

Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed is one of the earliest creeds of the Church. It is called the Apostles' Creed because the teachings in this creed date back to the main beliefs that the Church has professed since the days of the Apostles. Read the words of the Apostles' Creed one line at a time, and have the young people echo, or repeat, the words after you.

Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed, or more correctly, the Nicene-Constantinople Creed, is the creed regularly professed at Mass on Sundays. For this reason it is important to make sure the young people are familiar with its words so that they can join in professing the creed at Mass. Integrate this creed into your sessions.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son,
our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again
from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God
the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge
the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.

Amen.

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial
with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate
of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the
forgiveness of sins and I look
forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Teaching Prayer

Understanding Prayers

Catholic prayers are so familiar to us, and we so often say them from memory that we sometimes fail to reflect on the meaning of the words and phrases. Understanding the meaning of many of our common prayers can be difficult for young people. When teaching the words of prayers, be sure to explain the meaning as you go along. This will help the young people pray with more understanding and devotion.

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Home Connection

Pre-chapter activities for families


Getting ready for Chapter 17

Get CONNECTED

with family and friends

The Early Church: People of Pentecost

Jesus intended his teachings and work to continue until the end of time. In this chapter, you will learn how Paul and the other Apostles, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, taught the early Church to follow Jesus. Today, all members of the Church, under the leadership of the Pope and bishops, are called to spread the message of Salvation.



Activity

My relatives come to our house on all the special holidays. We never eat dinner before six o'clock because my aunt Ellen is always late. Most of my friends eat earlier and want me to hang out with them afterward. I always have to say no, which used to make me mad.

Then my mom told me that Aunt Ellen volunteers at a soup kitchen on holidays, and my attitude changed. One time, my aunt even took me with her to help serve the meals. Now it doesn't bother me at all to say no to my friends. And I feel so proud telling them about Aunt Ellen.

Do one of the following.

1. Survey your relatives to find out how they live their faith each day. Identify ways that your family can support and help one another live your faith.
2. With your family or friends, organize a drive in your parish or community to collect clothing and other necessities to benefit people in need.

Trivia

Church History To elect the Pope, the College of Cardinals meets in a locked room for a private meeting known as a conclave, which is from the Latin word for "key." The cardinals are not allowed contact with the outside world. The election continues until a two-thirds majority vote is reached. Then, white smoke rises from the Vatican chimney, signaling that the new Pope has been elected.

Quotable Scripture

"The last will be first, and the first will be last."
—Matthew 20:16

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Getting ready for Chapter 17

Get CONNECTED

with family and friends

Scripture Background

In the Time of Jesus

The Imagery of Light The imagery of light and darkness is found frequently in both Testaments of the Bible. In the Old Testament, God is described as covering himself with light like a garment (Psalm 104:2) and God's people are called to walk in the light of the Lord (Isaiah 2:5). In the New Testament, light is linked to Jesus, describing him as the true light for all people (John 1:9). Those who respond to him with faith are transported out of the darkness and into the light (1 Peter 2:9).
Read Matthew 5:14–16 to discover Jesus call to his followers to be light in the world, that people may see their goodness and turn to God.

WEEKLY PLANNER

<p>On Sunday</p> <p>At the end of Mass, pay special attention to the priest's words "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord." Decide to do one thing during the day to follow this call.</p> <p>On the Web blestarewe.com</p> <p>Visit our Web site for the saint of the day and the reflection question of the week.</p>	<p>Saint of the Week</p> <p>Saint Thérèse Lisieux (1873–1897)</p> <p>At age 15, Thérèse became a Carmelite nun. She believed that she could become a saint by doing little things for God with great love. She wrote about her spiritual journey in her autobiography, <i>Story of a Soul</i>.</p> <p>Patron Saint of: France, missionaries Fest Day: October 1</p>	<p>A Prayer for the Week</p> <p>Thank you, Lord, for the leaders of our Church. Bless them with wisdom and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Bless our family, too, so that we may lead others to you through our acts of love and kindness. Amen.</p>
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Sunday Connection

Visit Our Web Site Catechists and parents can visit blestarewe.com for

- resources related to the Sunday liturgy.
- a summary of the Sunday Scripture readings.
- the Reflection Question of the Week.
- seasonal activities.



More About the Saint of the Week

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux Mission on earth: praying for the world, especially for priests and missionaries. Named "Patron of the Missions." Proclaimed Doctor of the Church in 1997. Famous saying: "In the heart of the Church, I shall be love."



Praying A Prayer for the Week

Remind the young people of our need for good leaders. On the board, write the names of the Pope, your local bishop, your pastor and pastoral staff, and the catechists in the religion program. Ask the young people to keep these leaders in mind as they pray.

The Christians at Corinth

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Saint Paul brought the Gospel to Corinth, a great seaport held by a community of people from different social, economic, political, and religious backgrounds. Because of this, members of the Church in Corinth began to experience division. They began to deny poor people membership into the Church. Christians who prayed with great devotion in the Holy Spirit were more highly valued than those who did works of charity. People began to value certain Christian teachings over others. Paul's teachings helped the Corinthians to understand the importance of the unity of the Church.


The Mission of the Church

Jesus founded the Church so that his teachings and work would continue until the end of time. Jesus appointed the Twelve Apostles to be the first **missionaries** of the Church. Paul, at first a persecutor of Christians, became a missionary. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the Apostles and other early disciples joyfully spread the news of the Risen Lord. The Apostles and the other members of the early Church taught others the love of Christ by the way they lived. They shared what they had with others, particularly the poor and those in need.

Today, the Church continues the missionary work given to her by Christ. The Holy Spirit guides the Church in preaching the Gospel of Salvation. God loves all people and wants them to come to know his truth and be saved. The Church's mission is to preach the Gospel to people of all cultures and races throughout the world in every age. Because no one is excluded, the Church is catholic, or universal.

The Church is also apostolic. This means that the Church passes down the teachings of the Apostles, which are from Christ himself. Jesus **commissioned** Peter and the other Apostles and gave them the authority to continue his mission and to act in his name. Today, the Pope and bishops have the same role as the Apostles in proclaiming the Gospel. When the Pope, or the Pope and bishops together, officially teach on matters of faith

and morals the teachings are infallible, or without error. By remaining faithful to the teachings of the Apostles, the Church preserves the truth of Christ throughout the ages.



Activity

The teachings and traditions of the Church have been handed down from generation to generation for more than 2,000 years. Describe a family tradition or story that has been passed down to you. What makes this tradition or story special to you?

Answers will vary.

Faith Words

epistle An epistle is a formal letter. The New Testament contains epistles written to Christian communities by Saint Paul or other disciples in the early Church.

missionary A missionary is a person who shares his or her faith through preaching and charitable works. Catholic missionaries preach Christ's message of Salvation to all people.

commissioned To be commissioned is to be entrusted by someone with the power to fulfill a particular task in that person's name. Christ commissioned the Apostles and their successors with the task of leading and serving the Church.

What is the mission of a parish community?

Understanding the Scripture

- Have the young people read "The Christians at Corinth" on page 265.
- **Say** "All members of the Church are commissioned through Baptism and strengthened by Confirmation to spread Christ's truth."
- Invite the group to read "The Mission of the Church."
- **Ask** "Why has the Church's mission remained the same since the time of the Apostles?" (*Jesus established the Church so that his teachings and work would continue to the end of time.*)

Doing the Activity

- Have the young people read the directions. Give them a few minutes to think of and to record family stories.
- Ask volunteers to share their stories and to suggest ways that these stories might be passed down, such as by the good works of a person, in a letter, in a diary, or on a Web page.
- List the suggestions on the board.

Faith Words

Arrange the members of the group in pairs, and have them quiz each other on the meaning of the Faith Words.

Additional Activity

Making Posters About Participation

- Arrange the young people in small groups. Distribute poster board, art supplies, and a diocesan newspaper to each group. Ask each group to make a poster that shows ways that members of the Church can spread the Gospel.
- Have everyone draw illustrations or cut photographs from copies of diocesan newspapers to make their posters. Have them write captions for each picture they include.



Liturgy Connection

Profession of Faith

The Nicene Creed is a summary of the main points of belief of the Catholic faith. In the Creed we profess our faith that the Church is "one, holy, catholic and apostolic." We call these four qualities the four Marks of the Church. The Church adopted the Nicene Creed in the fourth century and officially made it part of the Liturgy of the Mass in the eleventh century. At Mass we profess the Nicene Creed after listening to the readings and the homily. In professing the truths of our faith in the Liturgy, we give witness to our faith in God's Word.

The Word Made Flesh

The Scripture readings assigned to the Masses of the Christmas season celebrate many aspects of who Jesus is. They also help us hear God’s call to us.

Whenever we hear the Scriptures proclaimed at Mass, we should listen carefully. The Scripture writers often used imagery to express God’s greatness and his message. Memorable images found in the Bible include a light in darkness, a bright star, and a voice from Heaven.

How do these words and images guide us? Ultimately, they lead us beyond things we can see, hear, or touch to a greater understanding of the mystery of who Jesus is. They are meant to show us the truth of God’s great love for us.

Jesus himself, in his words and actions and in his own flesh and blood, is the greatest Revelation of God’s love. He is the Word-made-Flesh. He is God made visible among us.



Activity

Look up and quietly read these Scripture verses from readings of the Christmas season. Then answer these questions in your own words.

1. The Nativity: John 1:14
Why did Jesus come into this world?

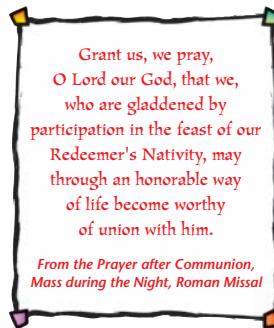
Possible answers: to show us the glory of God, to bring grace and truth

2. The Epiphany: Matthew 2:10–11
Whom did Jesus come to save?

Possible answers: all people, every nation, people from far away as well as nearby

3. The Baptism of the Lord: Luke 3:21–22
How is our Baptism similar to the baptism of the Lord?

Possible answers: We become children of God, we are made sharers in the mission and work of Jesus.



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Additional Activity

Revealing J-E-S-U-S

- To help the young people identify some words and actions that express how we are called to tell others about Jesus, write JESUS vertically on the board.
- Ask the group to suggest words or phrases that begin with each letter in the name *Jesus* to describe ways to reveal Jesus to others. Write their suggestions on the board. For example:

Judge Not

Express your beliefs

Support those who are weak

Understand others

Sympathize with those who are suffering

“What message does the Solemnity of the Epiphany give us?” (*Jesus came to save all people everywhere.*)

“Why is the feast of the Baptism of the Lord a good celebration for the end of the Christmas season?” (*It reminds us that we have a mission to share Jesus’ good news.*)

Respond

Objective

To reflect on the Scripture readings of the Christmas season

Doing the Activity

Invite the young people to read “The Word Made Flesh.” Read aloud the directions for the activity. You may wish to have the young people discuss their responses in pairs or small groups.



Prayer

Have the young people quiet themselves for prayer. Then pray together the closing prayer on page 333. You may wish to sing another Christmas hymn after the prayer. Close the prayer with the Sign of the Cross.



Cultural Awareness

Epiphany Customs

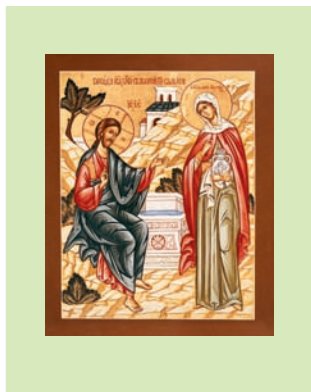
- In many cultures Christians exchange gifts on the feast of the Epiphany rather than on Christmas Day. This custom recalls the fact that the Magi brought gifts to the Infant Jesus. The Magi followed a bright star to Bethlehem, where they found the Christ child and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
- Another Epiphany custom is the blessing of doorways. Using blessed chalk, the head of the family writes the initials of the Magi along with the year’s date on the main doorway of the home. Then a prayer is said to ask God’s blessing on all who dwell in the home and all who will enter it.

Lent

• **The First Scrutiny.** A scrutiny is like an examination of conscience. This ritual takes place on the Third Sunday of Lent. The Church prays that Jesus, the Word of God, may change the catechumens' lives, just as he changed the life of the Samaritan woman at the well. (See John 4:4–42.) The catechumens reflect on how Jesus has been living water in their lives.

• **The Second Scrutiny.** This ritual occurs on the Fourth Sunday of Lent. The Church prays that God may enlighten the catechumens, just as Jesus gave sight to the man born blind. (See John 9:1–41.) The catechumens reflect on how Jesus has been the light in their darkness.

• **The Third Scrutiny.** This ritual takes place on the Fifth Sunday of Lent. The Church prays that the catechumens may receive new life in Christ, just as Lazarus did when Jesus raised him from the dead. (See John 11:1–44.) The catechumens reflect on how Jesus saves them from sin and death.



St. Photini at Jacob's Well by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery

Activity

In the scrutinies, the Church prays that the catechumens will be freed from evil and that they will be given the power to overcome sin.

If you were a catechumen, for what three intentions would you ask the Church to pray?

Answers will vary.



Look upon those who call to you, O Lord, and sustain the weak; give life by your unflinching light to those who walk in the shadow of death, and bring those rescued by your mercy from every evil to reach the highest good.

From the Prayer over the People, First Sunday of Lent, Roman Missal

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- **Ask** “What are the four special times in the final phase of the catechumens’ journey?” (*the Rite of Election, and the First, Second, and Third Scrutinies*)

“What will be the next step in your own journey to Easter?” (*Answers will vary.*)

Respond

Objective

To name prayer intentions modeled on the Scrutinies

Doing the Activity

Read aloud the directions for the activity. Brainstorm local, national, and international situations for which the young people might ask the Church to pray.



Prayer

Have the young people quiet themselves for prayer. Then pray together the closing prayer on page 339. Close the prayer with the Sign of the Cross. If there is time, you might play an appropriate piece of Lenten music.

Additional Activity

Praying the Jesus Prayer

- Have the young people quiet themselves for prayer.
- When everyone is ready, pray aloud this Jesus prayer: Lord Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.
- Explain that breathing rhythms are an important part of praying this special prayer. Tell them to breathe in during the words *Lord Jesus, Son of the living God*, and to breathe out during the words *have mercy on me, a sinner*.
- Encourage everyone to pray this Jesus prayer often throughout the day.



Enrichment

Meeting Catechumens

Now that the young people understand more about the process of being initiated into the Catholic Church, invite a current catechumen or a newly baptized Church member to speak to the group. Inform the speaker about topics you wish them to cover. Be sure to ask the speaker to share their personal reflections on anticipating, or actually experiencing, the Rite of Election and the Scrutinies.

Witness in the Light

There is probably a little of Nicodemus in each of us. Are we afraid of losing our friends if we make Jesus the center of our lives? Are we afraid of what others will think about us if we witness to Jesus by our words and actions? Can we bring ourselves to spend time with Jesus, listening and learning about God and the Kingdom of God, even when it means taking time away from doing other things?

The season of Lent is a good time to read and think about the story of Nicodemus. (See John 3:1–21.) We need to figure out where Jesus fits into our lives.

Activity

Read each of the statements below. Think carefully about each statement and circle the answer that expresses how true the statement is for you.

I am willing to speak with my friends about Jesus and my faith in him.

Always true Sometimes true Never true

Because I know Jesus, I make better choices than I would otherwise make.

Always true Sometimes true Never true

I would witness to Jesus and the Gospel even if it meant losing my friends.

Always true Sometimes true Never true

I want to come to know Jesus better, and I take steps to do that.

Always true Sometimes true Never true

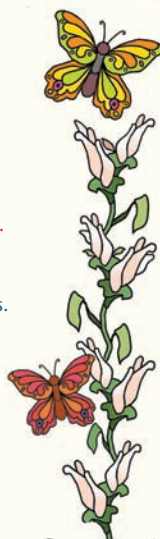
Complete this contract by stating how you will act like a faithful disciple.

Contract with Jesus

I, _____, agree to the following changes in my relationship with Jesus:

Answers will vary.

Signed,



By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God, may we walk eagerly in that same charity with which, out of love for the world, your Son handed himself over to death. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Collect, Fifth Sunday of Lent, Roman Missal

Respond

Objective

To explore the young people's attitudes and behavior toward Jesus

Doing the Activity

- Read aloud "Witness in the Light" on page 343.
- **Ask** "If you met Jesus personally, what questions would you like to ask him?" (*Answers will vary.*)
- Read aloud the directions for the activity. Challenge the young people to complete the activity as honestly as they can. Give the group time to work on their contracts. Assure them that they will not have to share their work with the group.



Prayer

Have the young people quiet themselves for prayer. Then pray together the closing prayer on page 343. Close the prayer with the Sign of the Cross. If there is time, you might play an appropriate piece of Lenten music.

Additional Activity

Designing Posters

- Provide the young people with poster paper and markers. Have them create posters that express their relationships with Jesus. Remind them that they can use both words and drawings in their designs.
- Display the completed posters in the prayer corner.



Try This

Language Arts

Invite the students to write a poem about Nicodemus and his relationship with Jesus. Suggest that the students write from either Jesus' or Nicodemus's point of view. If they wish, students can create a dialogue poem by writing verses for both characters. Allow volunteers to read their poems aloud.

Mary's Feast Day

As the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, it honors God's gift of grace in the life of Mary. Because of this special grace, Mary was able to say yes to what God asked of her. God's grace made Mary worthy to be called the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of God's own Son.

On this feast day, we also celebrate God's grace in our own lives. Although we do not share in Mary's unique graces of being free of Original Sin and all personal sin, we do share in God's grace. God's very life in us gives us the ability to say yes to God's plan for our lives.

Activity

Create headlines that tell about God's grace working in the lives of people. You can take the headlines from recent news reports you have heard or read or from your own experience. The first one has been done for you.



Homeless shelter will remain open thanks to generous gift from mystery donor.

O God, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin prepared a worthy dwelling for your Son, grant, we pray, that, as you preserved her from every stain by virtue of the Death of your Son, which you foresaw, so, through her intercession, we, too, may be cleansed and admitted to your presence. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Collect, Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Roman Missal

- **Ask** "What does this special feast of Mary celebrate?" (*This feast celebrates God's gift of special grace in Mary's life.*)
- Invite the young people to read "Mary's Feast Day." Invite volunteers to share what they have learned.

Respond

Objective

To discover signs of God's grace in today's world

Doing the Activity

Read aloud the directions for the activity. When the young people have finished writing, invite volunteers to share their headlines with the group.



Prayer

Have the young people quiet themselves for prayer. Then pray together the closing prayer on page 363. Close the prayer with the Sign of the Cross. If there is time, you might play an appropriate piece of Marian music.

Additional Activity

Praying the Rosary

- An important Catholic devotion to Mary is the Rosary. Distribute rosaries to the young people, and teach them how to pray this special devotion to the Mother of God.
- When you have completed your explanation, pray a decade of the Rosary with them.
- Encourage them to pray the Rosary at home. Whenever time permits, pray a decade of the Rosary with the group.



Enrichment

The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

Explain that Mary, under her title of *Immaculate Conception*, is honored in Washington, D.C., at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Tell the young people that this church is the largest Catholic church in the United States. It is also a popular site of pilgrimage for Catholics throughout this country and the world. Allow the young people to explore www.nationalshrineinteractive.com to learn more about the history and purpose of the shrine.

