

Catechist Formation Session 1

Introducing the Faith Formation Year and Ordinary Time in Fall

OBJECTIVES

- To prepare ourselves, both individually and as a group, for the year of faith formation.
- To explore who the learners are who come to us to grow in faith.
- To learn or recall the characteristics of faith development unique to different ages.
- To explore the period of Ordinary Time in fall and its corresponding faith formation sessions.

Note: The preparation page includes materials needed for the introduction to faith formation and Celebrating the Lectionary section, as well as the section on Ordinary Time in fall and can be used to prepare for these sessions regardless of whether they are one continuous session or two separate sessions held at different times.

BEFORE THE SESSION

- Distribute the **age-appropriate resources** to the catechists prior to the session. Request that the catechists preview the material beforehand. Remind them to bring their questions or concerns to the session.
- Plan to have appropriate **refreshments** available for the time of day in which the session is being held.
- Have **nametags** prepared ahead of time, or have **blank nametags** and **markers** available.
- Arrange the tables and chairs according to the number of catechists in each age group or group multiple ages together, depending on the number of catechists expected. Have **signs** on the tables to help the catechists find their age-level group.

GATHERING

- Prepare a prayer space with a **green cloth, candle, cross or crucifix, fall flowers**, or other environment suitable for Ordinary Time in fall. Prominently display the Lectionary or Bible. Have matches or a candle lighter nearby.
- Prepare a computer or overhead projector to display the objectives of the session.
- Ask a **volunteer** to prepare to proclaim the Scripture reading for the Opening Prayer.

INTRODUCING THE SEASON

- Bring **newsprint** and **markers**.
- For *Introducing Ordinary Time in Fall*, bring a copy of the **Year of Grace Liturgical Calendar** (notebook size) for each participant. These can be ordered from Liturgy Training Publications at www.LTP.org.

EXPLORING THE SEASON

- Bring copies of the **Activity Sheet “Faith Formation and Faith Development”** and **pens or pencils** for each participant.

INTEGRATING THE SEASON

- Bring copies of the **Activity Sheet “Faith Formation during Ordinary Time in Fall”** and **pens or pencils** for each participant.

CLOSING

- Ask a **volunteer** to prepare to proclaim Psalm 149:7–10 during the Closing Prayer.

MUSIC

- Bring **hymnals** or prepare **worship aids** with the suggested music. *Option:* Invite **liturgical musicians** to lead the group in song.

SESSION PLAN for Catechist Formation Session 1

GATHERING

As catechists arrive, warmly welcome them and show them where to get their nametags and handouts. Show them where the refreshment table is and where they are to sit.

Introduce yourself and give any practical instructions about the setting that may be needed. Since this is the first gathering, have each person stand and introduce himself or herself and tell the group what age group they will be working with. You might ask them to say a few words about why they chose to become involved in the ministry of faith formation. As the session leader, make sure that you introduce yourself also!

Explain the purpose and objectives of the gathering (listed below) in your own words. You may choose to display them as you speak.

- **To prepare ourselves, both individually and as a group, for the year of faith formation.**
- **To explore who the learners are who come to us to grow in faith.**
- **To learn or recall the characteristics of faith development unique to different ages.**
- **To explore the period of Ordinary Time in fall and its corresponding faith formation sessions.**

Opening Prayer Focus the group's attention by noting that we begin, as we always do, in prayer, asking for God's blessing on our gathering. After all are quiet for a few minutes, lead the following prayer:

**God in heaven,
you sent your only Son, Jesus Christ
to be with us in this world for a lifetime.
Now he is present to us in the Holy Spirit
and present to us in one another.
Let us reverence him during this time together
as we open our ears and hearts to one another.
Let us listen closely in the silence as you speak to us.
Make us willing sharers of our thoughts and reflections
as we prepare to serve your people
during Ordinary Time in fall.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
All: Amen.**

Have the volunteer proclaim Acts 2:1–5.

After a few moments of reflection, continue. Begin with the following petitions (or others that you have prepared), and then invite anyone who wishes to offer a prayer of petition to do so. Invite everyone to respond to the prayers with "Lord, send us your Spirit."

Make us your humble servants, we pray . . .

Teach us how to be bearers of the Good News, we pray . . .

When all who want to have offered their petition, say the following or similar words:

**Gracious God,
we bring these prayers and all of our prayers
to you through Jesus Christ your Son
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever. Amen.**

INTRODUCING CTL

As an opening exercise, invite the catechists to brainstorm at their table or together as a large group what it means to "celebrate the Lectionary." If you do this in small groups, have the group select a reporter to communicate the group's ideas to the large group. Whether you do this in small groups or in the large group, write down the ideas on newsprint for all to see and to come back to at the end

of the session. *Note:* Be aware that some catechists may not be familiar with the Lectionary and you will need to explain to them that the Lectionary is the ritual book that contains the Sunday readings which are taken from the Bible.

EXPLORING CTL

In your own words explain that two very important considerations in leading each of their classes are *who* they catechize and *what and how* they teach. We are going to spend most of our time in this session on these dimensions. We begin first by looking at the materials which contain the *what and how*. Distribute the handouts “Faith Formation and Faith Development.”

The “What” and “How” of Faith Formation

1. Using a sample session from one of the resources, walk through each part of the session with them.

- Look at a typical Session Preparation page and Session Plan (Gathering, Introducing the Word, Exploring the Word, Integrating the Word, and Closing). Note that the Preparation page lists all the materials required for each component and activity included in the Session Plan. Point out the space for them to write down any additional notes or materials they might want to bring to the session.
- Go through the purpose of each section of the Session Plan, noting that all sessions begin and end in prayer, but that they are free to adapt the prayers as necessary for their age-level. Point out the music options and discuss with them whether you have chosen the music for them to use or whether they have the option to choose from the suggestions given.
- Specifically refer to the focus reading and focus statement for the session and mention how the Church teaching and all the activities are geared to deepen their age group’s understanding of them. Each session builds toward helping the children, youth, and adults integrate the scripture reading and Church teaching in their own lives.

2. Invite the catechists to peruse their materials slowly. Have them note any questions that arise as they do so. This is an important part of helping people feel comfortable and confident, even if they have been in this role before.

- If there are experienced catechists in the group, ask them to talk about helpful things they’ve discovered that have led to a more effective use of the Session Plans.

3. Invite the catechists to read through a typical session plan from their age-appropriate resource and share what they think will be interesting, fun, or challenging about it. *Notes:* Be sure to get responses from catechists for different age levels. If the group is large, this step could be done within the groups at each table.

4. Take time to answer any practical questions about the time, location, materials, and dates for these sessions. If you deal with these questions at the outset, the catechists will be able to enter into their ministry more at ease.

5. Have participants complete the section under the “What” and “How” of faith formation on the Activity Sheet.

The “Who” of Faith Formation Explain that we’ll now spend some time on the other critical component of faith formation: *who* we help to grow in faith.

1. Saint Thomas Aquinas wisely said that whatever is received is received according to the *mode of the recipient*. *Mode* refers to the development level of the learner—how old they are and where they are in their moral, psychological, intellectual, and faith development. Illustrate this with your own example (perhaps something from a resource intended for young children being used ineffectively and inappropriately with a group of teenagers). To be sure, we can’t assume that everyone in our group is at the same developmental place, even among adults. Yet a general understanding of the path of growth and development helps us be more successful in reaching those we form in faith.

- If you look at an infant and look away for a few months, you are dramatically aware of its growth and development. Parents look at their teenagers and marvel that yesterday the

child was in preschool. Physical growth and development happen before our eyes. Social and intellectual development is not as immediately apparent. Yet it is certainly clear that there are also stages of this kind of growth.

- Moral development and faith development are much more subtle. We don't see them as readily and clearly. But there are indeed stages of development that we, and the children with whom we relate, go through. In all developmental processes, one stage builds on another. We do not skip over a stage.

2. Faith is a developmental journey.

- Take a minute to quietly think for yourself how you would draw a picture of who God is for you. Reflect on the questions: What role does God have in your life? How do you experience God? Allow time for the participants to use their handout to draw a picture or write it in words for themselves.
- Now, travel back in time to a much younger age and recall who God was for you then. Again, encourage the group to draw pictures or come up with descriptive words. Allow adequate time. Then ask for a few volunteers to share their contrasting present and past illustrations. Note that the difference between them is an example of how we grow and develop in faith.

3. Keeping this in mind, ask the catechists to reflect on what they know about the age groups with which they will be working.

- For *young children*, the medium is truly the message. They learn how to be loving, caring, and reverent by being loved, cared for, and revered or respected. Effective faith formation for this age group uses many hands-on and experiential activities. A respectful and caring environment is created by the catechists.
- For *elementary age children*, the faith journey continues and develops over the course of those years. While it is always effective to teach using activities, these children can increasingly use and learn through story, music, symbols, heroic figures, and real life examples. They learn by through emotions (heart) and bodily senses as well as the intellect (mind). While they learn from printed materials, they also learn from personal interaction, especially with their peers.
- *Adolescents* will challenge what they are taught in faith formation just as they do in other areas of their lives. This is a healthy sign of the process of integrating and internalizing what they believe, rather than simply blindly accepting it as they did as young children. Their faith formation leaders need to stay respectful of them, especially when they challenge what is taught. Engaging them in ways that appeal to their age is critical to walking with them on their faith journey.

Allow time for participants to respond to the questions about the "Who" of faith formation on their handout and to share their responses with the catechists of the same age group.

As Catholics we use the gifts of prayer, Scripture, the liturgy, the sacraments, and Church teaching as integral and essential components of faith development. We are blessed with a rich treasure chest of rituals to engage us at a deeply human level. We walk the journey of faith as a community.

It is a privilege to lead and walk with others as a catechist on their faith journey. The ministry is both a gift and a challenge. At every step of the journey, the old adage from Ralph Waldo Emerson holds true: "What you are shouts so loudly in my ears I cannot hear what you say." In other words, who we are as a person of faith and how we treat others because we are a person of faith, may be the most important tool of faith formation we have.

Elicit reactions, comments, and questions before moving on to the next section.

INTEGRATING CTL

Point out the last two questions for the catechists to fill in on their handouts. Allow adequate time for them to think about these important questions before asking them to share their responses. Depending on the size of the group, have the participants share their responses with others at their table or in the large group.

Finally, briefly return to the list on newsprint you made during Introducing CTL. See how many of the ideas resonate with the participants based on the material discussed in the rest of the session.

At this point, allow for a 15–20 minute break if you are continuing to the next section on Ordinary Time in fall. If you intend to have two separate sessions, go ahead to the Closing Prayer.

INTRODUCING THE SEASON

Note: If this is a new session, not a continuation of what preceded, take time to welcome everyone and have everyone introduce themselves. Begin with a short, spontaneous prayer.

If this is the second half of the previous section, gather people again at their places. Explain in your own words that we will now shift to the specific liturgical season of Ordinary Time in fall and look at the sessions which will be held during this period. Distribute copies of the Year of Grace notebook-size liturgical calendar or other liturgical calendar you might be using. Using the calendar and information from the Season Background included in each resource, give an overview of the liturgical year in your own words. Point out specifically where the period of Ordinary Time in fall occurs.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that the Easter Triduum is such a tremendous source of light that it shines radiantly on the entire liturgical year (CCC 1168). On either side of this great feast, the year is transfigured by this liturgy. It becomes a year in which we can see the Lord at work in our midst through the liturgies of its Sundays and feasts. Through the liturgical year, “the various aspects of the one Paschal Mystery unfold” (CCC 1171).

Point out that, although our faith formation year begins in September, the liturgical year begins with the First Sunday of Advent, near the end of fall. Lead the catechists through the liturgical year from Advent through the Christmas season. Then move to Lent and the Easter season. After talking about the aspects of the Paschal Mystery which unfold during these seasons (for example, the Incarnation in Christmas; the temptation and Transfiguration of Jesus during Lent; his Passion, death, and Resurrection during Holy Week and Easter; and his Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit during the Easter season), mention how the season of Ordinary Time is divided into two periods which are interspersed between the high liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas and Lent and Easter.

Take time to let the participants ask questions. Then, invite each person to tell something new they learned about the liturgical year, something they were glad to be reminded of, or something about their favorite liturgical season.

EXPLORING THE SEASON

Using your own words, communicate the following:

Catechesis is about learning to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Since the liturgical year traces his life and reviews his teachings, what better faith formation tool and template than the sacred scriptures contained in the Lectionary and the liturgies of the holy seasons to lead us through the process of deepening our understanding of and appreciation for our faith. Because we ourselves grow and change and mature, this model is always appropriate. No matter how old we are or how many years we have already walked the path as Jesus’ disciples, we never finish learning about Christ’s teachings and striving to live them in our daily life.

Next, point out the specific weeks you will be covering in the sessions for Ordinary Time in fall. Have the catechists flip through the materials as you do so and specifically note the title of the days which the sessions will cover. The sessions begin with the 23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time on September 6 and continue until the solemnity of Christ the King on November 22, which concludes both the season of Ordinary Time and this season of faith formation.

Give examples of other feasts and saints’ days that are interspersed throughout this time, for example, the solemnity of All Saints on November 1. Use the Year of Grace calendar or the liturgical calendar provided in the Season Background for Ordinary Time in fall to do so.

Allow time for questions and comments. Encourage the participants to talk about their own experience of the liturgical year and the Sunday readings by using questions such as: What helps them remain mindful of the liturgical season we are in? What helps them truly hear the scriptures and internalize their meaning for their lives?

INTEGRATING THE SEASON

This will be a time to explore the specific Session Plans for the season. If they are seated with other catechists of the same age level, have each person peruse a different session in this section and choose something they particularly appreciate in the session to share with each other.

If they are seated with catechists of other levels, have them look through their own materials and explain to each other why they think a particular session or part of a session is especially appropriate for that age level. Encourage them to contrast the different ways the Lectionary readings and Church teaching are presented. Since the upper end of one age group and the lower end of another will have some overlap, catechists might glean ideas from each other that can readily be adapted for their own use. Allow adequate time for this.

Distribute the Activity Sheet “Faith Formation during Ordinary Time in Fall,” explain its task, and ask for quiet while everyone fills it out. When you sense most people are finished, move on to the closing ritual and prayer.

CLOSING

Invite everyone to stand with the others at their table or, if the group is small enough, have everyone gather together around the prayer environment.

Invite the volunteer to proclaim Psalm 149:7–10, the psalm from the Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Have each person turn to the person next to them and ask, “What do you want to become part of the mind and heart of those you form in faith?” Invite the person to respond with one idea they wrote on their handout. The person who asked the question then makes a cross on the person’s mind and heart while saying: “(Name), may the Lord be in your heart and in your mind.”

After everyone has had a chance to ask the question and share a response, close in song.

Sing “Open My Eyes” (Manibusan) or “Lead Me, Lord” (Becker).



Catechist Formation Session 1: Introducing the Faith Formation Year

Faith Formation and Faith Development

Name: _____

The "What" and "How" of Faith Formation

From the discussion and looking through the faith formation resource I will use, I want to be sure to remember or return to look over more fully the following:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



The "Who" of Faith Formation

What qualities do I want to remember about the (children, youth, or adults) who will be in the sessions I lead?

What qualities do I want to embody when I am with them?



My Own Faith Development

When I was much younger God was:

For me today, God is:



My Reflections on the Upcoming Year

How I feel about doing this faith formation ministry:

How I hope I feel at the end of this year:



Catechist Formation Session 1: Ordinary Time in Fall

Faith Formation during Ordinary Time in Fall

During this liturgical season, the focus statements for the sessions are:

- To allow Jesus to open us to God, ourselves, and others.
- To put on the mind and heart of God.
- To know what truly makes one great in the eyes of God.
- To discover the sweetness of the precepts of the Lord.
- To recognize our dignity as children of God.
- To search for, know, and choose the path to God.
- To understand and embrace a life of discipleship.
- To know and follow Jesus fills us with joy.
- To understand our call to holiness.
- To rely on the Lord.
- To practice justice is to shine forever.
- To explore the truth and power of the kingdom.



Describe in your own words three of the most important teachings from the focus statements that you hope to have become part of the heart and mind of those you will form in faith and how you hope they might integrate them in their lives:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Name one (or more) goals you would set for yourself during this liturgical season:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____