

# Introduction to *Christian Initiation of Children*

## WELCOME

While the catechumenate is ideally a year-round process, the reality is the process in many parishes is a fall to spring cycle. In recognition of this fact, CTL begins each year in the fall, and includes year-round sessions at all levels.

*The Church*, “In the course of the year . . . unfolds the whole mystery of Christ from his incarnation and nativity through his ascension, to Pentecost and the expectation of the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord” (Sacrosanctum Concilium 102 § 2; CCC 1194).

*Christian Initiation of Children* offers a doctrinally-sound focus on the Lectionary readings in order to prepare unbaptized or uncatechized children ages 5–14 for the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Interactive reflections, engaging activities, and hands-on projects help children and young people in the catechumenate to prepare for initiation or full communion in the Catholic Church.

As part of the *Celebrating the Lectionary* series, this resource was written collaboratively by faith formation experts, Scripture scholars, liturgists, and theologians in order to assist in the formation of children and younger adolescents who are seeking initiation into the Catholic Church. Its format allows you to tailor the materials to fit your parish’s catechumenate process, handpicking activities, interactive reflections, crafts, and take-home materials to meet your individual group’s needs and interests. The sessions cover an entire year, from September to August.

Using *Christian Initiation of Children*, you will embark on a personal journey of faith as you encourage the members of your group to do the same. By helping young catechumens to prepare for the sacraments of initiation, you will come to a deeper understanding of the importance of these sacraments in the Catholic faith.

## CATECHESIS AND CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN

New this year: *Christian Initiation of Children* now includes session plans for all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation!

**Catechesis and the Catechumenate** *Christian Initiation of Children* serves the faith community’s task of helping its members to know, celebrate, and contemplate the mystery of Christ (*General Directory for Catechesis* 74). *Christian Initiation of Children* does so by blending different forms of catechesis such as the exploration of Scripture in light of the liturgy, the teaching, and Tradition of the Church; the application of the liturgy, the Scripture, and Catholic teaching to our times; and the formation of families in the context of the Catholic faith.

The catechesis in *Christian Initiation of Children* is liturgical in nature. Centered on the Lectionary readings for Sundays and Holy Days, the session plans incorporate catechesis on liturgical and sacramental actions, liturgical symbols and rites, and the liturgical year. The catechesis in *Christian Initiation of Children* helps form children and young people in the Catholic faith and encourages them to continue on the path of conversion to Christ through both prayer and catechesis.

Children, youth, and adults who seek initiation into the Catholic Church are all part of the catechumenate process. In some parishes, participants in the catechumenate process are divided according to age. This division allows catechumenate catechesis to take place in an age-appropriate manner. The sessions provided in *Christian Initiation of Children* are intended to be used as catechumenate sessions. Since the sessions are based on the liturgy, Lectionary readings, and the related doctrinal connections and are year-long, the catechesis offered in the sessions is suitable catechesis for the period of the catechumenate. (See *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* 75, no. 1.) The pedagogy used in the sessions allows for emphasis on both the personal conversion of the children and their formation in the doctrine, teaching, and traditions of the Church, thus fulfilling the requirements for their initiation according to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (see paragraph 253, in the section “Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age”).

Moreover, if children who are neophytes are included in your parish’s faith formation program, the session plans during the Easter season can also serve as mystagogical catechesis for those children and young people who were initiated at the Easter Vigil. The sessions provide an opportunity for the children and young adolescents to delve more deeply into the Paschal Mystery and integrate it into their lives through reflection on the Lectionary readings, Church teaching, and participation in service and justice (see *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* 244).

**Dismissal Catechesis** At the end of the Introduction to *Christian Initiation of Children*, you will find bilingual (Spanish/English) Catechumenate Dismissal Questions for each Sunday and Holy Day. These questions can be used by dismissal catechists who lead the catechumens in discussing the Lectionary readings they heard proclaimed in the Liturgy of the Word after they are dismissed from the liturgical assembly. The questions are specific to the catechumenate experience and related to the readings of the particular Sunday or Holy Day. The Catechumenate Dismissal Questions and the related session plans are written so that the dismissal catechesis and the lengthier catechumenate session can take place on the same day or on different days.

### **FAITH DEVELOPMENT AND CHILDREN WHO ARE CATECHUMENS**

Children and young adolescents who are catechumens often come to the Church seeking initiation because of the initiative of their parents or guardians. Occasionally, children or young adolescents will come on their own accord, but with permission to do so from their parents or guardians. The formation they receive ought to be tailored to meet their spiritual, cognitive, and emotional stage in life and must recognize that they still rely on their parents or guardians for their basic needs. (See RCIA 252.)

In many cases, as the director of the process for the Christian initiation of children, you will be working with a wide age range of children and young people, so a basic understanding of faith development across the ages will be helpful.

**Children 5–8** Children ages 5–8 love to hear stories; at the latter end of this age bracket, most children enjoy reading stories as well. Children at this age love to ask questions. They are children of discovery— inquisitive about all life has to offer and curious about themselves, others, and God. As they learn about God and hear stories from Scripture, they are prone to take them as literal and historical truth.

**Children 9–11** The faith of children ages 9–11 is characterized by their awareness of themselves and the world around them. As the children mature, they begin to see and understand the interrelationship of people. Mentors and adults in positions of authority become role models for them. Children this age often take on the values of people they respect. Scripture passages and Church teachings help these children to discern right from wrong as they begin to appreciate the consequences of their choices and learn what it means to live as Catholics.

**Adolescents 12–14** The faith of adolescents ages 12–14 is characterized by their need to be part of a group. In making decisions about what to believe, who to follow, and what to do in and out of school, adolescents greatly desire to feel a sense of belonging. Peer pressure often pulls them in many directions, and their actions begin to be influenced much more by their friends than by their families or teachers. If their friends enjoy participating in Church and faith formation activities, they will, too! While God is transcendent and mysterious to them, their relationship with God is shaped by their peer relationships and the relationships they have with those in authority, including parents, teachers, clergy, and other Church personnel. At this time in their life, adolescents seek guidance from their faith in dealing with issues that arise in their school and family. A more developed sense of reason also leads them to ask questions about their faith, especially if they might be learning about it in a formal setting, such as the catechumenate process, for the first time.

**Christian Initiation of Children and Multiple Ages** The session plans in *Christian Initiation of Children* offer activities and interactive reflections for children and young adolescents. Adapt the background on the Lectionary readings and the focus on Church Teaching to suit the needs and cognitive abilities of your group. At times, consider dividing the group according to ages and have adult volunteers lead age-appropriate discussions with the different groups. If the older children or adolescents in your group seem uninterested in an activity, invite them to assist the younger children. Alternatively, involve them in the Opening and Closing Prayers for the session. Whatever your situation, be aware of the need to constantly adapt the catechumenate sessions to the needs of your group. Talk with the members of your group and their parents to see how the sessions are going for them. Be flexible in meeting their desires, but also follow the guidelines offered in the *Rite of Christian Initiation*

of Adults, especially the introduction to the section on the Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age (paragraphs 252–259).

### FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND THE CATECHUMENATE

Find Family Sharing sheets at the end of the Introduction. This year the Family Sharing sheets are bilingual!

When children and adolescents are involved in the catechumenate, family participation should be a high priority. Since parental permission is needed for children to be initiated, the Church desires that they receive as much assistance as possible from their parents. The example of parents is of great importance in teaching children how to live a Christian life. Nothing can substitute for consistency in the life of a child. Children will know when what they hear and learn in church and in the catechumenate sessions is different from their lived experience at home. As a leader in the catechumenate process for children, consider involving parents and guardians from the start. Have them participate in the sessions alongside their children. Faith sharing among family members might be difficult at first, but the rewards of deeper family relationships outweigh the struggles to get started.

Use the Family Sharing sheets provided in *Christian Initiation of Children*. Simple family sharing, reflection, and prayer suggestions are given. A brief paragraph describing how families can practice justice and mercy also appears on the sheet. Send them home with participants at the end the session each week. Consistently remind the families to set aside a few minutes each week to follow through on one of the faith sharing suggestions and to decide how to engage in the practice of justice and mercy. Check back at the beginning of the next week's session to see how the families did.

### THE INITIATION MINISTRY TEAM

The work you do with the Christian initiation of children you do not do by yourself. Many people are a part of the catechumenate process in your parish. Working together as a team helps provide the best experience of the catechumenate process for all involved.

**Parents and Guardians** Children can be catechumens only with their parents' support and participation. Parents are the primary catechists of their children's initiation. The initiation process affirms and nurtures that role, providing guidance according to the needs of the parents.

**Bishop** The bishop is responsible for overseeing the formation of catechumens. He also presides over the Rite of Election ordinarily held on the First Sunday of Lent. This rite is optional for children (RCIA 277), but it is an important step marking their entrance into the immediate period of preparation prior to the celebration of the sacraments of initiation. As Elect, they have been chosen for the Easter sacraments. The Rite of Election teaches them that their particular parish is connected to the universal Church. For more on the role of the bishop in the catechumenate, see RCIA 12.

**Priests** Priests celebrate the sacraments of initiation and are tasked with the adaptation and celebration of the rites within the initiation process. They are also to be mindful of the pastoral care needed by the catechumens and to participate in their instruction in the faith. Priests approve the choice of godparents and are to be available to assist them in their role (RCIA 13–14).

**Deacons** Deacons are to be available to assist in the catechumenal ministry. If pastoral need dictates, they are to assist in the ritual steps and the catechesis of the different periods of the catechumenate process (RCIA 15).

**The Parish Community** The entire parish community is vital for Christian initiation. The rites, which mark steps along the journey toward initiation, ordinarily happen within the Sunday liturgy. In the process of forming new members, the parish community passes on the Catholic faith to those who are preparing to participate fully in the life of the Church. The initiation process, then, is about revitalizing and sustaining the community, as well as individual conversion (RCIA 9).

**Adult Catechumens** Adult catechumens are on a journey with the children, but in a different group setting. Together, the adults and children journeying toward full initiation are members of the

catechumenate. Ongoing coordination between the adults and the children who are in the catechumenate is essential in order that the parish community understands the unity of the initiation process.

**Sponsors** A sponsor is the individual “catechist” for each child catechumen, an adult mentor in the faith. Every child catechumen has an adult sponsor who is to be available on a regular basis. Introduce the children to adults who will spend time with them, befriend them, listen to them, and, when the time comes, help them speak their wishes to the Church. If necessary, this person may also take the place of the parents during the rites of initiation (RCIA 265). The sponsor who witnesses to the child’s readiness to be accepted into the Order of Catechumens may or may not be the same person who serves as a godparent for the period of Purification and Enlightenment and the celebration of the sacraments of initiation (RCIA 10). For more information on sponsors, including guidelines for sponsors, order Ron Lewinski’s *Guide for Sponsors* from LTP at 800-933-1800 or [www.LTP.org](http://www.LTP.org).

**Godparents** Godparents accompany the children at Baptism. Godparents are present at the Rite of Election, the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, and during the time of postbaptismal catechesis. They are to witness to the Gospel so that the neophyte is able to turn to them for guidance in his or her spiritual life (RCIA 11). For more information on Godparents and the requirements for being a godparent, order Paul Turner’s, *Your Child’s Baptism* from LTP at 800-933-1800 or [www.LTP.org](http://www.LTP.org).

**Child Mentors** Child mentors form a “group of companions” (RCIA 254 and 265). They are children of the same age or slightly older who welcome, support, and journey with the children who are in the catechumenate.

**Catechists** Catechesis with child catechumens focuses on conversion. It invites the children deeper into the mystery of God and the forgiveness taught by Jesus. While doctrine is taught, the catechumenate is also meant to show families how formation in the faith continues at every stage in life. Once they have celebrated the sacraments of initiation, it is important that the children, along with their parents, participate in whole-community faith formation. The catechist is the leader of catechumenate catechesis. Throughout the process of leading catechumenate sessions, the catechist will grow in his or her faith along with the children.

### PRAYER AND CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN

For children and adults of all ages, prayer involves the raising of the mind and heart to God. Prayers can be offered in praise of God, in petition to God, in thanksgiving, and in intercession for others. Prayers are either private or public. When the members of your group pray at the beginning and end of each session, it is a form of public prayer. Plan to make these times consistent. Your group members will then look forward to them as part of the session routine, but different from the teaching time and the activity time.

During the prayer at the beginning and end of each session, you are much more a prayer leader than a catechist. At these times, you will not be conveying knowledge, but will be evoking a sense of the presence of God in and around them. To do this effectively, let go of the details of the session to come or the session just completed and center yourself in God as you prepare to lead the prayer. This will enable you to be a channel for God’s grace. Through your example, the children themselves will learn to center themselves in God.

Each session plan in *Christian Initiation of Children* includes a Gathering Prayer and Closing Prayer. These prayers are adapted from the Gathering Prayer and Closing Prayer in the Prayer Services found in the *Program Guide*. The wording of the prayers in the session plan is simply a guide. Use the prayers as given or adapt them to better meet the needs of the children in your group. If you choose not to use the prayers provided, you might simply use the Sign of the Cross and a shorter spontaneous prayer as you open and close your session. Though a session might often seem rushed at the end because time is running out, you will want to refocus your group members at least for a brief moment

in order to conclude with prayer. Use the Closing Prayer as given or ask the children and young adolescents to contribute their own prayers based on the session's focus. No matter the prayer you choose, always remember the goal of prayer is to deepen your group members' relationship with God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### MUSIC AND CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN

Music plays an important role in good liturgical celebrations. Music evokes a sense of the transcendent God in both children and adults. The words of hymns and songs give voice to what we believe and help draw us closer to God the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Melodies combine with words to bring us in touch with our thoughts and feelings about God, others, ourselves, and the world around us.

The liturgical music suggestions in *Christian Initiation of Children* are appropriate for children and young adolescents in the catechumenate. They were chosen to introduce the participants in the catechumenate process to liturgical music, both traditional and contemporary, that is sound liturgically, musically, and pastorally. The suggested hymns and songs are sung in many parishes and Catholic schools, and are available from major liturgical music publishers.

*Christian Initiation of Children* gives four liturgical music suggestions for each session, two for the gathering and two for the closing. As the leader of the session, you have a number of options for the use of music. You might choose one song for the beginning of the session and one for the closing. Or, since children are comfortable with repetition, you might choose the same song for both. Prior to a particular season of the liturgical year, you might plan the music you will use and decide on two or three songs that you will use throughout the season. Doing so will help your group members connect with and attribute meaning to the season.

If you or an assistant is able to lead the music, that is ideal. Live leadership of hymns and songs in catechumenate sessions mirrors good liturgical practice in the Sunday assembly. Another option would be to see if any of the parents of members of your group is a cantor or belongs to a parish choir and then ask him or her to lead the music for the session. When it is not an option to have the music led "live" in person, check with your director of faith formation or liturgical music to see if a CD of the music is available. You might also check iTunes to see if the suggested music is downloadable. If the suggested music is not sung in your parish or school community, you might check with the director of liturgy or liturgical music for other appropriate choices.

You will also want to coordinate closely with the director of liturgy and liturgical music to find out what music will be used for the celebration of the various rites. Using some of the music sung during the rites in your sessions, especially those sessions immediately following the rites, can enhance the experience of the rites and the reflection on them after they have been celebrated.

### USING CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN EFFECTIVELY

The Scope and Sequence chart is available in the *Program Guide* and online at [www.LTP.org](http://www.LTP.org). Ask your director of faith formation for a copy or download one from the Web site.

**Before the Session** In preparation for each session, you will want to read through the following:

- *Scope and Sequence*: The Scope and Sequence chart gives the date, liturgical day, theme, focus passage(s), focus statement, and the doctrinal points of each session. Take special note of the focus and theme and reflect on how they tie into the overall direction of the season.
- *Season Background*: The Season Background provides in-depth information on the seasons of the liturgical year, solemnities, and feasts, as well as an overview of the seasonal Scripture readings. This information will give you historical and critical background to rely on as you lead your sessions.
- All of the Scripture readings for the Sunday or Holy Day liturgy.

See the end of the Introduction for a concise list of the documents and their abbreviations.



- *Scripture Background:* The Scripture Backgrounds contain commentaries on all the readings, and, when appropriate, make explicit the connection to the day's theme. They offer a sidebar with doctrinal connections to the readings. These connections come from *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and other Church documents. One or more of these doctrinal references inform each session.

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Once you have read all of the preliminary materials, plan for your session. Read through the week's Preparation Page, Session Plan, Catechist Sheets, and Activity Sheets. While reading through these resources, do the following:

- Reflect on the meaning of the focus in relation to the overall trajectory of the season.
- Review the Session Plan and decide how you are going to tailor it to your group. Select the activities that you will be using, and make notes in the margins of other resources such as the Church documents that you plan on using or information that you plan on mentioning, such as information from the Scripture Background.
- Read the Preparation Page for information on what you need to do before the session. Any items that you may need to bring with you are printed in bold. Pay careful attention to the materials you will need for the activities you have selected to do.
- Use the Materials Needed space in the margin to make a list of everything that you need to bring with you to the session. You may want to cross or check off items as you put them in your car or bag so that you are sure that you have everything.

A sample pack of Color Activity Sheets is provided with *Christian Initiation of Children*. This year the Color Activity Sheets provide a fun, exciting way to experience and learn about the Apostles' Creed, the Our Father, and the seasons of Advent and Christmas. Order copies for all the children in your group online at [www.LTP.org](http://www.LTP.org). Beautifully designed Color Posters for the Our Father and the Apostles' Creed coordinate with the activity sheets for these prayers.

**During the Session** Use the Session Plan to lead the following activities:

- *Gathering:* As the children begin to arrive, direct their energy toward a group conversation or helping you with simple classroom tasks. Have each child find his or her nametag. Once everyone has arrived, focus attention by taking attendance, celebrating birthdays, and leading the Opening Prayer ritual. Begin the prayer with the Sign of the Cross. Then, use the prayer text as a guide for the Opening Prayer.
- *Introducing the Word:* These activities prepare the children to listen to the Scripture reading by helping them to focus on ways in which it relates to their lives.

- *Exploring the Word:* By reading the focus Scripture reading from the Lectionary or Lectionary for Masses with Children or using the Catechist Sheet provided, introduce the group members to the focus reading in a way that is interactive and interesting to them. Pay particular attention to the Church Teaching section, which includes an explanation of the focus doctrinal connection for the session. We encourage you to put this in your own words and not simply read it to the children. Use the interactive reflection questions or activities to help the children and young adolescents better understand the Church Teaching.
- *Integrating the Word:* During this part of the session, you will use creative and engaging activities, games, and guided reflections to reinforce the Scriptural message and focus of the session.
- *Closing:* End each session with a brief, quiet moment of reflection in which you pray to God and thank him for your time together. Use the text for the Closing Prayer as a guide for your own prayer.

**After the Session** Use the following tools to help yourself and members in your group to live what they have learned and experienced throughout the week to come:

- You may elect to send some worksheets, activities, or completed crafts home with the children, explaining to their parents that they are to be used as a reminder to keep the focus Scripture reading in mind all week long. Remember to distribute the bilingual Family Sharing sheets.
- You might occasionally ask the children at the beginning of the next session what they did during the previous week to live as Jesus taught us based on the focus from your last session.
- Use the After-Session Reflection Questions to guide your own spiritual journey and behavior. The first after-session reflection question is intended to help you evaluate the session and your experience of how it went. The second after-session reflection question is meant to assist you in reflection on your own faith journey as you continue to serve as a faith formation leader with the children.
- Reflect on both what seemed to be readily understood by the children and what engaged the children in interesting and exciting ways. Ask yourself also what seemed to be difficult for them to understand or boring for them. Use your conclusions to inform your plans for the next session. Go to other catechists or your director with any questions.

### PRACTICAL TIPS FOR YOUR SESSION

- *Setting Up Your Space:* Arrive at least 30 minutes early in order to set up your room. Set out nametags and all prepared materials. Arrange the furniture how you need it. Bring materials to cover desks and tables if you are doing a messy activity. If you use a “borrowed” classroom or other parish or school space, be sure to clean up after yourself, erase blackboards or markerboards, and return all of the furniture to its original position.
- *Creating a Prayer Center:* Set aside a space for a prayer center. See the weekly Preparation Page for seasonal ideas. Cover a small table, sturdy box, or counter with a cloth of the liturgical color for the season (as indicated on the Preparation Page). Add a Bible or Lectionary, candle, and crucifix or cross. Depending on the time during the liturgical year and the content of the session, add a symbol of creation or a liturgical symbol, such as flowers, harvest foods, a Rosary, an Advent wreath, or a saint statue. Have matches or a candle lighter handy. Instill in the children the importance of this small ritual, as it will show them the importance of ritual in establishing our Catholic identity and help them make a connection between the faith formation session and the Sunday or Holy Day liturgy.
- *Welcoming the Group Members:* Your session starts as soon as the first child arrives. Welcome the children by name and help them to find their nametags. Engage the children as they arrive by providing crayons and paper, asking pre-session reflective questions, or encouraging the children

to help you serve the group by setting up the prayer center or distributing materials. You might want to have some soft music playing in the background as children arrive.

- *Parent and Volunteer Involvement:* Involving parents and volunteers in your group will be a tremendous benefit for everyone involved. If you feel that you could use an extra set of hands during your sessions, solicit some help (parents, youths preparing for Confirmation, and elders are good people to ask). Before soliciting volunteers, however, be sure to check with the director about parish and diocese requirements for volunteers who work with children.
- *Family Considerations:* Learn about your group members' families and be sensitive to differences of ethnicity and race, socioeconomic background, language, religions practiced by other family members, and nationality. Be considerate of single-parent families and familial issues or concerns such as illness or death that may be occurring. Teach the children and young adolescents how their faith can help them through times of sadness and how, as members of a community of faith, we can offer encouragement and support to one another in happy and sad times.
- *Adapting for Special Needs:* If you have a child with special needs, take time to learn about the situation from his or her parents or guardian. Be cooperative and understanding as you work as a team with them and your director. When preparing your sessions, adapt activities to include the special needs child or children without overly drawing undue attention to them. You may need to leave space for wheelchair access, or make a quiet space with activities or toys for a child who cannot remain seated. In some cases, you may want to explain a child's special needs to the rest of the group, and tell them how they can help. Be sensitive about redirecting any comments, stares, or gestures that might make the special needs child uncomfortable. Remind your class that God makes each person with special talents and needs and loves everyone equally.
- *Establishing Consistency:* A consistent routine helps children to know what is expected of them and stay focused and on task. Establish routines with your class that are repeated each week. Be sure to write down your routines in case you ever need to use a substitute catechist.
- *Discipline:* The words "disciple" and "discipline" come from the same Latin root, *discere*, which means "to learn." Keep this in mind as you work with your group—discipline should always be instructive rather than punitive. Always let children know that it is the action, not the child, that is unacceptable, and explain what the right course of action might have been in the situation. Follow your parish or school discipline policy if the action requires a more formal punishment. Communicate ongoing problems verbally and in writing to the director of the program.
- *Affirmation:* All persons, especially children, desire encouragement and support when they do something well. Offer a positive word when a child responds to a question with an insightful comment or correct answer. Be generous with your compliments as the children work on craft projects and cooperatively participate in activities.

### KEEPING GOD'S CHILDREN SAFE

As adults who work with children and care for their spiritual, emotional, and physical needs for the time in which they are with us, we are morally obligated to provide a safe and nurturing environment for them. As a catechist or assistant who leads the sessions given in *Christian Initiation of Children*, it is necessary for you to participate in the training required by your diocese and to cooperate with the mandated background screenings before you undertake your ministry. If you recruit other parents or adult volunteers to help with particular sessions, check with your director of faith formation or school principal regarding the conditions under which they might work with the children. Doing so helps ensure the sessions run smoothly and, most importantly, that God's children can develop their relationship with Christ in a safe environment.

### LIVING THE LITURGY TOGETHER

You may feel some anxiety as you prepare to lead or assist in your first session. You may ask yourself: Do I know enough about my religion to share it with others? Do my sins or shortcomings make me unqualified to perform this ministry? Many lay people who serve the Church ask themselves these questions. Remember that Jesus taught us that anyone who does good works in his name is serving as his disciple (Mark 9:38–43, 45, 47–48). By virtue of our Baptism, we are called to embrace our service in the Church according to the gifts and talents God has given us. Love and serve the Lord in your ministry with the children and adolescents in the catechumenate without feeling you need to be perfect in all you say and do. Just as you grow in your relationship with God each and every day, so can you build upon your successes and learn from your failures in the sessions.

As you approach the task ahead, remember that you are not alone. Among the many resources available to you are other initiation team members, other faith formation catechists, the director of faith formation, members of the clergy, fellow parish members, and your friends and family. Rely on these people to help you to explore your faith, serve the children in your group, and brainstorm session activities. You may want to invite the other catechists to set aside a time before each session to meet briefly to share challenges and successes and to pray as a group.

By taking on this ministry, you are embarking on a journey of faith along with the group that you will be leading. This is a tremendous opportunity for you to actively explore your beliefs and celebrate Catholic traditions as you take on the role of a faith formation guide using Jesus Christ as your model. By attending Sunday Mass, praying the liturgy, actively participating in it, absorbing the depths of its meaning, and then approaching each day with a prayerful mindset, you will be given the opportunity to truly live your faith more deeply. You will be a true model in faith for those seeking to be joined to Christ through Baptism and incorporated into God's people, the Church so as to carry out his mission in the world!

We at Liturgy Training Publications invite you to share your successes and concerns with us. We welcome your feedback on *Christian Initiation of Children* and hope that you will take the time to help us make this resource even better. Please email us at [ctl@ltp.org](mailto:ctl@ltp.org).

**Doctrinal Connections Key** The following is a list of documents that are referenced in the connections to Church teaching and tradition section on the Scripture Background pages. A Scripture Background page appears before each session in *God with Us*. Full texts of the following documents can be found in *Vatican Council II, The Basic Sixteen Documents* (Flannery, ed.), on the Vatican Web site ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)), on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Web site ([www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)), or online by typing the English or Latin title into a search engine.

AA: Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.

AG: Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*.

BLS: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, *Built of Living Stones*.

CGTM: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*.

CCR: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, *Called to Compassion and Responsibility*.

CCC: Interdicasterial Commission for the Catechism of the Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

CL: Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*.

CKS: United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, *The Church as Koinonia of Salvation: Its Structures and Ministries*.

CSDC: Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church*.

CU: Synod of Bishops, *Convenientes ex Universo*.

DCE: Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*.

DH: Second Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae*.

DPPL: Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy*.

DM: Pope John Paul II, *Dives et Misericordia*.

DV: Pope John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*.

EM: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, Encuentro and Mission.  
EN: Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi.  
GS: Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes.  
GMD: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, Go Make Disciples.  
JPSS: Pontifical Biblical Commission, The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible.  
LG: Second Vatican Council, Lumen Gentium.  
MC: Pope Paul VI, Marialis Cultus.  
NDC: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, National Directory for Catechesis.  
NA: Second Vatican Council, Nostra Aetate.  
NMI: Pope John Paul II, Novo Millennio Inuente.  
OHWB: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Our Hearts Were Burning.  
RP: Pope John Paul II, Reconciliatio et Paenitentia.  
RH: Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Hominis.  
RM: Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Mater.  
RMi: Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio.  
RCIA: Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.  
SCST: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Sharing Catholic Social Teaching.  
SRS: Pope John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis.  
SS: Pope Benedict XVI, Spe Salvi.  
SNL: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Strangers No Longer.  
TMA: Pope John Paul II, Tertio Millennio Adveniente.  
EE: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, To the Ends of the Earth.  
USCCA: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Catechism for Adults.  
UUS: Pope John Paul II, Ut Unum Sint.  
VS: Pope John Paul II, Veritatis Splendor.  
No abbreviation: Pope John Paul II, Day of Pardon Homily.  
No abbreviation: Pope Paul VI, Message for the 1976 World Day of Peace.

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