

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Forgive Us Our Trespasses

Catechist Preparation

Clarifying the Essentials

Believers cannot observe and practice the teaching of Jesus only as an external measure of behavior.

- ◆ Loving others as Christ loves us can only be achieved as we internalize that command; we live it from the depths of our heart (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2842).
- ◆ As members of his Body, we are to live in Christ and practice as he did in his earthly life (see CCC 521).

Jesus is our model and guide.

- ◆ Christ did not live for himself but for us, from his Incarnation to his Resurrection (see CCC 519).
- ◆ As his disciples, Christ invites us to follow his example of humility, prayer, acceptance of poverty, and even persecution (see CCC 520).

Why Is This Important?

On our own we cannot hope to achieve the limitless level of reconciliation and forgiveness that the example of Christ holds forth to us. Too often we seem unable to forgive the wrongs we have received at the hands of others. But by opening our hearts to God's grace in his Word and in the Sacraments, our hearts are transformed. We are encouraged and supported by the Church. We can practice and enact real concord with others, through the Spirit, so that our relationships are characterized by reconciliation, forgiveness and peace.

Doctrinal Session Guide

(Approximately 60 minutes)

Arrange chairs in a circle. Place in the center a candle, an open Bible, a rosary, and prayer booklets.

〔Christ〕 persuades us to be modest, commands us to forgive others, sets us free from vengeful obsessions, promises pardon, and holds before us good hopes and a high view of the unspeakable mercy of God.

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Welcome

Greet people as they arrive. Check in with everyone to find out how they are doing.

Pray

State the theme of the gathering, and invite the participants to recognize our common need for forgiveness. Pray an Act of Contrition together.

Engage

1. Ask everyone to close their eyes and reflect on a time when they experienced being forgiven. Then ask these or similar questions:

How did you know you were forgiven?

In what ways did you learn to forgive?

After some time for quiet reflection, invite them to share with another person.

2. Following the sharing, invite them to complete these sentences:

In the Gospel Jesus tells us to forgive not only once, but "seventy times seven"—an unlimited forgiveness. How do you understand the meaning of his words?

3. Continue with the **Insight** and **For Reflection** sections of the participant handout.

Teach

Begin with the **Church Teaching** section. Continue with a discussion of these points:

- ◆ There is no limit to God's mercy. As God forgives, so must we forgive. There is to be no limit to our forgiveness of one another.
- ◆ Forgiveness frees the one who forgives, as well as the one forgiven.
- ◆ Forgiveness is experienced in a variety of ways. Underlying each is a genuine, heartfelt desire to be reconciled with the other.

Allow some time for questions and clarifications.

Apply

Encourage everyone to reflect those in their lives to whom they need to offer forgiveness.

Pray

Sing the hymn "Amazing Grace."