



Living the Easter Call: Discipleship & Mission

This project consists of seven mystagogical sessions (one for each week of the Easter season), based on the book *Call and Mission: The Adventure of the Twelve Continues* (USCCB, 2014).

Gatherings based on these sessions may take place at the usual time for RCIA meetings; however, they should be clearly separate. Attendance of both the neophytes and members of the parish community should be encouraged. However, these sessions are not designed for the catechesis of inquirers or catechumens as they presume the reception of the sacraments.

The goals of these sessions are as follows:

- To assist “the community and the neophytes in moving forward together, meditating on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and performing works of charity” (RCIA, no. 37).
- To help the faithful, especially the neophytes, come to a “more fruitful understanding of the ‘mysteries’ so that they draw a new sense of the faith, the Church, and the world” (RCIA, no. 38).
- To help form the faithful who participate into missionary disciples, ready and able to share the Gospel through their words and actions.

Instructions for Using the Sessions

Parishes that do not wish to have weekly sessions may choose from the seven provided, based on their pastoral needs. Each week’s session is structured similarly and will take approximately 90 minutes. A time of fellowship and refreshment may conclude each session:

Opening Prayer – 5 minutes

Introductory Discussion/Sharing – 10 minutes

Informal discussion of questions to begin focus on the topic

Proclamation of the Word from the Bible (not *Call and Mission*) – 5 minutes

Catechetical Reflection – 20 minutes

Led by a RCIA team member or other parish catechist.

This reflection should always begin by inviting and addressing questions derived from the reading from *Call and Mission* before addressing the proposed topics.

Witness Talk – 15 minutes

Led by a member of the parish, a RCIA team member, or a sponsor.

Reflection/Discussion – 20 minutes

This time may include personal reflection and journaling, sharing in pairs or small groups, or discussion by the whole group, depending on numbers. It should always begin with a period of silent reflection on the questions posed.

Discussion Wrap-up: – 10 minutes

Led by session leader

Closing Prayer – 5 minutes

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Each participant should have:

A copy of *Call and Mission: The Adventure of the Twelve Continues*.

- A small notebook or journal.
- The room should have chairs able to facilitate both speakers and discussion.
- A table at the front of the room should have a Bible enthroned along with lit candles.
- The table might also include some of the following: a crucifix, a small bowl of blessed baptismal water, and flowers.
- Refreshments for the fellowship time.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS, NOT REQUIRED

- A copy of *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*; opening prayers can be found in this book.
- Various parish organizations (Knights of Columbus, Peace and Justice Committee, Altar Society, etc.) may wish to offer information about their groups to the participants to help them integrate more fully into the life of the parish.



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Session 1: The Empty Tomb

(*Call and Mission*, pp. 62-67)

Opening Prayer: The Easter Sequence (*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, pp. 125-126)

Introductory Discussion:

- What moment of the Paschal Triduum was most memorable for you? Why?

Proclamation of the Word:

John 20:1-10

Catechetical Reflection:

- Choose one of the biblical characters discussed in this chapter (Nicodemus, Peter, the beloved disciple, Mary of Magdala) and consider how that person can be a model for disciples today. Invite those in attendance to consider which model most closely resembles their faith journeys.
- Discuss the importance of seeing and believing and how our experience of God's goodness and the witness of faithful disciples can invite others to encounter Christ and can deepen our faith.
- Discuss the importance of Christian witness in daily life, through ethical decision making, establishing priorities grounded in faith, responding with hope in light of life's challenges, and turning to God in prayer at all times.

Witness Talk:

A member of the parish bereavement ministry, a hospice worker, or a mature Christian who has lost a loved one should offer a brief personal reflection on how the power of the Resurrection can transform grief.

Reflection/Discussion:

- How does faith in the Resurrection of Jesus strengthen your hope? How can your life witness to that hope?
- In your daily life, how can you make a link between what you see and hear in God's words and actions and how you understand and embrace the faith of the Church?
- How can you be a better witness to Christ's Resurrection?

Discussion Wrap-up:

The session leader may invite those willing to share the fruits of their reflection and discussion.

Closing Prayer: Psalm 118



Session 2: Mary Magdalene: The First Herald of the Gospel

(*Call and Mission*, pp. 68-75)

Opening Prayer: Chaplet of Divine Mercy (*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, p. 127)

Introductory Discussion:

- How did you get your name (birth name or baptismal name)? Why was it chosen? Does it have any special meaning?

Proclamation of the Word: John 20:1-2, 11-18

Catechetical Reflection:

- The focal point of this passage is Mary's encounter with the Risen Jesus. God calls her by name and, in that encounter, her grief is transformed and she is sent to share the Good News with the disciples.
- Similarly, as we encounter Jesus in Word and Sacrament, we are sent to share the Gospel with those we meet. Our Christian witness is grounded in this encounter with Christ. We cannot share that which we have not experienced.
- Once again, the reading focuses on the relationship between proclamation and faith. But what is it that we proclaim? Nothing less than that death has been destroyed through the power of Jesus.

Witness Talk:

A member of the parish evangelization team or a parish catechist should offer a brief reflection on efforts to share the Gospel with others.

Reflection/Discussion:

- How do you listen for/hear Jesus' call?
- What can you do in the week ahead to share the message of Jesus' Resurrection?
- How (and where) do you encounter Jesus?

Discussion Wrap-up:

The session leader may invite those willing to share the fruits of their reflection and discussion.

Closing Prayer: Romans 10:9-18

Session 3: Recognizing Jesus

(*Call and Mission*, pp. 76-83)

Opening Prayer: *Adoro Te Devote* (*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, pp. 11-12)

Introductory Discussion:

- What companions have accompanied you on your spiritual journey? What assistance and support did they provide?

Proclamation of the Word: Luke 24:13-35

Catechetical Reflection:

- A key element of this Gospel passage is that knowledge of the faith is not sufficient. One could be able to recite the Catechism by heart, but without faith in Christ, that knowledge would not bear fruit.
- We must move from knowledge to belief. We cannot just know about Jesus; we must **know** Jesus.
- Knowing Jesus will make demands on the way we live. It will require us to recognize Jesus in those around us (especially those most easily ignored) and require us to share what we believe by word and action.

Witness Talk:

A member of the parish who participates in regular Eucharistic adoration or an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist may reflect on how their love of the Eucharist affects their daily lives. Alternatively, a parish priest can reflect on celebrating his first Mass and his first experience of consecrating the Eucharist.

Reflection/Discussion:

- What things make it difficult to recognize God's presence in your life?
- The disciples on the way to Emmaus struggled with the idea of a Messiah who suffered. What parts of faith do you struggle with?
- What can help you recognize Jesus in your time of struggle?

Discussion Wrap-up:

The session leader may invite those willing to share the fruits of their reflection and discussion.

Closing Prayer: Go and Make Disciples: Prayer for Evangelization (*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, pp. 368-369)

Session 4: The Calling of Paul

(*Call and Mission*, pp. 90-95)

Opening Prayer: Prayer for All Vocations (*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, p. 386)

Introductory Discussion:

- Have you ever felt that God is calling you to something?

Proclamation of the Word: Acts 9:1-12, 15-20, 23-26

Catechetical Reflection:

- Highlight the two calls in this passage. God calls both Paul and Ananias to serve him. Ananias serves God by healing Paul and by welcoming him into the Christian community. Paul serves by preaching the Gospel to the nations.
- What is the difference between a vocation and a career? What does it mean to be called by God? Focus on the difference between the questions, “What do I want to be?” and “How is God calling me to serve?”
- Describe and explain vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, consecrated life, marriage, and the single life.
- All vocations will include times of suffering and opposition. Christian faith can allow us to face these difficulties with hope and love.

Witness Talk:

People with various vocations (priesthood, diaconate, consecrated life, marriage, and the single life) should offer brief reflections on how they discerned God’s call and on the struggles and joys of their vocations.

Reflection/Discussion:

- To what is God calling you?
- What gifts has God given you to help you serve his people?
- How might you help others to hear God’s call in their lives?

Discussion Wrap-up:

The session leader may invite those willing to share the fruits of their reflection and discussion.

Closing Prayer: Prayer for Missions (*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, p. 370)

Session 5: The *Kerygma*

(*Call and Mission*, pp. 96-103)

Opening Prayer: Prayer for the Church in Need (*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, p. 364)

Introductory Discussion:

- What message first drew you to Christ?

Proclamation of the Word: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-19

Catechetical Reflection:

- The *kerygma* is the core of the Gospel that we are called to proclaim: That Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead, destroying death forever. After his Resurrection, he sent his Spirit to remain with us so that we may proclaim this message to the ends of the earth.
- The *kerygma* tells of a new exodus, moving from the slavery of sin and death to the freedom and life of children of God.
- The selections in today's reading give two testimonies, one by Peter and one by Paul. In these testimonies, Peter bases his argument on his understanding of the Old Testament. Paul relies on the eyewitness testimony of those who have seen the risen Jesus. In the same way, the Church continues to turn to Scripture (the Bible) and Tradition (the lived experience of the Church) to reveal the truth of faith.

Witness Talk:

If available, a person who has served on a mission (contact your diocesan Office for the Missions to find returned missionaries) might reflect on his or her experience of sharing the Gospel message with those who do not know Christ. Alternatively, a parish catechist could reflect on their ministry in teaching others about the faith and on living that faith as an example.

Reflection/Discussion:

- How would I sum up my faith to someone who asked me?
- In what ways can I share my faith with those around me?
- What steps can I take in the next few months to continue my growth in faith?

Discussion Wrap-up:

The session leader may invite those willing to share the fruits of their reflection and discussion.

Closing Prayer: Acts 2:14-16, 22-36

Session 6: Life in Community

(*Call and Mission*, pp. 114-117)

Opening Prayer: Prayer for Christian Unity (*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, p. 364)

Introductory Discussion:

- What characteristics do you think make a parish community strong and vibrant?

Proclamation of the Word: Acts 2:37-47

Catechetical Reflection:

- This passage focuses on the community's concern for the common good. The faith that we have received, that we celebrate in the sacraments, and that we share, should affect our daily lives – how we spend our time and our money, how we vote, and the other decisions we make.
- Catholic social teaching helps us to understand the unbreakable bond between our faith in Christ and our concern for the common good. Seven key themes lie at the heart of Catholic social teaching: the life and dignity of the human person; the call to family, community, and participation; rights and responsibilities; the option for the poor and vulnerable; the dignity of work and the rights of workers; solidarity; and care for God's creation (<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm>).
- This chapter highlights several duties of the Christian community, duties which we share: a commitment to evangelize, a commitment to hear the Word of God, frequent communion and attendance at prayer, and the sharing of material and spiritual goods.
- Additional information on the relationship between the sacraments and the social mission of the Church can be found here: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/sacraments-and-social-mission.cfm>.

Witness Talk:

Members of the parish social justice committee or parishioners who work in social justice ministry (e.g., a soup kitchen, organizing workers for fair treatment, housing justice, etc.) could reflect on how their faith supports their work on behalf of the common good, particularly the least among us.

Reflection/Discussion:

- What steps can I take to listen to the teaching of the Church?
- How does the way I spend my time reflect my life of faith?
- How can I make concern for the common good a central part of my decisions?

Discussion Wrap-up:

The session leader may invite those willing to share the fruits of their reflection and discussion.

Closing Prayer: Matthew 5:1-12

Session 7: Pentecost

(*Call and Mission*, pp. 84-89)

Opening Prayer: Pentecost Sequence (*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, p. 132)

Introductory Discussion:

- Has there ever been a time or place where you felt unwelcome? If so, where?

Proclamation of the Word: Acts 2:1-13

Catechetical Reflection:

- The fundamental act of a Christian is accepting Jesus as Lord. While we can only do that by the grace of God, accepting Jesus as Lord requires that we live our lives in accord with his teaching, loving God and neighbor.
- In Baptism and Confirmation, we receive the gift of the Spirit who conforms us to Christ, enabling us to live in faith and to proclaim the Gospel boldly by word and deed.
- You may wish to reflect on these words from Pope Benedict XVI: “we enter into the mystery of the first Pentecost: a radical transformation results from the tumult of Babel, from those voices yelling at each other: multiplicity becomes a multifaceted unity, understanding grows from the unifying power of the Truth” (Homily, June 12, 2011).

Witness Talk:

Members of the parish who work in ministries that attempt to overcome division and promote reconciliation (between religions, cultures, etc.) or those who work to welcome those who feel excluded may wish to reflect on the joys and challenges of their work and how the Spirit helps to gather all people into the love and unity of God.

Reflection/Discussion:

- *Call and Mission* describes the Pentecost as a theophany—a special manifestation of God. In what ways is God made manifest in our world today?
- To whom do I need to reach out?
- What sustains and strengthens my faith?

Discussion Wrap-up:

The session leader may invite those willing to share the fruits of their reflection and discussion.

Closing Prayer: Litany of the Way: Prayer for the Journey (*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, p. 283)