

DIVING SIGNALS

Signs and Symbols

GOAL

The goal of this session is for youth to realize how God communicates spiritual grace through the physical world via sacraments and sacramentals.

Scripture

Joshua 1:9, Mark 7:31-37, Mark 8:22-26, John 2:1-11, John 14:16-18, Romans 1:19-20

Catechism

CCC 1128, 1145-1165, 1335, 1667-1673, 2822-2827

Resources

Articles

Thomas H. Groome, “What Makes Us Catholic: The Sacramental Principle” (newspapers.bc.edu)

“Sacraments and Sacramentals” (usccb.org)

“Story of the Miraculous Medal” (miraculousmedal.org)

“The Saint Benedict Medal Explained” (catholiccompany.com)

Handout

“Diving Signals” Parent Letter

Videos

Ascension Presents, “What is the Brown Scapular? (feat. Fr. Michael-Joseph Paris OCD)” (youtube.com)

@BlueHorizonDiving, “Common Scuba Diver Hand Signals | Scuba Diving Tips” (youtube.com)

GATHER

Youth play a silent communication game in small groups, introducing the idea of sharing ideas without using words.

PROCLAIM

The following are the main teaching points of the Proclaim:

- Sacramentals are symbols that resemble and remind us of the grace we receive in the sacraments.
- God communicates spiritual realities through the physical world, which Jesus showed through his teaching and healing.
- When we do not feel like God is close, sacramentals remind us of his constant presence and care.

BREAK

Youth experience different sacramentals through a hands-on “museum” to inspire them to begin their own collection of sacramentals.

SEND

Youth receive a rosary and use it to pray a decade of the Rosary.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Take your rosary with you as you go about your week. When you remember it, hold it in your hands and say a short prayer.

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PREP

Collect all materials needed for the Edge Night.

Select which sacramentals you want on display for the Break. Choose from the list provided in the outline, or select your own. If selecting the Miraculous or St. Benedict medals, print large images to display the symbols clearly. Prepare at least three different stations of sacramentals.

Discuss sacramentals with your core team and select who will lead a short teaching on each for the Break. Allow core members with personal testimony for particular sacramentals to lead those stations.

Next week's Edge Night includes a short time of Eucharistic Adoration with music. Coordinate with a priest or deacon and music minister to offer this time of prayer for your youth.

SETUP

Follow the environment suggestions for the series.

Set up stations around the main meeting space for the sacramental stations in the Break. Place a small table with a tablecloth at each station. Display multiple styles of medals, rosaries, and icons. Place sacramentals like holy water or oil in small bowls on the table that youth can pick up, smell, and touch.

Test all audio-visual elements of the Edge Night.

Project the environment image and play the "ES - Below the Surface" Spotify playlist as the youth enter.

SUPPLIES

Prepare the following supplies:

Break

- Various sacramentals

Send

- ☐ Rosary, one per person
- ☐ Slides of the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be prayers

NOTES

CORE ASSIGNMENTS AND NOTES

This youth minister worksheet provides writing space to detail core member assignments and notes specific to running this Edge Night. Write the names of core members assigned to the roles listed.

Highlights:

- Review the rules for the Gather Game and practice playing as a core team.
- For those leading stations in the Break, encourage the youth to physically experience the sacramental while still treating them with reverence.

Setup: _____

Opening Prayer: _____

Gather – Signs

Leader: _____

Proclaim – Diving Signals: _____

Break – Hands-On Sacramental Museum

- Station Leaders: _____

Send – The Rosary

- Leader: _____

Weekly Challenge: _____

Parking Lot: _____

NOTES

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GATHER

Introduction (5 min)

Welcome the youth and introduce those who are there for the first time. Invite the preselected core member to begin in prayer. Give a brief overview of the Edge Night topic, using the following as an example. Consider showing the “Common Scuba Diver Hand Signals” video found in the Resources section.

Diving signals are essential for divers to communicate. Without the ability to speak, communicating with universal signals is important for them to maintain safety while underwater. God is constantly communicating with us, but we may not understand his signals. Sacraments and sacramentals are meant to serve as signals for us to turn our attention back toward God in times of doubt, trouble, or spiritual dryness and remind us of his never-ending love.

Signs (20 min)

Divide into small groups, standing in circles and facing the middle. Have everyone in the group come up with a simple sign — a movement or gesture — that will be unique to them (such as waving their right hand, touching their nose, patting their head twice, etc.). The sign must be visible but not too obvious. When everyone has come up with a sign, have them demonstrate it to the whole group. Play through passing the sign around the circle with each player. Once everyone knows the signs, play can begin.

One person stands in the middle of the circle, trying to detect signs being passed between players. When they detect who has the sign, they try to tag them before that person can pass the sign to someone else. Choose the first guesser to start in the middle and close their eyes. Choose one person in the circle to start the game. That person starts the game by doing their sign and then sending game control to another person by doing that person’s sign. The guesser opens their eyes and tries to find who has control. The person who receives control performs their own sign and then passes control to someone else, attempting to evade the notice of the guesser.

For example, Player A starts the game by doing their sign and then Player B’s sign. Player B now has control and does their sign, and then the sign of Player C. Player C now has control. Players continue passing control until the guesser successfully tags the person in control. If someone is correctly identified and tagged, they become the guesser, and the game starts over.

Players who receive control do not need to send the sign instantly, but they should be discouraged from holding onto it for too long. The point is to try to be discreet so the guesser does not know who has the sign.

PROCLAIM

“Diving Signals” Teaching (10 min)

Symbols of Hope

Share a short story about a memento or photograph that helped you feel close to someone who lived far away or who had passed away. Take notes here:

- Many of us have items or pictures that make us feel close to those we love most. This could be an item that was gifted to us or a picture that brings back memories. At times, just seeing or even holding these items can bring us a level of comfort and happiness.
- Throughout the history of the Church, many of the saints and other everyday Catholics have used religious items or images to invoke a similar feeling. These items are called sacramentals.
- Sacramentals are symbols that resemble and remind us of the grace we receive in the sacraments.
- Sacramentals point us back to God through prayer and the sacraments. While we do not live our lives only in the church, receiving the sacraments 24/7, we can carry sacramentals with us in the “real world” as constant reminders of God.
- The objects of sacramentals hold no power in themselves – rather, they are physical reminders of who has the power: God. Sacramentals are meant to aid our prayer life and be physical reminders of the spiritual truths of God.
- It is important that we do not use sacramentals as good luck charms but as a reminder of the sacraments, which contain real and practical power. **(CCC 1670)**
- For example, wearing a crucifix does not automatically make us “more holy,” but it can cause it to remember his love and grace, and our hope is strengthened. In this case, the crucifix or medal keeps the memory of God close and calls us to action through prayer.
- Sacramentals are not limited to objects either – blessings are also a form of sacramental.
- By our baptism, we have the power to bless things like meals, objects, places, and even other people. **(CCC 1669)**
- To bless something is to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God, giving him praise for this gift he gave us. **(CCC 1078)**
- Again, blessings do not hold the same power as the sacraments, but they are like constant signals of communication that bring our minds back to God regularly.

Two Sides of the Same Coin

- The principle behind sacramentals comes from how God chooses to communicate with us.
- God created a physical world for us to live in and our bodies with senses in order to experience it. Even though God is pure spirit, he translates spiritual realities through physical elements. **(CCC 32)**
- God used plagues of pests to warn the Egyptian pharaoh of the dangers of disobeying God and keeping God's people in slavery. **(Exodus 7-10)**
- In the New Testament, Jesus frequently taught using physical examples like the vineyard and the mustard tree to teach realities about the Kingdom of God. Jesus even used dirt and his own spit to perform healing miracles!

Project and read **John 9:1-7**.

- God does not have to communicate like this, but he chooses to because we are physical beings with senses. Our senses are how we take in and understand the world around us.
- While we might not have a sense that detects grace or God's presence, God bridges the gap by giving us physical elements to see, taste, touch, and smell in the sacraments. **(CCC 1146)**
- Every sacrament includes specific things we hear and see. We call these things form and matter. The form and matter help us identify a Catholic sacrament wherever we are. Without the proper form and matter, the sacrament is not valid or authentic.
- The form of a sacrament is the prescribed words of prayer, and the matter is the substance or action that takes place. For example, the form (what we hear) for Baptism is, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," and the matter (what we see) is the water being poured.
- In a similar way, sacramentals use the physical world to draw us into the spiritual. Sacramentals engage our senses with a spiritual reality and nudge us toward the sacraments, where God gives us grace.

Going Deeper

Saint Carlo Acutis, one of the newest saints of the Church, wore a scapular, which encouraged him to live his faith and to attend daily Mass. This scapular was one of the physical reminders that Carlo used to express to himself the spiritual reality that he could not go a day without Jesus being at the center of it.

To Each Their Own

- One of the cool things about sacramentals is that there is a great variety that speaks to all kinds of people. Your grandma may keep holy water around her house, or one of your friends may carry a rosary in their pocket.
- Regardless of which sacramentals you feel drawn to, they all serve the same purpose of leading our hearts back to God.

Invite the youth to share some examples of sacramentals before moving on. Examples may include blessed palms, rosaries, holy water, ashes (from Ash Wednesday), crucifix or cross pendants, holy medals, scapulars, devotional candles, holy images and icons, blessed salt, and even the Sign of the Cross.

- Holy water is a great example of a sacramental as it is a symbol of our baptismal water and reminds us of our Baptism when we use it to make the Sign of the Cross.
- When we do not feel like God is close, sacramentals remind us of God's constant presence and care. Just like how our mementos or pictures of family can comfort us when a loved one is far away, sacramentals can give us the comfort we need when we aren't feeling as close or connected to God as we might hope.
- Sacramentals are a great gift from God, but we must remember that sacramentals are meant to draw us back to the sacraments and prayer, not be a replacement for them.
- The sacraments and prayer are extremely powerful and give us the grace and spiritual gifts that we need to thrive in our everyday lives.

BREAK

Hands-On Sacramental Museum (20 min)

Dismiss the core members leading stations while the leader introduces the next activity to the youth. Around the room are different stations of sacramentals. Youth go to each station to learn about a different sacramental and experience it with their senses.

At each station, a core member reads a brief explanation or history of the sacramental, then passes around an example of it for youth to examine, touch, and smell. Youth remain at each station for the entirety of the presentation before moving to another.

Holy Water

Holy water is a common sacramental that we see in churches and even our homes. Holy water is used to bless all kinds of objects, like the palms on Palm Sunday, and people, like those who receive the Anointing of the Sick. The water calls back to our baptism, when we became children of God and God washed away our sin. Every time we enter the church, we bless ourselves with holy water, dipping our fingers in it before making the Sign of the Cross. This is a very concrete reminder of our baptism. We are encouraged to use holy water to bless our homes, inviting God's presence into them.

Blessed Oil

In the Bible, oil is a symbol of God's blessing. We often use the word "anoint" to describe someone being blessed with oil. For example, David is anointed as king of Israel, and Jesus is called the Anointed One. **(1 Samuel 16:13, Acts 10:38)**

The Church has three sacred oils that the bishop blesses. Clergy use these oils to celebrate sacraments like Baptism and the Anointing of the Sick. Separately, we can also have oil blessed for ourselves as a sacramental. The purpose of this oil is primarily for healing and protection from harm. Like holy water, blessed oil can be used to pray for oneself or others. The simplest way of anointing is to make the Sign of the Cross on the forehead while saying the accompanying prayers.

Brown Scapular

A scapular, in general, refers to a religious garment worn over the shoulders. In 1251, a Carmelite brother, Simon Stock, prayed fervently for the growth of the Carmelite order. Mary appeared to him, giving him a large scapular, and said, "This shall be a privilege for you and all Carmelites, that anyone dying in this habit shall not suffer eternal fire." (The "habit" Mary referred to was the religious garment, called a "scapular.")

Then, in answer to prayer, the order miraculously grew. People noticed. Many faithful people asked the Carmelite friars (members) for a share in the blessing Mary gave to them. The friars cut off pieces of their scapular to give away as blessings. Today, most scapulars are two squares of brown wool tied by string and worn around the neck. The scapular can be worn underneath clothing. Those who wear it entrust themselves to Mary and the promise she made to the Carmelites.

Miraculous Medal

Saint Catherine Labouré was a religious sister of the Daughters of Charity in France in the 1800s. Mary appeared to her in grand visions, standing with rays of light coming from her hands. Mary instructed St. Catherine to “Have a medal struck upon this model.” Mary further said, “Those who wear it will receive great graces, especially if they wear it around the neck. Those who repeat this prayer with devotion will be, in a special manner, under the protection of the Mother of God. Graces will be abundantly bestowed upon those who have confidence.”

The front side of the Miraculous Medal depicts Mary, her hands open, full of light, standing on the globe as the Queen of Heaven and Earth. The year 1830 on the Miraculous Medal is the year of St. Catherine’s vision. The text around the outside reads, “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee,” which is a petition to Mary, as she is our special intercessor.

The back side of the Miraculous Medal shows the Cross with the letter M, symbolizing Mary’s close relationship to the Passion and Death of her Son, Jesus. Beneath the M are images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, two other popular Catholic symbols. Finally, the 12 stars are a reference to the original 12 tribes of Israel, symbolizing God’s complete Kingdom, as well as the woman from Revelation: “And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” **(Revelation 12:1)**

St. Benedict Medal

Saint Benedict was known for performing amazing miracles with the power of the Holy Cross. He bravely resisted temptations and escaped dangerous traps set to harm him. He had a special power to drive away the devil using the Holy Cross. Because of this, a special medal was created in his honor. The medal as we know it today, called the Jubilee Medal, was first made in 1880.

The St. Benedict medal is very popular among Catholics. People use it to remind themselves that spiritual protection from evil and temptation is only a prayer away, to pray for sinners to change their ways and to ask for help during difficult times.

The front of the medal shows an image of St. Benedict, a cup with a snake, and a raven – other images that relate to stories from St. Benedict’s life. The letters on the medal stand for words or phrases in Latin. Here are what the ones on the front mean:

- In the middle – “The Cross of [our] Holy Father Benedict.”
- Around the outer edge – “May we be strengthened by his presence in the hour of our death.”

The back of the medal shows the Cross, a symbol of triumph for Christians. At the top is the Latin word *pax*, which means peace. Here are what the other acronyms stand for:

- The vertical beam of the cross – “May the Holy Cross be my light.”
- The horizontal beam of the cross – “Let not the dragon be my guide.”
- Around the outer edge – “Begone, Satan! Never tempt me with your vanities!”

Step It Up

Provide take-home items at each station, like prayer cards or pamphlets, for the youth to take home. Alternatively, create a “Sacramental Passport” where the youth can receive a stamp at each station after learning about each sacramental.

SEND

The Rosary (15 min)

Gather the youth together in the main meeting space. Pass out a rosary to each person. Give a brief history of the Rosary, using the following as an example:

The Rosary is a special form of prayer that Catholics have prayed for centuries. It is prayed on a rosary or string of beads. Each bead represents a different prayer, and, as you pray, you pass each bead through your hand, working your way around the loop. This prayer was given to a saint named Dominic, who was a priest in the early 13th century.

Saint Dominic was struggling to combat popular lies about God (called heresy), so he went into a forest to pray, asking God to provide what he needed to overcome it. Mary and angels appeared to him, revealed the prayers of the Rosary, and directed him to meditate on the stories of Jesus’ life. These stories directly contradicted the heresy by focusing on Jesus’ Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection.

There are two main reasons Catholics pray the Rosary. The first is to meditate on the life of Jesus. We remember stories from the Gospels as we recite the prayers to ponder, visualize, and become more familiar with the life and person of Jesus. The slow, consistent rhythm of the prayers helps us meditate and know Jesus more deeply. The second is petitioning God for a special favor, such as helping a loved one recover from an illness or thanking God for blessings or an answered prayer.

Lead the youth through a decade of the Rosary. Start by naming some intentions for your prayer, then begin with an Our Father, ten Hail Marys, and conclude with a Glory Be. Project the prayers for youth to follow along.

Suggestion

If your group is well-disposed, consider praying an entire Rosary together. Pray with the mysteries of the weekday and invite several core members to lead the five decades.

Step It Up

Provide a pamphlet for how to pray the Rosary that the youth can also take home.

Weekly Challenge (5 min)

Invite the preselected core member to present the Weekly Challenge.

Take your rosary with you as you go about your week. When you remember it, hold it in your hands and say a short prayer.

Dismiss the core members preassigned to parking lot safety.

Make announcements related to your program.

Dismiss the youth.