

# SESSION 11: TRANSFORMATION

**TOPIC:** Acts of the Apostles/the Gospel Message

## GOAL

The goal of this session is to show the teens how the news of Jesus' death and Resurrection changed the entire world. The teens will also be reminded that the Gospel has the same transformative power in our lives today.

## KEY CONCEPTS

The Good News is not just a piece of interesting information; it is a message that the world changed through Jesus' death and Resurrection.

This new reality was proclaimed boldly by the early Church thanks to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost and on every community who converted.

The **death and Resurrection of Christ** had the final word for those who accepted the Good News. Nothing else mattered: not status, wealth, family, friends, suffering, or even death. The followers of Christ believed there was more to life in Christ.

## KEY TERMS

**Hope:** The theological virtue by which we desire and expect from God both eternal life and the grace we need to attain it.

**Kerygma:** Preaching or proclaiming, as distinct from teaching or instruction, in the Gospel of Christ.

**Martyr:** A witness to the truth of the faith, in which the martyr endures even death to be faithful to Christ.

## SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 15:17, 54-58

2 Corinthians 4:7-12

Acts 2:22-39

Acts 8:14-17

## CATECHISM

1287-1288

2471-2474

## ABOUT THIS SESSION

The Gather is a game that challenges the teens to mimic the actions of a leader. The Proclaim explains the magnitude of Jesus' death and Resurrection, as well as the Holy Spirit's descent on the apostles at Pentecost. The Break gives the teens an opportunity to develop their own

kerygma. The Send invites the teens to respond to Christ in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Build upon the environment from the previous session by hanging pictures and descriptions of saints in the form of news stories around the room.

## **MEDIA SUGGESTIONS**

“Holy Spirit,” Francesca Battistelli (*If We’re Honest*, Word Entertainment, 2014)

“Holy Spirit,” The Bible Project ([youtube.com/watch?v=oNNZO9i1Gjc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNNZO9i1Gjc))

## **GATHER**

*Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 min)*

Gather the teens in the main meeting space. Welcome them to the session and begin in prayer.

*Mirror, Mirror (10 min)*

Gather the teens in the main meeting space and have them sit in a circle. Choose one teen to be “it.” This teen leaves the room while the remaining teens determine who will be the “leader.” Once the leader has been chosen, invite the “it” teen to rejoin the group. The leader performs a series of motions that the rest of the teens copy while the “it” teen tries to determine the identity of the leader. Give the “it” teen three guesses and then reveal who the leader is. Play as many rounds as time allows, choosing new people to be it and the leader each round.

*One Solitary Life Video (5 min)*

Play the video “One Solitary Life” as a transition into the teaching.

## **PROCLAIM**

*“Transformation” Teaching (15 min)*

### **A New Day**

*Begin with a story about how one day made all the difference (e.g., you went to bed in one “reality” and woke in another). This could be the day after you were married, graduated from high school or college, or a loved one passed away. Share about how your reality was different the next day and how it felt.*

As we learned in our last session, the death and Resurrection of Jesus changed everything for the apostles. To them, Jesus was not just proposing a new philosophy. They saw Jesus — through His Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension — as inaugurating a new reality.

Everything about life had changed for the early Church. Not only had the powers of evil, sin, and death been defeated, but even earthly powers were also subject to this Christ who defeated death.

The biggest change in this reality was that Jesus' death and Resurrection had the final word. What does this mean? Throughout our day we make decisions, some big and some small. Each decision is based on different factors and situations. You may decide not to try out for your school play because the rehearsals will conflict with your baseball schedule — baseball has the final word in that decision. You may decide not to go to a party because your parents would be upset if they found out you went — your parents have the final word. You may decide not to tell your crush how you feel about them because you are afraid they may not feel the same way — fear has the final word.

The apostles and early Church show us that the Resurrection of Jesus should have the final word in every situation of our lives. This was a revolutionary idea for the early Christians. They changed everything about their lives: their relationships, their occupations, their worship, and their interactions with the world.

Saint Justin Martyr said, "We who used to value the acquisition of wealth and possessions more than anything else now bring what we have into a common fund and share it with anyone who needs it. We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies."

Saint Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Paul's whole life was for Christ. Fear of death and condemnation of sin no longer had the final word in his life. The early Christians no longer lived their lives for themselves; their decisions were no longer controlled by fear or sinful desires. Even after Jesus' death, the apostles were scared and hiding. Following His instructions, they were later gathered in Jerusalem, awaiting Jesus' promised delivery of the Holy Spirit. At this point, they had not yet gone out to the rest of the city to tell them the Good News, the Gospel. It was not until the Holy Spirit poured out upon them and gave them the grace — the gifts of the Holy Spirit — to start their mission that they went out to the nations. Through the Holy Spirit, the apostles had everything they needed to be the witnesses Jesus needed them to be.

*Acts 2:1-13; John 20:19; Philippians 1:21*

### **A New Message**

So what was the message? The Gospel of Jesus was not a new philosophy like many others were proposing at the time. It was not like stoicism, which said you will be a better, happier person through detachment from the world. It was also not hedonism, which said that the physical world is the only reality, so your only goal in life is to do things that give you pleasure. The apostles were not saying, "This is a better way to look at the world." They proclaimed that something had happened and the world was different because of it.

*Read Acts 2:22-39.*

Peter boldly proclaimed, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Jesus is the ultimate ruler of

the world, but He is also Christ. He is God, our Savior. All of the apostles' preaching centered on this fact.

*Acts 2:36*

*Consider projecting the following as you read:*

We were made by God and destined for a life with Him.

Through sin, we were alienated from God.

We were unable to reunite ourselves to God.

God sent His Son, Jesus, to Earth to save us.

Jesus died on the cross to bring us back to God.

The life changing part comes at the end: "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

*Acts 2:37-38*

## **A New Life**

This message changed the very fabric of society.

In the 200s, during the reign of Cyprian, the Roman world was devastated by plague. The pagan religions and philosophies did not believe in a meaningful afterlife nor any purpose for suffering (remember stoicism and hedonism), which led to a mass exodus out of the cities in order to avoid sickness and death. This effectively left the poor and needy to die alone. Those who could not escape would throw sick relatives out into the street (even before they had died!) in order to protect themselves. The early Church was the only source of comfort, compassion, and charity. Instead of living in fear and despair — like many of their pagan neighbors — Christians were joyful and served the poor, needy, and sick without reserve or concern for themselves. They lived this way because, for the early Church, the cross had the final word.

We see this example, too, in the lives of the martyrs.

*Share a few stories of early Church martyrs. Some suggestions include:*

- St. Stephen: The first martyr who was stoned to death while proclaiming the Gospel and forgave those who were killing him. "But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.' But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul."
- St. Ignatius of Antioch: He wrote to churches on his way to be martyred, begging them not to save him. "Permit me to imitate my suffering God... I am God's wheat and I shall

be ground by the teeth of beasts, that I may become the pure bread of Christ... I know what is to my advantage. At last I am becoming his disciple. May nothing entice me till I happily make my way to Jesus Christ! Fire, cross, struggles with wild beasts, wrenching of bones, mangling of limbs — let them come to me, provided only I make my way to Jesus Christ. I would rather die and come to Jesus Christ than be king over the entire earth. Him I seek who died for us; him I love who rose again because of us."

- St. Polycarp: "Eighty-six years have I have served him, and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior? 'I have wild animals here,' the Proconsul said. 'I will throw you to them if you do not repent.' 'Call them,' Polycarp replied. 'It is unthinkable for me to repent from what is good to turn to what is evil. I will be glad though to be changed from evil to righteousness.' 'If you despise the animals, I will have you burned.' 'You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and is then extinguished, but you know nothing of the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. Why are you waiting? Bring on whatever you want.'"
- Sts. Perpetua and Felicity: "The day of their victory dawned, and they marched from the prison to the amphitheatre joyfully as though they were going to heaven, with calm faces, trembling, if at all, with joy rather than fear. Perpetua went along with shining countenance and calm step, as the beloved of God, as a wife of Christ, putting down everyone's stare by her own intense gaze. With them also was Felicitas, glad that she had safely given birth so that now she could fight the beasts."
- St. Tarcisius: A 12-year-old acolyte during one of the fierce Roman persecutions of the third century. One day, St. Tarcisius was carrying the "Holy Mysteries" to those in prison. On the way, he was stopped by non-Christian boys and was asked to join their game. He refused and they noticed he was carrying something. Anxious to view the Christian "Mysteries," the small gang of boys turned upon him with fury. He went down under the blows, protecting the Eucharist until his last breath.

## Conclusion

Like these martyrs, we too have a choice. We can choose to live our lives trying to be "good people" who go with the flow of the world around us and avoid suffering, or we can choose to live lives of discipleship. We can choose to take up our crosses every day and follow Jesus. When we do this, we reflect God in the world. This is not a meaningless action or something that simply makes us happy. Being a disciple of Jesus and proclaiming the Gospel like the apostles did will change the world. Be who you were made to be — choose to be a disciple.

## BREAK

*Kerygma Enigma (15 min)*

Divide the teens into their small groups. Begin in prayer and then use the following to explain the activity:

*Kerygma is a Greek word that refers to the proclaiming of the Gospel, usually a short and easily understood version of the Gospel message. Saint Peter said in one of his letters that we must always be ready to give a reason for our hope. We should be able to tell someone in a simple*

*way what the news is and why it is good. Saint Irenaeus summed up the Gospel in these words: "God became man that man may become God." At this time, each of you are going to reflect on the Gospel message and craft your own kerygma.*

Give each teen a pen and a copy of the *My Kerygma* handout. Invite the teens to use the questions on the handout to craft their own kerygma. If time allows, have the teens share their kerygmas with their small group or invite a few teens to share in the large group.

## **SEND**

*Our Response (25 minutes)*

Gather the teens in the chapel or church sanctuary, or set up the main meeting space for Adoration. Use the following to transition into the prayer experience. If the teens are not familiar with Adoration, take a few moments to explain it before exposing the Blessed Sacrament.

*The apostles and early Christians were inspired and emboldened to preach the Gospel, even to the point of death, because of one thing: a personal encounter and relationship with Jesus Christ. They received the Holy Spirit, who gave them the grace to go out and change the world. We have that very same gift in the Eucharist. During this time spent adoring Christ in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, we receive grace from the Holy Spirit to go out and be disciples. But, we have to respond. When Jesus called Peter to be His disciple, Peter had to respond. When Peter received the Holy Spirit and boldly proclaimed the Gospel to the people, the people were cut to the heart and had to respond. Each of the martyrs, when confronted with death, had to respond. Today, God is calling you to respond to His invitation, to His Good News. You have an opportunity to respond to Him now, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. How will you respond?*

Invite your parish priest and music minister to lead the teens in Eucharistic Adoration. If needed, refer to the *How To Lead Adoration* handout for a how-to guide for Adoration.

## **Handout: My Kerygma**

Use the following questions to craft your kerygma.

**What struggle or problem did I face?**

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**How did Jesus help me through that struggle or problem?**

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**Who am I now because of what Jesus did for me?**

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## **Handout: How To Lead Adoration**

Gather the teens in the chapel or church sanctuary, or set up the main meeting space for Adoration. Have a Core Member working the slides with the song lyrics throughout praise and worship. For song suggestions, see the *Song Suggestions* handout.

The following are instructions for worship leaders to lead teens in praise and worship using the Temple Model:

The Temple Model follows the structure of the Jerusalem Temple. The temple can be broken down into four main parts: the outer court, inner court, holy place, and holy of holies. Worship will typically move from high praise (fast music) into deep worship (slow music) to contemplation (no music). The goal is for the worship leader to guide the teens into a state of contemplative prayer where heart speaks to heart.

### Outer Court

Scripture instructs us to “enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise.” The first step is to begin with a time of high praise and fast music. This is an expression of our excitement about coming into the presence of the Lord. After a series of high praise songs, transition into the inner court.

### Inner Court

The inner court is where we begin quieting ourselves and preparing for a deeper encounter with God. The music moves into a more moderate tempo, neither fast nor slow. We are moving toward the destination of the holy of holies (the place of contemplative prayer). But first, we enter the holy place.

### Holy Place

The holy place is where worship of God becomes authentic adoration. The music is much slower, the lyrics are simpler, the volume becomes softer, and the content of the songs speaks more to the pure adoration of God. You might repeat a chorus like, “how great is our God,” “I exalt thee,” or simply, “holy.” These lyrics speak directly to God in a way that is deep, profound, and loving. Now, the teens are ready to enter the holy of holies.

### Holy of Holies and Eucharistic Adoration

In the holy of holies, the music begins to cease. Our hearts have quieted. In the days of the Old Testament, the high priest spoke little when he entered this sacred place. Instead, he remained silent in the presence of the Lord. This was the place where God’s very presence resided. Here we give God the opportunity to speak into the quiet of our hearts as we soak in His presence.

During this phase, have your parish priest or deacon expose the Eucharist and encourage the teens to acknowledge God and rest in His presence. Allow time for silence. At the right moment, the music minister, priest, or deacon invites the teens to behold Jesus beholding them.



To conclude Eucharistic Adoration, have your parish priest or deacon give Benediction and lead the teens in the Divine Praises. Project the responses for Benediction and the words of the Divine Praises so all of the teens can participate.

Concluding Praise

End with an upbeat song or two, thanking God for His presence.

## **Handout: Song Suggestions**

Consider using the following songs that are simple, singable, and scriptural. Every song contains a citation or licensing number to help musicians find the correct music. This is similar to the Life Teen *Liturgy Planning Guide*, which equips parishes to minister to teens through the liturgy.

### **Praise and Worship Songs**

- 10,000 Reasons/Bless the Lord (Redman, Myrin) [CCLI #6016351]
- Ever Be (Strand, Greely, Wilson, Heiligenthal) [CCLI #7030065]
- Good, Good Father (Brown, Barret) [CCLI #7036612]
- Great Are You Lord (Leonard, Ingram, Jordan) [CCLI #6460220]
- I See Heaven (B. Torwalt, K. Torwalt) [CCLI #6088011]
- Shepherd (Cook) [CCLI #7003305]

### **Praise and Worship Songs for Eucharistic Adoration**

- Adoration (Maher, Aquinas) [CCLI #4729949]
- Adoro Te Devote, We Adore You (St. Thomas Aquinas, translated by Gerard Hopkins) [davidmaresmusic.com]
- Behold the Lamb of God (Maher) [CCLI #4669755]
- Memorial (Ndolo, Sooter, Maher) [CCLI #7059697]
- Miracle of Grace/Bread of Life (Stephan) [CCLI #5767814]
- Restless (Assad, Maher) [CCLI #5762008]
- Sinking Deep (King, Davies) [CCLI #6605236]
- This is Jesus (Cowan) [CCLI #2185286]
- Ubi Caritas (Hurd) [Spirit & Song II #367]