

A Template for an Evangelizing Catechetical Session

by Joe Paprocki, D.Min.



As a catechist, you are not a teacher of a subject but rather the facilitator of an evangelizing encounter with Jesus Christ.

In order to facilitate an encounter with Jesus Christ, your faith formation session must take place within a climate of prayer (*General Directory for Catechesis*, 85) that incorporates a language of mystery (sign, symbol, and ritual) that makes your session resemble Mass more than class. Within this

prayerful context, you will transmit the content of our faith that has been revealed by God through Jesus Christ, who entered into human history and said and did specific things that reveal how we find salvation through him. Following is a template for structuring a typical 75-minute catechetical session that creates a climate of prayer and delivers the content of our faith so that the experience is both evangelizing and catechetical.

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Preliminaries (15 minutes)

Establish a climate of prayer and encounter Jesus in our midst.

- ◆ If possible, ahead of time, arrange the seating so that it looks and feels less like a classroom (e.g. circle, semi-circle).
- ◆ Greet participants at the door with a bowl of holy water (held by you, an aide, or one of the participants), and invite them to dip their fingers and bless themselves.
- ◆ Play liturgical music in the background as participants gather.
- ◆ Give participants a slip of paper, and invite them to write down one thing they are thankful for and one thing or person they would like to pray for. Have them fold the paper and place it in a basket.
- ◆ Once all have arrived, turn down the music and handle any needed introductions, attendance-taking, and business.
- ◆ Invite participants to prayerfully set up the prayer space.
 - Provide each participant with a sacred object, such as a prayer cloth in the color of the liturgical season, Bible stand, Bible, flameless pillar candle, basket of prayer intentions, crucifix, bowl of holy water, or an icon.
 - Have participants line up on one side of the room for a procession.
 - Have the participant with the cross lead the group as they slowly process around the room, while an appropriate song is played and/or sung.
 - Have the last participant ring a hand chime every five seconds.
 - As each participant approaches the prayer table, he or she sets down the object and stands at his or her seat.
- ◆ Lead an opening prayer.
 - Pause for 10–15 seconds of silence.
 - Pray the Sign of the Cross.
 - Begin with a ritual greeting such as, **“This is the day the Lord has made!”** *“Let us rejoice and be glad!”*
 - Invite participants to make the threefold Sign of the Cross with their thumb on the forehead, lips, and chest. Initiate this by saying, “Let us pray today that God’s Word will be...in our minds [forehead], on our lips [lips], and in our hearts [chest].”
 - Pass the flameless candle around, and invite each participant to share one thing he or she is thankful for.
 - Pass the candle once more as each participant shares a prayer intention.
 - End with a traditional prayer. Alternate the prayer each month.

Engage (15 minutes)

Enter through their door.

- ◆ Introduce the theme/topic/big idea of the lesson. Announce it clearly, and write it on the board or an easel.
- ◆ Do an engaging activity/icebreaker that enables you to “enter through their door”—drawing from their lived experience, current events, or popular culture—to grab their attention in a way that connects with the direction you intend to take with your lesson. Your *Finding God* or *Christ Our Life* catechist manual has ideas and suggestions for ways to introduce the lesson theme and engage the participants.
- ◆ Invite a minute of silence to prepare to hear God speak in the lesson. Follow the moment of silence with the session-starting prayer in *Finding God* or one of the prayers in the What Catholics Should Know section of *Christ Our Life*.

Explore (25 minutes)

Transmit the content of our faith and listen to what Jesus has to say.

- ◆ Invite a participant to come forward, bow before the Bible, and read a passage that sheds light on the session theme. (Scripture passages are referenced in the textbook.) End the Scripture reading with “The Word of the Lord./Thanks be to God,” or “The Gospel of the Lord./Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.” Have the reader return the Bible to its enthroned position on the table, bow before it, and return to his or her seat.
- ◆ Deliver the content of our faith by interacting with a textbook, viewing and discussing a video, or interacting with some other appropriate resource. Relate the content to the big idea of the lesson.
- ◆ If using a textbook, show a brief video or use some interactive media that reinforces or sheds light on the content being transmitted.
- ◆ Engage participants in a discussion or some other activity that further clarifies, fleshes out, or reinforces the content being transmitted and the big idea. Possible activities are found in your program’s blackline masters or art prints.
- ◆ End this segment by listening to a song (either liturgical or popular/contemporary) that flows from or reinforces the theme of the session and the big idea.

Reflect (10 minutes)

Facilitate an intimate encounter with Jesus Christ.

- ◆ Invite participants to come forward one at a time to take a small battery-operated tea light candle from the table and proceed to a chosen or assigned “sacred space.” This is the place in the room where they will remain during the guided reflection or experience of *lectio divina*. It may be on the floor but in a seated position—no laying down.
- ◆ Lead a guided reflection that flows from and connects with the theme/big idea of the lesson and invites participants to use their imaginations and their senses to go to a place where they will encounter Jesus and engage in discussion with him. Alternately, you might lead an experience of *lectio divina*.
- ◆ Allow a few moments of silence at the end of the guided reflection or *lectio divina*.

Respond (10 minutes)

“Be sure to leave through your door.” Take Jesus into the world.

- ◆ Use resources from the textbook or other resources to assess participants’ comprehension of the big idea and to identify ways to apply the lesson taught to everyday life.
- ◆ Give an assignment that invites/challenges the participants to put into practice what has been learned and to share with their families.
- ◆ Invite participants to share how they put last week’s lesson into practice.
- ◆ Lead a closing prayer.
 - Pause for 10–15 seconds of silence.
 - Pray the Sign of the Cross.
 - Lead participants in a traditional prayer, a decade of the Rosary, a sung refrain, or a Mass part (Confiteor; Gloria; Creed; Holy, Holy, Holy; or Lamb of God). *Finding God* users may choose to pray the prayer at the end of each session in the book.
 - Invite participants to share a Sign of Peace.
 - Pray the Sign of the Cross.
- ◆ Have participants bless themselves with holy water as they depart.
- ◆ Return the room to its usual arrangement.