

St. Laurence Catholic Parish
Elementary Children's Faith Formation (CCE)

Week 1 Lesson Plan

Meet & Greet: *Building a Faith Community*

(Based upon the *Beginning the Catechetical Year: K-8 Systematic Catechesis* lesson,
As developed by Dr. Sharon Skeans dated August 2017)



Note to Catechists:

Welcome! Thank you SO much for your generosity of heart in guiding our young learners in their journeys with Christ and their Catholic faith formation. And so, your own journey begins. 😊

During the first two gatherings of the year with your learners (i.e., tonight and next week), your main goal is not merely to inform them of the routines and expectations of their time at weekly faith formation sessions, but more importantly to discern their current understanding of age-appropriate faith concepts AND to create an environment for faith sharing and learning.

Focusing on activities that share our Catholic Identity clearly communicates to these students in public schools that *faith formation sessions are quite different*. Before even beginning Unit #1 (Who is Jesus Christ?) in two weeks, *we want to achieve the following three goals over this week and next:*

- 1. Get acquainted with each other** (with tonight's *Meet & Greet* Lesson)
- 2. Build a Faith Community** (starting with tonight's *Meet & Greet* Lesson and continuing next week depending upon which ice-breaker activity you choose below)
- 3. Pre-assess whether or not your learners can "use" the Bible** (next week's *Bible Literacy* Lesson).

CATECHIST PREPARATION

To prepare for this week's lesson:

- Prepare your adult heart and mind by watching the following video ahead of the lesson: [IMPORTANT LESSONS FOR CATECHISTS](#) (please watch up to 19:57 – beyond that to the end is optional for this session) **and** reading [TO TEACH AS JESUS DID](#) **plus either** [FOUR WAYS MARY INSPIRES CATECHISTS](#) **or** [LESSONS CATECHISTS CAN LEARN FROM ST. JOSEPH](#)

- **Reflect upon a favorite Scriptural passage** about Jesus and his love for children that you would like to share with your learners and why it is important to you, or consider any one of the following:

[MATTHEW 18: 2-5](#), [MATTHEW 18: 10](#), [MARK 10: 13-16](#) or [LUKE 9: 47-48](#)

- **Review the *Meet & Greet Lesson Activities Resources* outlined below** as the end of this lesson outline to decide which you would like to explore with your learners in class In the EXTEND section of this lesson outline and plan accordingly. (Note: Many supplies can be found in the RE Workroom of the AMC. Can't find something? Just ask!).
- **Consider or plan out your classroom *Sacred Prayer Space* or *Prayer Table*:** Since prayer tables are not found in public schools, take some time to consider what your room's prayer space (or table) should have on it and how you will call attention to it for your learners. **Be sure to open and close your weekly lesson with an age/grade-appropriate prayer around the Prayer Table** (see the [Common Prayers and Formulas by Age](#) handout on the Catechist webpage of the St. Laurence website) or use any of the suggestions incorporated into the *Opening* and *Closing Prayer* sections of the weekly lesson outlines.

Typical prayer table items include: A cloth of the liturgical season's color, a crucifix or cross, a Bible or Book of Gospels, a candle and something representing Creation (e.g., a plant or flowers). **Basic items, including a crucifix, battery-operated candle and table cloth – one side green, the other side purple to change with the Liturgical seasons – are provided in the 'Elementary CCE' drawer (upstairs classrooms) or closet (Kinder & 1st Grade).** The upstairs classrooms are also each equipped with a console table, typically under the TV screen. You are free to move the furniture for your set-up, but please return it to its proper place at the end of class.

Make the prayer space aesthetically appealing. To emphasize that all lessons have a Christological (i.e. *Christ*-centered) focus, try adding pictures of Jesus during different times in his life (i.e. pictures from some or all of the mysteries of the Rosary can be used- beautiful images can be found and reproduced from [THE MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY](#)). As we progress through the **4 Big Ideas/Units**, their underlying **Essential Questions (EQ's)** and the **Liturgical season EQs** listed on the **ELEMENTARY FAITH FORMATION (CCE) LESSON SCHEDULE** (found on the [CATECHIST](#) webpage) during the course of the year, *build your prayer table* as the catechetical year progresses by asking learners what might need to be added from week to week based on the topics/themes discussed. This is also a beautiful way of engaging the children by perhaps rewarding them each with a turn to reverently add a special item to the table. For more ideas, check out [How to Make a Prayer Table for Kids](#). **(Note that the security of any personal items left in the classroom cannot be guaranteed, as multiple ministries use these classrooms. Please do not leave items of significant personal value in the classrooms).**

Keep the Bible reverently displayed on your Prayer Table to be used for readings in your lessons. When proclaiming *The Word* to children, it is more impactful to read directly from the Bible and not just from their workbooks. This gives them the sense that this is not just any old book and should be revered. In next week's lesson, you will explore the Bible more deeply with your learners with the *Bible Literacy Lesson Plan*.

- **Establish a comfortable learning environment** in your classroom for you and your learners for the duration of the session. Move furniture, as necessary, to create this space, being mindful to return everything to the standard room setup at the end of class.

- A *Catholic* family or children's Bible (go to [USCCB](#) for approved Bible translations); on campus, we use the [ST. MARY'S PRESS CHILDREN'S BIBLE](#), a classroom set of which is located in the "CCE" storage cabinet (upstairs classrooms) or closet (100-level classrooms).
- An electronic device with reliable internet access (i.e., an in-class mounted TV or TV cart) *if* a video will be watched as part of the lesson or you want to access the weekly Lesson Plan electronically.
- Supplemental *Prayer Table* items in addition to those provided in each classroom (optional)
- Sticky notes (provided in your class bin)
- Crayons, markers and pencils as needed (provided in the "CCE" storage and your class bin)
- Materials necessary for any of your chosen 'ice-breaker'/'getting acquainted' activities selected during the INTRODUCTION and EXTEND segments of the lesson. Please remember to request any copies you need at least 24 hours before your session start time.
- Butcher paper, poster board, construction paper and/or cardstock to outline your class expectations and have the students create name tent cards (all of these supplies can be found in the RE Workroom-help yourselves)
- Stickers to decorate learner name tent cards (can be found in the RE Workroom)



Gather together in your dedicated prayer space and ask the children to quiet their minds and hearts as you pray together. Begin with the [SIGN OF THE CROSS](#) and recite a favorite prayer, choose one of the [COMMON PRAYERS BY GRADE](#) or sing [SPIRIT OF GOD, TO BE A SAINT](#) or [I WANNA SAY 'YES'](#) together. Conclude by praying the [SIGN OF THE CROSS](#).

ENGAGE (Mental warm-up)

Say, “Today, we are going to spend some time getting to know each other better and talk about how we will grow in love for our friend, Jesus, this coming year in faith formation or CCE. I want to share with you one of my favorite passages about Jesus’ special love for children, found in the Bible... (*Read your favorite passage from the Bible about Jesus’ love for children and explain WHY it is important to you or your favorite passage*)...You know, Jesus has a very special relationship with all children, and he wants to have one with you too!”

Day 1 INTRODUCTIONS - CATECHIST ‘WITNESS’ TESTIMONY

Learners of all ages are curious about their catechists/teachers/class assistants. First, take time to introduce yourselves as believers and disciples of Christ. Share a few details about your family and your own faith journey. Explain why you are a volunteer in the Elementary Faith Formation (CCE) program. Why did you choose this parish ministry over all the rest, and share about any other ministries you might be involved in at St. Laurence Church. Connect your role as a catechist to your way of being a disciple of Jesus Christ and encouraging others to know and love HIM and how you use Jesus Christ as your model of how to live a holy life.

Taking the time to explain who you are and why YOU answered the call to be a Catechist 😊 is a great way for your students to get to know you better! For suggestions on a very visual and engaging way to do this, see the “*Blessed Particulars*” / *Gift Bag of Faith* activity under the *Meet & Greet Lesson Activities Resources* section below or come up with introductions of your own.

EXPLORE (Pre-assessment of faith concepts)

Each week, you will take time in the EXPLORE section for “inquiry” by posing some of the open-ended questions provided and *listening* to your learner’s responses. Pre-Assessment is necessary to inform your planning for systematic catechesis for the year *with this particular group of learners*, regardless of what the scope & sequence states. We want to meet our learners where they are at.

Below are a few examples of such questions. Use your judgment as to which ones will assist you in forming/building a faith community of your learners.

Ask/Discuss, “What do you know about God and the Catholic faith?”

- ❖ As the children share their ideas, have them jot a few down on a sticky note (with their name) and then place them on the wall in your classroom space. (For younger children, you may have to act as the ‘scribe’). Retain the sticky notes to have an understanding of what the children already know or don’t know. This will be helpful as you move along in your lessons beginning next week.
- ❖ To facilitate thinking and discussion, use some of the following prompts, affirming or discussing appropriate answers: Who is God to you? What does “faith” mean? What’s one way you practice your Catholic faith? Where and when have you seen God’s presence in your own life? Who is Jesus? Who is the Holy Spirit? How would

you describe/explain each to someone who may not believe in God? (For the next questions, gather several visuals: a crucifix, a rosary, a picture of Creation, a manger scene, a dove, a priest, the pope, a chalice, The Paschal Candle, etc.) Show age-appropriate ones and ask: What does this mean to you? What does it mean to all Catholics around the world? *Plus, any other questions you can think of...*

EXTEND

For today's lesson, **choose and implement at least one ice breaker activity from the suggestions in the MEET AND GREET LESSON ACTIVITY RESOURCES provided below** at the end of this lesson outline. Be sure that the chosen activity is appropriate (or has been adapted) to the age of your learners so that they can successfully participate in the activity. Also be mindful of the possibility of first-day shyness and/or anxiety that may inhibit some learners. Always invite to participate, but do not make it mandatory, if there is significant hesitation. Perhaps assigning a partner/buddy to any such children to pair off in smaller groups might be helpful.

Then, as a class, **brain-storm together and establish classroom expectations** (i.e., respect, patience, etc.) **and procedures** (following the leaders up to class at dismissal, no running in the hallways or getting ahead of the adults, bathroom break rules, etc.). Commit these expectations to a poster to be able to display them during class in order to refer back to them as needed. **Have the students each create and decorate a 'name plate' out of construction paper or card stock** to use each week until everyone gets better acquainted.

EVALUATE/REFLECT

- **Say**, "Think back to the passage that I read from the Bible when we first gathered today. What do you think it tells us about Jesus and how he loves all children? Why do you think that is?" (*Discuss together, affirming and reinforcing appropriate answers and/or teaching points*).
- **Summarize what you discovered during today's Meet & Greet session. Specifically, spend your last bit of time together with the children discussing just how much Jesus loves each of them and how he wants to get to know them better. Practice each other's names and briefly summarize how your class will practice love and respect for each other (one of Jesus' BIG lessons) by following the rules that everyone contributed to the class expectations.**

Say, "Today, we made a lot of new friends. Who doesn't like new friends? We also learned that Jesus, God's Son, has a very special place in his heart for children, just like each of you. Over the next months as we come together each week for CCE, we will come to understand how Jesus wants to have a very special (or personal) relationship with each and every one of us. He wants us to know that he is present not just at Mass on Sundays, but in our everyday lives. By brain-storming about ways to behave in class each week, we also learned how we can practice love and respect for each other – one of Jesus' BIG lessons for all of us. We are off to a great start and Ms./Mr. _____ and I can't wait to get to know each of you better. In fact, let's practice everyone's

please be sure to request copies at least 24 hours in advance of your teaching session. Email Molly at mzimmer@stlaurence.org or Joan at jhastreiter@stlaurence.org to request copies.

- **Catholic Get-to-Know You Game (Beach Ball Game):** Use a beach ball marked with questions on it about faith, God and Catholic identity. Gather learners in a circle and toss it to have students take turns answering questions. This also works with a ball of yarn. Refer to Page 5 of the [FIRST DAY ICE BREAKERS](#) on the Catechist webpage of the St. Laurence website at <https://stlaurence.org/the-catechist> for suggested questions. Some questions may need to be adapted for your learner age-group. Some beach balls and yarn can be found in the RE workroom. Help yourselves!
- **What's in a Name?** (Given, Baptismal) – modeled first by Catechists
 - Move to four corners – based on month of birth (i.e., corner #1 – Jan/Feb/March, corner #2 – April/May/June, etc.) or two corners for smaller classes OR concentric circles for larger classes
 - Share your given name and why you were given that name
 - Share your baptismal name and why you were given that name
- **The Name Game 'Song.'** See lyrics at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-FssT2ga54>
- **Who in Your Life?**
 - Have the children think of someone in their lives who they consider to be a good Catholic. What makes them think so? Have them think of specific actions/deeds that the person says or does which give them that impression of the person they brought to mind.
 - Have the students share and discuss their thoughts with a neighbor or the class.
- **So, "Why am I Here?" (AKA: Why should I attend Faith Formation classes?)**
Read aloud *Dear Pope Francis*, pp. 38-39 – available in the AMC library and Joan also has 2 desk copies-if you'd like to reserve this from Joan, please send an email to jhastreiter@stlaurence.org)
Discuss: What makes sense to you from this letter by Pope Francis...and explain why?
- **Who We Are: Look up the St. Laurence Parish Mission Statement at <https://stlaurence.org/about-us-1>.** Have copies available for each learner or group of learners. Individually or in small groups, have them read and discuss the mission statement, asking them questions such as: *What does it mean to be 'centered' in the love of Christ? How do I remain centered in Christ's love? What does it mean to 'glorify' God? How can I glorify God with my own life?* Once the children are finished, encourage them to begin memorizing the mission statement. Collect their answers and save them for the end of year. Spend time reminding them throughout the formation year how we fulfill our baptismal call (or mission) summarized in this statement. Circle back to their recorded answers at the end of the formation year to see what they have learned and whether their answers have changed. This would be a great final review discussion to wrap things up with.

- **Turn & Talk (pairs or triads):** Have the children consider and discuss questions such as: *Who is God to me? What is faith?* Have the children then turn and share answers with their partners or the class.