

UNIT ONE: WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

LESSON 1: The Christian Family: A Domestic Church

This lesson is for students and their parents.

CONTENTS OF LESSON:

1. Recapitulation Quiz on 'I Believe in God' This year's course is entitled 'I Believe in the Holy Catholic Church' covering: who belongs to our Church family, how we celebrate our faith, how we behave.
2. The Christian family is considered a 'domestic church'. We are meant to reflect the love and unity of the Holy Trinity and to be 'islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world.' This means we live holy, God-centered lives, loving, forgiving and respecting one another and being a witness to the world. [CCC 1655,1656, 2205]
3. This is possible if we pray daily, read the Word of God and celebrate the Eucharist, seeking to live it out in our daily lives. [CCC 1657, 2205]
4. *Jesus gave us the key to building a strong and happy home through the story of the wise and foolish builders: According to Jesus, the wise man is like someone who 'comes to me', 'hears my Word' and 'acts on it'. As families, we will be able to stand up to the storms of life if we come to Him daily in prayer, read his Word and try to act on it.*



REFERENCES: Luke 6:46-49.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts, Bibles, Prayer of Consecration (*One per family. These could be mounted on card paper to make them more attractive and durable.*)

I. STARTER:

- Last year we studied a very important part of our faith, that is, 'I Believe in God'. This covered the basics of what we believe about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Before we introduce the second part, we are going to check how much you remember of what you learned. Parents can also check their own knowledge of the faith!

(Form groups of about 4 students with their parents. As the questions are read, the group discusses it and writes the answer on a slip of paper. After 30 seconds, one student stands with the slip. When the answer is announced, the groups give themselves points: 2 points for each correct answer. Each group appoints a score-keeper to keep a record of its points. The teacher adds the comments given in brackets after each answer.)

1. How many gods do we believe in? **ONE**. [There are 3 persons, but only one God.]
2. Why did God create us? **OUT OF LOVE/ TO SHARE HIS LIFE WITH US**.
3. When God created human beings he made them different. What do we have which animals do not? **A SOUL**. [That is why we are able to know and love God, which animals cannot.]
4. We call God 'father' because he gave us life and cares for us. But when did we become his children in a new and even more real way? **AT OUR BAPTISM**. [Since Jesus is the true Son of God, when we join his Body, God becomes our Father in a real way.]
5. Give one word for rejecting God, refusing to trust and obey him. **SIN**.
6. Who is a 'liar and the father of lies'? **SATAN/ THE DEVIL**. [Jesus called him this.]
7. Who is the New Adam? **JESUS**. [Adam disobeyed and brought death, Jesus obeyed and brought life.]

8. Give one word for: Accepting God and his truths, trusting and obeying him. **FAITH**. [Faith is the opposite of sin.]
 9. When Moses asked God who he was, what name did God give for himself? **YHWH/YAHWEH**.
 10. God revealed himself through creation, through the prophets etc. What was God's final Word? **JESUS**. [When we look at Jesus, we know what God is like.]
 11. Give another name for Good News. **GOSPEL**.
 12. We studied the names and titles of Jesus. Give a name which means 'anointed one' **CHRIST**.
 13. Give a name that means 'God with us' **EMMANUEL**.
 14. Give a name that means 'God saves' **JESUS**.
 15. Give one word for: God became flesh. **INCARNATION**.
 16. Jesus paid the price so as to 'buy us back' What is this called? **REDEMPTION/REDEEM**.
RANSOM is also acceptable.
 17. Death lost its power because of this. **JESUS' RESURRECTION**.
 18. Before rising from the dead, we say that Jesus went down to hell. What is this place? **THE PLACE WHERE THE DEAD DWELL**. ['Hades' or 'Sheol'. It is not the hell where the damned go. Jesus went down to set free all the just people who had died before, beginning with Adam and Eve.]
 19. We studied 8 symbols of the Holy Spirit. Which 2 symbols show that the Spirit gives life? **WATER; BREATH OF GOD**.
 20. Which 2 signs were experienced when the Spirit came on Pentecost? **FIRE & SOUND OF WIND**.
 21. How many people were baptized on that day? **ABOUT 3000**.
 22. Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete. Give one other word used instead of this word. **HELPER, COMFORTER, ADVOCATE, COMPANION**.
 23. If Jesus is the vine and we are the branches, what is the Holy Spirit? **THE SAP**. [He flows to us from Jesus, helping us to bear fruit.]
 24. We looked at 12 fruits of the Spirit. One of them covers all the rest. Which one? **LOVE**.
 25. Name the 2 important Creeds that all Catholics should know and understand. **THE APOSTLES CREED AND THE NICENE CREED**.
- (Groups add up their scores to see how they have fared. The scores need not be made public.)*

II. DEVELOPMENT:

- This year we will be studying the second part of the Creed: I Believe in the Holy Catholic Church. We will study it under 3 main heads:
 1. What is the Church (and who it consists of).
 2. How we celebrate our faith (liturgy and sacraments).
 3. How live out our faith in our daily lives (commandments).
- Today we will look at our families or the 'DOMESTIC CHURCH' as it is called. Why has the Church given Christian families this name? What is a Christian family supposed to be? We will try and answer these questions by studying quotes from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC).

[Give out the handouts, one to each participant. All the members of the group discuss the questions 1 to 6 and fill in the answers. Using their answers, bring out:]

1. The world is like a stormy sea, because of the false values and lack of faith. Money, possessions, comforts, education etc are considered more important than God. God is either forgotten, or moved to the back-ground. The media plays a big role in influencing us. *[Accept additional ideas.]*
2. Christian families who really believe are very important, because they are like an island in a sea, or light in darkness. Without a 'faith-filled' home children will be lost spiritually. They will not be able to stand up to peer pressure and the media. Believing families are important not only for ourselves, but also for the world around. The world needs us, because it needs God.
3. We are supposed to be a sign or image of the Holy Trinity's love and unity.
4. We can join in the celebration of the Eucharist and live it out in our daily lives. We learn to give of ourselves as Jesus did.
5. Daily prayer and reading the Word of God will give us the strength to love each other. It is not easy to keep forgiving and accepting each other, especially when we see faults in each other. It is not easy to overcome our selfishness, but when we are united to God through prayer and reading his Word we get strength.
6. We can be missionary by our very love and unity.
We can open our doors to others, especially those in need.
We should also be ready to speak about Christ to others and to pray with them.

III. INTERIORISATION/PRAAYER:

- All of us would like our families to be good and happy. The parable from Luke 6:46-49 gives us the key to building a strong and happy home, even in the midst of storms and challenges. Let's see if we can pick out the message Jesus has to give us.

[Groups read the passage and try to answer the question: 'WHAT IS THE KEY TO BUILDING A STRONG AND HAPPY HOME?'. After about 10 minutes bring out:]

- According to Jesus, the wise man is like someone who does 3 things. 'COMES TO ME', 'HEARS MY WORDS' and 'ACTS ON THEM'. (Verse 47)
- 'COMES TO ME': Every family needs to keep aside some time every day for family prayer. This is the first step. It is difficult, but it is necessary.
- 'HEARS MY WORDS': During our prayer it is important that we listen to God speaking. We can take a short passage from the Mass readings of the day, read it, and share what God is saying to us through it. E.g. "I feel God is asking me to trust him more."
- 'ACTS ON THEM': After hearing God speak we must try to act on it. God's Word has to change us. For example, after reading about forgiveness, each one could write a note to each other asking pardon for hurting each other.

[Someone who has a good experience of family prayer could share how their family conducts prayer. This should be BRIEF: Not more than 5 minutes.]

- Let us spend a few minutes thinking about our family prayer. Is it happening regularly? Do we really come in contact with God? Do we spend time listening to him? Simply reciting the rosary without any inner reflection is not meaningful or fruitful. If we are reciting the rosary, we could talk about the mystery and what it says to us. The scriptural rosary is also a good way to help reflection.

[In the groups parents and children could discuss and share what they would like to change or add to their family prayer. Perhaps they would simply decide to make it more regular.]

- Let us come to the Lord and consecrate our families to Him, asking him for the grace we need to become strong, believing families.

[Distribute the 'Prayer of Consecration', one per family. Families stand together and recite it. Any announcements regarding the Confirmation Course could be made now.]