

SESSION 12: FOUNDATION

TOPIC: Why the Church?

GOAL

The goal of this session is to help the teens understand that Jesus established the Church to help us in this life. The Church, through the sacraments, gives us everything we need to get to heaven.

KEY CONCEPTS

Jesus intentionally established the Church and gave Peter special authority to govern, which he passed down to successors in order to guide and govern the Church with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

The Church has been sent to all nations with the mission of making disciples. The Church exists to evangelize.

The Church is the universal sacrament of salvation. Its purpose is to lead people to heaven.

KEY TERMS

Apostolic Mission: Just as He was sent by the Father, Jesus sent His apostles into the world to continue His own saving mission. Thus, the Church is missionary by its very nature, continuing the mission, or work of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, according to the plan of God.

Disciples: Those who accepted Jesus' message to follow Him. Jesus associated His disciples with His own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to the disciples, and gave them a share in His mission, His joy, and His sufferings.

Sacrament: An efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:14

John 13:16

John 14:18; 26

John 16:13

Matthew 16:13-20

Matthew 18:18

Matthew 28:16-20

CATECHISM

739

774

849

ABOUT THIS SESSION

~~The Gather sends the teens on a scavenger hunt around the church property with a mission to take creative group pictures using specific items or people.~~ The Proclaim introduces the Church and why Jesus established it. The Break is a small group Scripture study on a passage from the Gospel of Matthew. The Send closes the session with a prayer experience for the teens and Core Team.

ENVIRONMENT

Project a variety of images and symbols of the Church (e.g., St. Peter's Basilica, the pope, a roman collar, the interior of a beautiful church).

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

"Epic National (:60) | Catholics Come Home" (youtu.be/Z_E6Lw09z2Y)

AS YOU GET STARTED

For a shortened version of the Gather, consider assigning each group one of the hidden items rather than having each group look for all of the items.

For an alternative Send, consider encouraging the teens to reflect on their mission in the Church, specifically identifying their talents and how they can use them to build the Church and lead people to Christ. After the individual reflection, have the teens share their ideas with their small group or the large group. Close the session with a spontaneous prayer for the teens to use their talents to build the Kingdom of God.

GATHER

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 min)

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

Not doing activity to allow more time for small group

PROCLAIM

"Foundation" Teaching (15 min)

Our Journey Home

Have you ever been on a tour before, one where you needed a guide to show you the way or help you see things you may have missed on your own?

Share about a time you were on a guided tour of a historical place or a guided trip, such as a rafting trip, skydiving, guided hunt, etc.

We are on a journey to heaven, but we need help getting there, which is why we have the Church as our guide. Jesus gave us the Church because He knew that — due to our sinful

nature — we needed help to get to heaven. We need to be constantly reminded and beckoned toward Him.

The Church has a mandate to uphold — a mission that was given to her by Christ. She stands as the “universal sacrament of salvation.” We learned in our first session that a sacrament is a sign that gives grace, a sign that points to something else. The Church, as a sacrament of salvation, points to something else: heaven. The Church gives us what we need to get to heaven.

CCC 849

Who Is Jesus?

In Matthew’s Gospel, there was a moment where Jesus was speaking to His followers, asking them who they thought He was. Peter exclaimed in that moment, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Matthew 16:16

What an answer. Think about it for a moment. The Jews had been longing for a messiah. He was going to set them free from oppression and slavery. Peter confessed that Jesus was (is) the Messiah they were waiting for — Jesus is God’s Son.

The Establishment of the Church

Once Peter confesses, Jesus changes his name from Simon to Peter (Kēphas in Greek), which means “rock,” and tells him, “you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church” (ekklēsia in Greek). The Church Jesus is speaking of is the community He will gather, a community that will have Peter as its foundation — its rock. Peter becomes a witness to that community that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. He is the reminder to the Church, the guide who leads us home.

Matthew 16:18

Jesus goes on to give Peter the keys to the Kingdom of heaven, which gives the Church authority and credibility. Credibility is important if people are going to listen to the Church and follow her teachings. The keys show that Peter, the pope, is the one who has authority over the Church, the people of God. Two chapters later, Jesus echoes that authority: “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault... But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you... If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.”

Matthew 18:15-17

After establishing Peter as the foundation of the Church in John’s Gospel, Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to guide the Church in truth and remind her of all that He taught. He also promises to never leave the Church orphaned. Why is this important? So that we “may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles.”

Ephesians 4:14; John 13:16, 16:13

In other words, Jesus knew that we are not perfect. He knew there would be corruption and sin because He was entrusting the Church to broken, imperfect humans, so He put a fail safe in place: the Holy Spirit. And that Spirit, who speaks for the Father, guides the Church until Jesus returns.

That was a lot of Scripture, so let us recap before more moving on:

Jesus established a Church. He gave that Church authority. He entrusted Peter to oversee the Church. Jesus promised to never leave the Church. In His absence, and because we are not perfect, He sent the Holy Spirit to guide the Church and remind the Church of everything He taught.

John 14:18, 14:26; Matthew 16:16, 16:18-19, 18:15

This is how and why we can trust the Church.

The Mission of the Church

We mentioned that the Church has a missionary mandate: to make disciples. This mission was given at the end of the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus told the apostles to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

CCC 849; Matthew 28:19-20

How does the Church accomplish this mission, a mission that was given to her by Jesus Himself? By re-presenting Christ to the world. Remember, Peter was given his role to witness to the reality of Jesus as the Son of God. That is why we have a Church: to reveal the hidden mysteries of God, namely Jesus.

CCC 774

The most tangible way the Church makes Christ present to the world today is through the sacraments; and through the sacraments, Christ makes known His holy and sanctifying Spirit. It is through the sacraments that we, the Church, come to know the Holy Spirit, who reminds us what Jesus taught. And it is through Jesus that we have salvation.

CCC 739

What Does This Mean for You?

Let us go back to Peter’s confession. Who is Jesus to you? Think about it like this: C.S. Lewis said, “Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.”

Claiming what it claims — that Jesus is the Son of God sent to save us — Christianity is either the most important matter or the biggest hoax. There is no in between.

If it is the biggest hoax, we are simply wasting our time. The Church is not real. The Bible is not real. Jesus is not real. We can all go home.

But, if it is true, everything that we are meant to be hinges on our belief in Jesus and everything He taught — our salvation, our eternity, and our identity — are found in Jesus.

Jesus thought it was important enough to make Himself known to people 2,000 years after He died, so He established a Church to pass down who He is through the generations. He loved you enough to give you the Church so that you would know and experience His love.

The Church, as the Body of Christ, reveals Christ through the sacraments. The sacraments give us what we need to come to know Christ as the Son of God, sent to save us from death and free us from sin.

The Church helps us embrace our identity as children of God. Trust the Church. Make use of the sacraments, mainly the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. These sacraments, if you will allow them, have the power to change your sinful nature.

We cannot make this journey on our own, so Christ gave us the Church to guide us, sustain us, pick us up when we fall, and put us on the right path toward heaven. Living in the Church is not restrictive; it is true freedom.

BREAK

Small Group Bible Study (20 min)

Divide the teens into their Confirmation small groups. Begin in prayer and then invite a teen to read Matthew 16:13-20 aloud. Use the following questions to facilitate a discussion:

- What stands out to you in this passage?
- Peter confessed that Jesus was “the Son of God.” Who is Jesus to you?
- If Jesus is the Son of God, how does that change the way you live?
- At the end of the passage, Jesus instructs them to tell no one that He is the Son of God. Why do you think He does that?
- What excuses do you make to avoid telling people about Jesus?
- What is one way you can share Jesus with someone new this week?

SEND

Commissioning (15 min)

Gather the teens in the main meeting space. Introduce the prayer activity, using the following as an example:

The mission of the Church is to make disciples. Through the Sacrament of Confirmation, we accept this mission. Through the Holy Spirit, we are equipped with certain charisms and gifts to help us in this mission. We are each given unique gifts because we each fulfill the mission in different ways. Today, we want to begin praying for that with you, helping you begin to discern how the Spirit is equipping you.

Have the Core Team divide into pairs and spread throughout the room. Create a prayerful environment by playing instrumental music in the background. Invite the teens to be prayed over by a pair of Core Members, encouraging young men to go to male Core Members and young women to go to female Core Members.

If the Core Team is uncomfortable with this type of prayer, provide them with the following guide:

If you do not know it already, ask the candidate what their name is.

Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit, whom your Son promised to send to us as a guide. We pray that you would send your Spirit upon (name of teen) and reveal to him/her how you are calling him/her to serve. Show (name of teen) what gifts you have equipped him/her with, so he/she can make your Kingdom known and bring those in his/her life closer to you. Thank you for the gift that (name of teen) is to us and the Church. We thank you for all of the hearts that will be brought to you because of his/her witness. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Once everyone has been prayed over, pray a Hail Mary to close the session.