



OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

Parish Religious Education Adaptations



ave maria press
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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PART 1 WE BELIEVE: THE APOSTLES' CREED

Introduction: Our Catholic Faith

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

Ask the students to read Introduction: Our Catholic Faith and Part 1: We Believe: The Apostles' Creed (pages 8–19) in preparation for this session.

- Prior to this first session have the students jot down a couple of what they consider to be life's most difficult questions (e.g., "Why does God permit evil?").
- Bring in copies of teen magazines that contain advertisements (e.g., *Teen People*, *Cosmo Girl*, *Word Up!*, *Seventeen*). If possible make a video copy of television commercials, that promote messages of conditional acceptance. Check out www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm for help and examples.

Warm-up (15 minutes)

- Begin this first session by warmly welcoming the students. If necessary, have name tags available and wear one yourself. Be ready to explain classroom guidelines and to answer any initial questions the teens might have.
- Use the following icebreaker to help the students get to know one another. To begin, pass around a bowl of M & M's/Skittles or a roll of toilet paper. Say to the students, "Each of you should take as much as you think you will need." Offer no further instructions until all the students have taken what they thought they "needed." Ask one of the students to give his or her name and then tell one thing about himself or herself for each M & M/Skittle or piece of toilet paper he or she took. When the first student has finished, move on to the next student in the group and so on. If you want to discover some *different* information about each student, consider giving each color M&M a different meaning or category. For example:
 - Orange: personal information (name, school, age)
 - Red: family information (parents, brothers, sisters, pets)
 - Yellow: hobbies, other interests (sports, dancing, talents)
 - Green: dating experience (favorite date, worst date, significant others)
 - Blue: free category (something fun about yourself)

Distribute sheets of paper. Have the students spend 2–3 minutes writing their response to the following question: "Who thinks you're wonderful? Why?"

Part I: Lesson (45–50 minutes)

Text Reference: You Are Wonderful; The Importance of Faith; More About Faith (pages 8–13)

- Paraphrase the opening story in the first three paragraphs of "You Are Wonderful" (pages 8–9). Afterward, call on volunteers to share what they wrote earlier about who thinks they are wonderful and why they think so.
- Go on to have the students turn over their sheets of paper and list ten wonderful things about themselves. Allow only a couple minutes for the writing. Call time and invite the teens to share what they wrote with a partner. Afterward, inquire whether anyone had difficulty thinking of ten wonderful things. Ask the students to conjecture why it is so often difficult for us to identify what's *right* about ourselves, while it is so easy to find what's *wrong* about ourselves.
- Divide the group into small groups of three or four. Distribute copies of teen magazines. Have each group find examples of ads that say "You're *not* so wonderful," ads that promote *conditional* acceptance. Invite each group to share its findings with the class. *Note:* If time allows, have the students cut out and collect all the ads and make a poster or bulletin board of them.

- Afterward, share the message contrary to that which the ads and commercials conveyed—especially the message that faith helps us gain a different perspective on our destiny. The message we learn through Christ and his Church is that all people have great worth—no strings attached.
- Point out the questions listed in the final paragraph of the text section “You Are Wonderful” (page 9). Call on different students to respond to each question. Accept all reasonable responses—no judging here. Go in to invite the students to share some of “life’s most difficult questions” they wrote prior to the session.

Before moving on, have the students join in a short prayer for faith. Distribute copies of the activity sheet “Prayer for Faith” and pray it with the teens. This sheet is included at the end of the lesson. Suggest they post the prayer at home in their rooms and make it part of their daily prayer.

- Draw attention to the text section “The Importance of Faith” on pages 9–10. Have volunteers read the first two paragraphs aloud. Write the word **Faith** on the board. Distribute copies of the activity sheet “Faith Is More Like . . .” and give the students time to complete it on their own.
- Check responses to the activity sheet. For each statement, have students who circled column 1 stand on one side of the room, those who circled column 2 on the other. Have volunteers from each “column” tell why they made the choice they did. Repeat this procedure for all ten statements. Accept all reasonable replies. There are no right or wrong answers. The point of this exercise is not to define faith, but to help the students recognize that faith—in someone or something—is that which drives us. Absolutely everyone lives and moves by some force of faith, no matter how strong or how weak.
- Distribute the activity sheet “Our Catholic Faith” from the end of the lesson. Read the three paragraphs of text with the students. Invite questions. Then go on to review the teachings on faith covered on pages 11–12 by pointing out the four “starred” statements on the activity sheet. Give the students a few moments to write a brief explanation of each in the spaces provided. Afterward, call on different students to share what they wrote.
- Tell the students that they will look more closely at Mary as a model of faith in the second part of today’s session. For now, call attention to the fifth text paragraph on page 12. Read the first two sentences aloud: “Faith is an act of the Church. Faith results in **religion**.” Tell the students that over and over again in the Scriptures whenever God calls an *individual* to faith, God always finds a *people*, a group, a Church.
- Conclude this part of the lesson with a *group* trust activity. Have the students stand in a circle. Tell them to arrange themselves so that someone about the same size is on either side of them. Direct the students to turn to their right, step in closer to the center, and place their hands on the waist of the person in front of them. Explain that in a moment they are each going to sit on the knees of the person behind them keeping their own knees together as they do. Tell the students to concentrate on guiding the person in front of them to sit comfortably on their knees, and trust that the person behind them will guide them, too. Have a trial run. Say: “On the count of three everyone bend down, touch bottoms to the knees of the person behind you, and come right back up, just to make sure we are all standing closely enough together. Ready? One, two, three. . . .” If necessary, have the students readjust their positions. Finally, tell the students to sit down, then raise their hands over their heads. This activity not only calls on and allows participants to demonstrate their faith in one another, but also demonstrates what a group of trusting (faith-full) people can do in solidarity. (Note: F.Y.I. Supposedly, Austrian soldiers developed this exercise so that they could rest in a wet field without getting wet.)

Break/Writing Exercise (10 minutes)

- Join the students in a break with refreshments.
- Play a recording of “I Believe,” by Third Day, *Wire*, Essential Records. Invite the students to listen to what simply believing in someone enables us to do (viz., tap into faith, hope, and importantly, love).

*Give me something to believe in and then I'll/
Share it with the world for everyone to see/
I believe in faith that's strong/
I believe in hope that carries on/
I believe in these things and more/
Most of all I believe in love*

- Invite the students to write in their journals responses to one or more of the following questions:
 - What faith sustains you, motivates you, keeps you going?
 - How much faith do you have in yourself? Enough to loosen up and not have to be right on every subject? Enough to let go of the pressure of having to be the coolest or the funniest or the toughest kid in class?
 - What are some qualities in people that make them worthy of placing our trust or faith in them?

Part 2: Lesson (30 minutes)

Text Reference: What Catholics Believe; Creed: An Expression of Faith (pages 13–17)

- Tell a brief story about a person in your life who has been a model of faith for you. If possible, tell how one of your students has modeled Christian faith. As a homework assignment, tell the students to write a letter to a person in their lives who has been a model of faith for them. (See the first “Discussion Question” on page 14 and the second “Applying What You Have Learned” activity on page 16.)
- Take a class survey of the beliefs offered in the text session “What Catholics Believe” (pages 13–14). Tell the students that holding up one finger signifies a firm belief in the teaching; two fingers indicate a less strong belief; three fingers means you are not sure if you believe; four fingers means you need to know more about the topic before you can say whether you believe in it. Do the same for the Catholic belief “Summary Points” on page 16.
- Fill in the details of Mary’s life from the feature “Profile of Faith: Mary, the Model Christian” (page 15). Point out Mary’s “Yes” to God. Stress that Mary’s faith helped her trust in God even though she did not know how a virgin could conceive a child or—later—what it meant when Jesus said he had to be “in my Father’s house” (Luke 2:49–50). Ask: “How is the faith of teens today tested like Mary’s faith was tested? How can they respond?”
- Do a quick preview of “Part I: We Believe: The Apostles’ Creed” (pages 18–19). Begin by writing the word “Creed” on the board and pointing out (from page 18) that the word comes from the Latin word *credo*, which means “I believe.” Ask the students to write their own creed by listing at least five important things they believe about God. Afterward, have the students share beliefs. Note where the students have expressed ideas similar to those found in the Apostles’ Creed.
- Go on to tell the students that some scholars hold that the even more ancient origin of the word creed comes from the Latin words *cor*, meaning “heart,” and *do*, meaning “I give.” When we profess a creed of the Church, then, we are “giving our heart” to God. Invite the students to recite the Apostles’ Creed together (page 19). Ask:
 - How does the Apostles’ Creed express the story of God’s great love for us?
 - Why can praying the Apostles’ Creed be described as giving our hearts to God?
- Distribute the activity sheet “The Apostles’ Creed” from the end of the lesson. Tell the students that the sheet details how the first five chapters of this book will address portions of the Apostles’ Creed. Explain that the Creed was originally a baptismal creed, and its earliest format was in the three questions asked in the liturgy of Baptism at the Easter Vigil. Point out the quote from the *Catechism* and read it aloud. Note: If the students are unfamiliar with the *Catechism*, introduce them to it. Explain the paragraph numbering system. Make sure you have copies of the *Catechism* available in your classroom for the students to use in their sessions together.

Prayer Experience (10 minutes)

- Have the students gather in a circle around the Paschal (Easter) Candle. Light the candle. Observe a moment or two of silence.
- Invite the students to mark themselves with the sign of their faith. Lead them in reverently praying and making the Sign of the Cross.
- Have one of the students read 1 Peter 1:1–10. Afterward, challenge the group to think quietly for a moment or two about what this passage is saying about their faith.

Invite the students to respond to each of the following petitions, saying: “Faithful God, increase our faith.”

- When the world insists our faith is foolish . . .
- When doubts cloud our minds and blur our vision . . .

- When we are tempted to turn away from you . . .
- When we feel lost and abandoned . . .
- When we feel challenged and tested . . .
- When you ask us—as you asked Abraham and Mary—to say “Yes” . . .
- Wrap up your prayer by praying together the Mary’s *Magnificat* (page 17). If you wish and the students are able, join in a sung version of the *Magnificat*; for example, that by Joncas or by Haas.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Distribute copies of the “Introduction Test” (online at www.avemariapress.com). Direct the teens to complete questions 1–20 and to bring their responses to their next class.
- Ask the students to read Chapter 1: Our Loving God: Father and Creator (pages 20–39) in preparation for the next session.
- Remind the students to complete and mail their letters to someone in their lives who has been a model of faith for them.
- Draw attention to the “Reach Out” activity back on page 11. Strongly encourage the teens to undertake this challenge and put their faith into action.
- Tell the students to find a story of someone—famous or otherwise—who has put his or her faith in God on public display. Tell the students to try researching the Internet or looking through newspapers or news magazines.
- Tell the students to ask two adults and two peers for two reasons for believing or not believing in God. Have the students record the responses and bring them to their next session.

 Prayer for Faith

Faithful and caring God,
give me the faith to see and believe
the truth about myself,
no matter how good it may be.

Amen.

Faith Is More Like . . .

Directions: Each of the following contains dual statements that complete the phrase "Faith is more like. . . ." Circle the option with which you most identify.

Column 1

a search for truth

bright sunshine

a sure thing

oatmeal

hanging on

losing

a spring

giving

a leap

a question

Column 2

truth discovered

a partly cloudy sky

a risk

tacos

letting go

winning

a marathon

getting

a decision

an answer

Our Catholic Faith

Catholic doctrine distinguishes between two kinds of faith: the faith *by which* we believe and the faith *which* we believe.

Faith is first and foremost a relationship. It is the way we lean into reality, set our hearts, trust or distrust all that is, trust God is and loves us. This is the faith *by which* we believe. It is our response to the great love God reveals in creation, in Israel's history, and in Jesus.

The gospels, doctrines of the Church, and the beliefs of our creeds form the content or "deposit" of faith—that *which* we believe. During our time together we will learn both to trust our personal faith and to expand our understanding of doctrine.

* Faith makes it possible for us to accept Jesus as Lord.

* Faith makes it possible for us to share in the life of the Holy Spirit.

* Faith is a gift from God, but our response to faith must be freely given.

* Abraham and Mary are two models of faith.

☀ The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty creator of heaven and earth.	Chapter One
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate,	Chapter Two
was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.	
I believe in the Holy Spirit,	Chapter Three
the holy catholic Church,	Chapter Four
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.	Chapter Five

The Apostles' Creed is so called because it is rightly considered a faithful summary of the apostles' faith. It is the ancient baptismal symbol of the Church of Rome. Its great authority arises from the fact that it is "the Creed of the Roman Church, the See of Peter, the first of the apostles, to which he brought the common faith" (CCC, 194)