antechamber to the Sacristy of the Sistine Chapel; here the pope reflects on the heavy burden he will carry.



II. Post-exhibit visit catechesis [90 minutes or two 45-minute sessions to accommodate scheduling]

Note to catechist [The catechist should select three persons to assist with the role of collecting and counting ballots and someone to serve as the cardinal dean whose role is explained below]. After returning from the exhibit, explain that in preparation for the papal election, the class will first review what they experienced at the Vatican exhibit on Papal elections and discuss one or two critical issues facing the Church today.

[10 minutes] Review what the students observed in the Vatican exhibit section on the papal elections.

[35 minutes] Instruct the learners that the class will now begin the discussion on the critical issue they had chosen prior to the conclave for electing a new pope. Setup the forum of papal “candidates.” Review the guidelines for the discussion [e.g. 3-5 minute presentation from each candidate followed by an open forum of discussion]. Remind students that after the discussion, the papal election [conclave] will take place without further discussion or debate. Serve as a timekeeper directing the 3-5 minute candidate presentations followed by the 10-minute open forum.

[35 minutes] Begin the conclave by reading Mt. 16:17-19 and invoke the Holy Spirit’s guidance in the election of the pope. Ask if there are any special intentions involving prayers for the universal church.

Finally, inform them that voting is about to begin and must continue in absolute silence. Explain that everyone will receive a ballot. On one side of the ballot each student should write one’s name, next to “YOUR NAME.” On the other side of the ballot each person should write one’s choice for pope next to “PAPAL SELECTION.” Inform them that anyone voting is eligible. They cannot vote for themselves. Remind them that a 2/3 majority +1 must occur for a new Pope to be elected. Each person should place his completed ballot on the plate [e.g. paten]. The two cardinals [who will count the votes] will drop the ballots from the plate into the bowl. Once all the ballots are in the bowl, the ballots will be counted. If no 2/3 +1 majority is found, the cardinal dean will hold up a black card to indicate a pope has not been elected. The cardinal dean will announce each candidate’s vote count. [This is necessary to move the election to a successful conclusion.] When the necessary 2/3 +1 majority has been reached for a papal candidate, the cardinals counting the votes will inform the cardinal dean who, in turn, will go to the elected cardinal to ask if the person will accept the selection. If the elected cardinal responds YES, the cardinal dean will ask what name the person wants to be called as the new Pope. The cardinal dean then announces the person and new pope to the class.

Note: Inform the group that they will be given 5 minutes in between balloting [if a pope is not selected].

Assessment:

[10 minutes]

1. After the session, review what the students learned about the process of electing a pope.
2. **Additional:** Compare and contrast the papal electoral process with the U.S. presidential electoral process.
3. Review what guided the class’s decision on the person that they elected as Pope.
4. Review the class’s understanding of the meaning of papal authority or teaching authority of the pope. Ask to explain “Papal Infallibility” and when it is used.

Terms

Conclave: The closed room or hall specially set aside and prepared for the College of Cardinals electing a pope; also the assembly of the cardinals for the canonical execution of this purpose. **A cardinal** is a bishop who is appointed and used by the pope for advice and transaction of business. The number of cardinals eligible to vote in papal elections is limited to 120.

Papal election: The election of the pope is done by the College of Cardinals in secret conclave not less than 15 nor more than 18 days after the death of the previous pontiff. The election is held by secret ballot. Pope Pius XII fixed the electoral majority at two thirds plus one vote. After each session, ballots are burned; chemical cylinders are added to the burning ballots [black smoke signifying no new pope; white smoke signifying a new pope has been elected].

Papal authority: [Mt. 16:17-19]. The authority Jesus Christ gave Peter and his successors to guide the Church in remaining faithful to God and His laws for love and life. See “catechist background” section for more.

For more information, refer to “The Vatican” website. See link on “Catholic Encyclopedia: Papal election.”

Reliquary containing relics of Saints Peter, Paul, Anne, Joseph and others
Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Vatican City State

PART SIX

Saints, Relics and Our Call to Holiness

Faith Theme:

Church Doctrine, Church History



Catechist Background:

In the earliest Church, all Christians were considered saints, because of their distinctive lifestyle of holiness. Martyrs, however, were considered to have gone immediately to heaven. Unlike their pagan contemporaries, who feared death and their Jewish contemporaries, who considered touching animal and human remains to be “unclean,” the early Christians did not fear death or bodily remains because of their strong belief in the Resurrection. Consequently, it became common practice to honor the remains of the martyrs in a variety of ways. The early Christians would preserve the remains of the martyrs, bury them and then say masses over their graves using portable altars. Later, they began to build churches on the site of martyrs’ graves. It also became common to bury the dead near the graves of the martyrs. From these early practices, we retain the modern customs of church graveyards and building altars in new churches with enclosed relics. In fact, until recently it was required that all new churches be built with the altar encasing the relic of a saint. We bow to the altar upon entry to a Church in part to venerate the saint whose remains are embedded in the altar.

As Christianity spread, the devotion to saints and their relics also increased. As Christians sought to distinguish themselves in the expanding world, devotion to saints and relics became a way to constantly remind themselves of the requirements of holiness. Devotion to relics and remembrance of saints deepened the people’s faith as they encouraged their belief in the Communion of Saints.

The trade in relics exploded in the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, corruption entered the scene. The practice of “simony,” the selling of sacred things for profit, blossomed and many fraudulent relics came on the scene. This practice of simony was one of the reasons for the start of the Protestant Reformation. The Church now prohibits the sale of sacred objects and has strict procedures for determining a relic’s authenticity.

Grades 9 -12

Learner Objectives:

The learner will:

1. Ascertain the definition of saint, martyr and relic.
2. Learn about our “call to holiness” by looking at the Sacred Scriptures.
3. Learn about the lives of saints by reading books on the “lives of the saints.”
4. Explore the veneration of relics as a means to deepen our lives as Christians answering the call to holiness.

Materials:

- Bible
- Chalkboard
- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Books on the “Lives of the Saints”

SAINTS, RELICS, OUR CALL

Catechetical Lesson Plan and Activity

Ask the students to discuss items that they collect or that they know others collect. Be sure to elicit responses that address “collectibles” from both famous and non-famous people. List these on the board as they offer suggestions. Discuss why people would want to collect these items. While answers might concentrate on financial gain, be sure to draw out themes that address the human need to remember, admire, imitate and honor those whom we consider important.

Explain that the students will see or hear about several ancient, sacred “collectibles” at Vatican Splendors exhibition. These include: “Reliquary of contact objects from Jesus and Mary and relics of Saints Peter, Paul, Anne, Joseph and Others.” Explain that unlike modern “collectibles,” relics are not valued for financial reasons. Rather, they are holy objects that remind us of the lives of those we can imitate in following our own call to holiness.

Explain that relics are classified into three categories. They are:

- First Class - the actual body or part of the bodily remains of a saint. (Including hair, bones, ashes) - very limited in number.
- Second Class - items that came in close contact with the saint while he/she was alive (including prayer books, clothing, instruments of death) - limited in number.
- Third Class - bits of cloth or other articles that have been touched to a first class or second class relic - quite numerous.

Review the history of relic preservation outlined in the catechist background section of this lesson plan. Emphasize that today, while private stewardship of relics is permissible, no relic may be used solely for private devotion. The guardian or steward is obligated to make the relic available for public veneration for the entire Church.

Explain that while we often think of saints as superhuman, this is not actually the case. Saints were ordinary people who lived extraordinary lives. They struggled to overcome many of the same types of problems and temptations with which we all struggle. While the Church has formal procedures called canonization to determine sainthood, the Church also acknowledges that there are many more saints than have been formally canonized.

Explain that we are all called to sainthood and holiness. One significant way to respond to this call is to recognize and keep God foremost in our lives. The veneration of saints and their relics fundamentally recognizes that the saint’s holiness originates with his/her total reliance upon God. Emphasize the distinction between veneration and worship. While miracles have often been associated with relics, we should not consider relics to be “good luck” charms.

As Americans, we admire sports figures and celebrities and collect their memorabilia as a means to imitate their music, fashion and behavior. We also save “treasures” passed down to us from loved ones as a way to honor their memories. Like modern day “collectibles” relics are a way to preserve the memory of the saint and his/her life of holiness. The veneration of relics is a way for us to pray for the ability to imitate the holiness of the saint.

Have the students break into small groups to discuss the relevance of martyrs, saints and relics to their faith life today. For the small group discussion ask the students to: reference Acts 7: 54-60 to discover the impact of the first Christian martyrdom; discuss the importance of the early martyrs on the development of the Church; identify modern martyrs; and identify the role models of holiness and their “relics” in their own lives. Have each group report the substance of their discussion back to the larger group. Answer any questions that may arise.

Close with a prayer of a saint. If possible, use a prayer composed by or about the patron saint of your parish/school.

Alternative suggestions:

To deepen the students understanding of the meaning of the terms saint, communion of saints, martyr, relic and veneration, have them search the index of the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#).

Identify the relic imbedded in your parish altar stone. Ask the students to research that saint and compose a prayer to be said as you visit the altar to venerate the saint whose remains are imbedded therein.

Other suggested activities:

Assign the students one page essays on the life and death of any two of the following martyrs of the Church: Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint Agnes, Saint Joan of Arc, Saint Justin, Saint Thomas More, Saint Maximilian Kolbe.

Assign students to make class presentations on one of the saints whose relics are exhibited in the Vatican Splendors exhibit.

Assessment:

During the small group reports at the end of the lesson, determine whether the students understand the concepts of saint, martyr, and relic. Determine whether they understand the similarities and differences between modern day collectibles and sacred relics.

At any point during the discussion, ask the students to orally state the definitions of the key terms included in this lesson and/or to summarize their understanding of why relics have been and continue to be venerated in the Church.

Evaluate the "audience's" questions and discussions to ensure they have understood the main points that have been presented.

Terms

Saint: Every person in heaven is a saint. Saints are Christian models of holiness. Every Christian is called to be a saint.

Communion of Saints: The "communion of saints" refers to the bond of unity among the followers of Jesus, who are the Mystical Body of Christ. This community of the assembly of saints includes those who are still living on earth, those who are being purified in purgatory, and those who are already blessed in heaven.

Martyr: A person who chose to suffer, even die, rather than renounce his or her faith or Christian values. Martyrdom is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death.

Relic: Relics are remains of saints such as bones, ashes, clothing or even writings or belongings left behind.

Reliquary: A reliquary is a container used to preserve the relic of a saint.

Veneration: Veneration is respectful honor paid to saints and sacred objects. Veneration is not adoration or worship. Adoration and worship are reserved for God alone.



Original and Unique Marble Cast of the Crucifixion of Saint Peter from the Ciborium of Sixtus IV (1471 – 1484)
Paolo Romano (~1415 – 1470) and workshop
Original: 15th century, cast: 2002
Resin and Marble Powder
The Reverenda Fabbrica of Saint Peter, Vatican City State

Portrait of Pope Benedict XV
A. Zoffoli, 1914 – 1922
Oil on canvas,
Congregation for the Evangelization
of Peoples, Vatican City State

PART SEVEN

Infallibility and the Magisterium

Faith Theme: Church Doctrine, Ecclesiology



Catechist Background:

Jesus instituted the hierarchical structure of the Church, entrusting His teaching mission to the Apostles with Peter at their head. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, as promised, to guide the Apostles and their successors and to keep them free from error in teaching of the faith. The Catholic Church has operated under the system of Apostolic Succession since its inception to ensure the authenticity of the faith it passes on from generation to generation.

The divinely instituted hierarchy of the Church fulfills its teaching mission through the Magisterium, or teaching office. The teachings of the Magisterium can be classified into a variety of levels, depending upon their relationship to the central tenets of the faith. By the power of the Holy Spirit, teachings that are central to the truths revealed by Jesus are infallible, regardless of whether their infallibility is declared by humanity. While Jesus promised this infallibility in teaching, however, He did not promise freedom from error in other matters of Church governance. Nor did he promise that Peter and the Apostles, or their successors, the Popes and the bishops, would be kept free from personal error or sin.

The Magisterium has the right and the great duty to ensure the authenticity of Church teaching. A large part of their work involves the development of answers to questions and situations that Jesus himself did not directly specify. As the Magisterium researches and reviews pressing issues, it is careful to clarify when it is teaching infallibly (i.e. requiring assent as a matter of faith). While most infallible teachings have been issued as a result of the Ordinary Universal Magisterium (see below), the Pope himself has the Supreme authority to teach infallibly by himself when he speaks *ex cathedra*. (See below.) The *ex cathedra* power of the Pope has only been exercised twice in the history of the church, both times regarding Marian dogmas. Nonetheless, the Chair of Peter, the “cathedra” from which the Pope alone can teach infallibly on matters of faith and morals, remains a powerful symbol of his duty to ensure the authentic teaching of the Catholic faith.

Adults

Learner Objectives:

The learner will:

1. Review the origins of the hierarchical structure of the Church.
2. Review the doctrine of Apostolic Succession.
3. Learn about the levels of teaching authority in the Church.
4. Understand the meaning of infallibility.

Materials Needed:

- Chalkboard
- Bible
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

The levels of teaching authority of the Church can be classified as follows:

Ex Cathedra Statements - INFALLIBLE: when he makes an ex cathedra statement, the Pope must be speaking on faith and morals, must appeal to his apostolic authority, must write the statement in a formal manner, must be speaking as Supreme Pastor and must be speaking on matters that are already held to be true. This type of teaching has only been issued twice in Church History, both in relatively recent times. The Dogma on the Assumption of Mary was stated in 1950 and the Dogma on the Immaculate Conception of Mary was issued in 1854.

Solemn Definitions of Ecumenical Councils - INFALLIBLE: all the bishops, united with the Pope speak together formally intending to legislate for the entire Church on an issue central to Divine revelation. Most of these types of formal statements were made by the fifth century as the Church defined central dogmas and doctrines.

Universal Ordinary Magisterium - INFALLIBLE: all the bishops in union with the Pope agree with unanimity about some point of doctrine as revelation. These teachings are not necessarily formally written, but all relate to issues that are central to the faith. Examples of this type of teaching would be The Ascension, the Incarnation, and the command to love one's neighbor as oneself. Most theologians would agree that more recent teachings regarding abortion and euthanasia are in this category. Although no statements have been issued declaring these teachings infallible, there seems to be unanimous agreement among the bishops with the Pope regarding the reasons against abortion and euthanasia.

Ordinary Non-Universal Magisterium - NOT INFALLIBLE: These are the most common form of teaching that emerges from the Magisterium. These include encyclicals, papal bulls, apostolic exhortations, statements of US Bishops, statements from Bishops Synods, pastoral letters, etc.

These teachings are generally regulatory in nature and can be changed. These include: Canon Law, Holy Days of Obligation, Days of Fasting, Celibacy, Female Altar Servers, Liturgical Norms, and regulatory teachings of ecumenical councils such as those issued by Vatican II involving use of the vernacular, liturgical music, etc.



Bust of Pope Innocent XI (1676 – 1689)
Attributed to Domenico Guidi (1628 – 1701)
17th century, Carrara Marble
Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Vatican City State

INFALLIBILITY, MAGISTERIUM

Catechetical Lesson Plan and Activity

Ask the group to name as many forms of government about which they remember learning in Social Studies classes. List these on the board and clarify the manner in which power is administered in each of the forms (i.e. general election, representative election, dictatorship, birthright). Conclude this process by asking the group to identify the form of government that most closely resembles that used by the Catholic Church. (Correct answer: none of the above.)

Explain that the Church is a hierarchy. Review the Greek root of the word that means “sacred power.” While there is room within this structure for much discussion and debate, the hierarchical structure of the Church is unique because Jesus Himself established it.

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 28:18-20 aloud. Explain that this passage shows that Jesus established the Apostles to teach in his name and promised them the Holy Spirit to keep them free from error in their teaching.

Explain that the bishops are the successors to the Apostles and that the College of Bishops (all Bishops together) is the successor to the group of Apostles whose leadership of the Church is described in the Acts of the Apostles.

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 16:13-19 aloud. Explain that this passage establishes Peter as the head of the apostles because to Peter alone did Christ give the “power of the keys” and the legislative authority to “loose or bind.” Point out that the group will see or has seen the symbolic “keys” given to Popes during their visit to the Vatican Splendors exhibition.

Explain that throughout the history of the Church bishops and Popes have been selected in an unbroken line that can be traced back to the apostolic age through the “laying on of hands”. It is through this Apostolic Succession that we can be sure that we are receiving the authentic faith handed on by Christ. Explain that the Catholic Church is the only Christian religion that can claim authentic Apostolic succession.

Have the group break into small groups and ask them to identify the issues and questions they may have about the notion of “infallibility.” Once they have completed their discussion, recap the issues on the board.

Introduce the concept of the Magisterium by explaining that the primary way the hierarchy of the Church fulfills its mission to pass on the authentic faith is through this teaching office.

Explain that while the Pope and the bishops have much assistance in teaching the faith, it remains their divinely appointed right and duty to preserve the “Deposit of Faith” with which they have been entrusted by Christ. In addition, the work of the Magisterium is not to develop new truth but to provide answers and direction to questions and situations that Jesus did not specifically address.

Explain that just as the Church is hierarchically structured, so too are the truths with which the Magisterium is entrusted.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud from #90 and #234 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Clarify that all the teachings of the Church are evaluated in terms of their closeness to the central mystery of our faith, the Trinity.

Explain that it then follows that there would be different levels of teaching within the Magisterium.

Use the chalkboard to outline the various levels of teaching authority outlined in the catechist background section of this lesson plan. Be sure to compare and contrast the truth about infallibility with the issues listed from the earlier small group discussion. Be sure to also point out that the group will see a reproduction of the chair (cathedra) from which Peter sat to teach at the Saint Peter and the Vatican exhibition.

Emphasize that just because a teaching is not considered “infallible” does not mean that it should be disregarded. The Magisterium takes great care, expense and much prayer to discern answers to the pressing issues of our time. Although Catholics are not obligated to “believe” non-infallible teachings in the same way that we “believe” core beliefs, we are nonetheless obligated to follow all teachings of the Magisterium.

Explain that even though the doctrine of infallibility was not defined until Vatican I in 1870, the Church’s hierarchy, by virtue of apostolic succession, has always been “infallible” since the truths it teaches come from the most infallible source of all, God.

Review the major points that have been discussed and allow time for questions and answers.

End with a prayer for the leadership of the Church, our Pope and bishops.

Assessment:

During the question and answer period of the lesson, evaluate the groups understanding of essential concepts.

Develop a quiz regarding the different levels of teaching authority within the Church and administer it at the end of the lesson.

Terms

Deposit of Faith: a term that refers to the sum total of truth given to the church by Jesus.

Magisterium: the teaching authority of the Church

Apostolic Succession: the process that ensures the continuity of the truth since the Church first received it from Jesus.

Infallible: free from error in matters of faith and morals.

Additional Resources:

Search the Vatican website to determine the number of Popes since the time of Peter and the current number of bishops worldwide today.

Search the Catechism of the Catholic Church to learn more about hierarchy of truths, apostolic succession, Magisterium, Deposit of Faith, hierarchy.

Search the Catholic Encyclopedia for a full explanation of infallibility. A copy of the most recent edition of the Catholic Encyclopedia is available on CD-ROM or in hard or soft cover. A copy of the 1918 version of the Catholic Encyclopedia is available online at www.newadvent.com.

Scripture References:

Matthew 16:17-19

Luke 22:32

Acts 4:1-13

Acts 2:37-41

John 21:2-3, 11

Catechism References:

77, 88, 95, 888-891, 2032-2036