



Catechetical Resources for Respect Life Sunday – October 2, 2022

Catholics United to Protect and Support Women, Children, and Families

Fourth and Fifth Grade – Preparation for the Session

Overview for the Catechist

This year, the bishops of all twelve dioceses in California are united in their desire to protect and support vulnerable women, children, and families in our state, as they made clear in a [joint statement](#) made in January of this year. At the same time, historic events have brought the theme of protection of human life in the womb to the forefront of our social and political landscape.

As we enter Respect Life Month, our bishops are calling on all Catholics to unite as one in support of women experiencing a difficult or unexpected pregnancy. For Fourth and Fifth Graders, this is a time to encounter God’s merciful love for the suffering and to hear the call of faith to make the impossible possible by acting together in a spirit of loving kindness, starting above all with kindness and a willingness to help family members at home.

This 60-minute catechetical session will explore these themes, connecting them at the end to the source and summit of our faith—the Eucharist—which sends us forth in the company of our Mother Mary to transform the world in the image of God’s perfect and unconditional love. It will be important to **check in with your Parish Catechetical Leader/Director of Faith Formation before the session** to find out if there are any fundraising or service activities that the parish pastoral staff or school administration wants the children and their families to participate in during Respect Life Month.

Keep in mind when reviewing the following pages that the indicated words for the Catechist are a guideline, so it is not necessary always to read directly from the page. If you feel comfortable doing so, study the message and be prepared to deliver it naturally, in your own words.

Catechists should take time to **review the included “Background for the Catechist” articles** from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. While these articles will not be quoted during the catechetical session, the catechist might be called on to answer questions from the children. A solid understanding of Catholic teaching on mercy, solidarity, the merit of good deeds, Christian holiness, and our Christian duty of personal and communal care for the poor will prepare the catechist to respond to the children’s desire for deeper understanding, rooted in the Gospel.

Background for the Catechist: Articles from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1813 [On the theological virtues] The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. [See nn. 1814 to 1829 for more details about the theological virtues. https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P66.HTM]

1846 [On divine mercy] The Gospel is the revelation in Jesus Christ of God's mercy to sinners. The angel announced to Joseph: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." The same is true of the Eucharist, the sacrament of redemption: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

1939 [On human solidarity] The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of "friendship" or "social charity," is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood.

An error, "today abundantly widespread, is disregard for the law of human solidarity and charity, dictated and imposed both by our common origin and by the equality in rational nature of all men, whatever nation they belong to. This law is sealed by the sacrifice of redemption offered by Jesus Christ on the altar of the Cross to his heavenly Father, on behalf of sinful humanity."

2008 [On merit for our good deeds] The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace. The fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man's free acting through his collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful. Man's merit, moreover, itself is due to God, for his good actions proceed in Christ, from the predispositions and assistance given by the Holy Spirit.

2009 Filial adoption, in making us partakers by grace in the divine nature, can bestow true merit on us as a result of God's gratuitous justice. This is our right by grace, the full right of love, making us "co-heirs" with Christ and worthy of obtaining "the promised inheritance of eternal life." The merits of our good works are gifts of the divine goodness. "Grace has gone before us; now we are given what is due.... Our merits are God's gifts."

2013 [On Christian holiness] "All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity." All are called to holiness: "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

In order to reach this perfection, the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ's gift, so that . . . doing the will of the Father in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbor. Thus, the holiness of the People of God will grow in fruitful abundance, as is clearly shown in the history of the Church through the lives of so many saints.

2219 [On the duties of children] Filial respect promotes harmony in all of family life; it also concerns relationships between brothers and sisters. Respect toward parents fills the home with light and warmth. "Grandchildren are the crown of the aged." "With all humility and meekness, with patience, [support] one another in charity."

2443 [On love for the poor] God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them: "Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you"; "you received without pay, give without pay." It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones. When "the poor have the good news preached to them," it is the sign of Christ's presence.

2446 St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs." "The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity."

When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.

2447 The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.

Session Outline

- Welcome, roll call, and opening prayer (10 minutes)
- The mustard seed activity (18 minutes)
- Faith, hope, and charity – the “superpowers” of Christians (15 minutes)
- Learning to ask the question: “How can I help?” (12 minutes)
- Closing prayer and song (5 minutes)

Materials Needed

- A container of mustard seeds
- Photocopied handouts for each child
- Pencils and crayons for writing/drawing
- Audio equipment for the closing song (if available)

Fourth and Fifth Grade – Catechetical Session

Welcome, roll call, and opening prayer (10 minutes)

1. Welcome and roll call

[Take a few moments to call each student by name. If students are still new to one another, when each child responds “here” or “present,” have the other students respond with a greeting: “Good morning, **N.**” In this way, they will gradually get to know one another by name.]

2. Opening prayer

[Now invite the students to stand and join together in prayer, in the following or similar words.]

Catechist: Class, let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God, as we begin our session in prayer... [Make the sign of the cross] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Catechist: Now everyone repeat after me... [Students repeat, one line at a time.]

Heavenly Father,
I offer you this day
All that I do and think and say,
Uniting it with what was done
By Jesus Christ, your only Son.

Jesus, shine through me
And be so in me
That every person I meet
May feel your presence
In my soul.
Amen.

3. Sharing and caring – reflection and intercessory prayers

Catechist: Students, we are going to continue our prayer, but I want you to sit down for this part. [Wait a few seconds for the children to take their seats.] Close your eyes and take a deep breath... Now let it out... Take another deep breath... And let it out.

Catechist: I want you to remember some of the things that happened in the last week. Maybe at home, maybe at school, maybe with your friends. Think about a happy

moment you shared with someone... [Wait a few seconds.] Let's give thanks to God for the people who bring us joy and happiness. Repeat after me: [Pause after each line for the children to repeat the words.]

Dear God, I want to thank you
for the people in my life
who bring me joy and happiness.
Amen.

Catechist: Take another moment to just sit quietly in silence. [Pause.] Think of a time this week when you saw someone who was sad. Maybe you saw them cry. Maybe they got hurt or felt lonely. Open your heart to that person, and try to see them as God sees them—as his beloved child, for whom he would give everything. [Pause.]

Catechist: Now let's go around the room. I want each of you to say the name of the person you have in your heart, nice and loud so we can all hear. And when you say their name, we will all respond: "Dear Jesus, fill *N's* heart with your love."

[Go around the room and give each child a chance to say someone's name. If they feel shy, just let them know it's okay, and have everyone respond, "Dear Jesus, fill *N's* friend's heart with your love," and go on to the next child.]

Catechist: Thank you all for those beautiful prayers for our brothers and sisters in our community! We know that God our Father loves us all more than we could ever imagine, and our Mother Mary also loves us as her own children. So, let's finish up our prayer by asking our mother in heaven to pray for all of us: [have the children pray along, or if they do not yet know the Hail Mary, have them repeat each line after you]

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women

and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,

now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Catechist: [Make the sign of the cross] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

The mustard seed activity (18 minutes)

[In this activity, the children will have an experience of encounter with Jesus through the Gospel reading for this Sunday. We want to let them use their imagination to explore what it means for the impossible to become possible. They may dream up fantasies that are completely disconnected from the real world... That's okay. Jesus also used a fantastic image to make his point. Let them explore their ideas through drawing and invite a few children to share what they drew, as time allows.]

1. Intro - discussion about faith and the mustard seed

Catechist: Class, we are going to listen to a special message that Jesus has for each of us today. Has anyone ever heard the word “faith”? Do you know what faith is? Any ideas?

[Allow a couple of children to respond, and gently affirm or correct their answers.]

Catechist: Good, now I'll tell you a little more. [Pass out the mustard seeds—one for each child.] I'm passing out a little mustard seed, and I want you to hold it in your hand and look carefully at it. Does it look like that seed is alive? Does anyone know what that seed needs to make it grow? [Let the children come up with some answers.]

So, who thinks that if we planted this seed, and watered it, and let the sun shine on it, that it would grow into a living plant?... How do we know that? [Let one or two children answer.]

Faith is kind of like that. We do not normally see God the Father with our eyes or hear him with our ears. Faith is what tells us that God is real and that God loves us, even though we cannot sense him with our bodies. Faith also helps us to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that everything he tells us is true, because it comes from God.

2. Reading from the Gospel of Saint Luke

Catechist: Now let's listen to what *Jesus* has to say about faith and the mustard seed.

[Slowly read the passage from Luke 17:5-6, which is written on Handout #1, p. 12. Wait a few moments and then read it a second time.]

3. Reflection on the power of faith

Catechist: Let's think about this reading and what Jesus says. Raise your hand if you have ever pulled a full-grown tree out of the ground with your hands. [Pause.] Anyone? Is that easy to do?... No! It's really hard, right? Now look at the mustard seed... Which is bigger, you or the mustard seed? [Pause.] You, right? The mustard seed is really small... But when it is planted, it actually becomes the biggest bush, so that even the birds of

the air make their nests in it! Jesus says, that is how our faith is... It might start very small, but it grows and grows, until things that seem impossible suddenly become possible.

4. Faith activity: What would you do?

Catechist: [Pass out **Handout #1** and pencils/crayons] On the paper I'm passing out, you will see the words of the reading we just listened to, and there's a drawing of Jesus explaining that faith the size of a mustard seed can make a tree be lifted up and planted in the sea. My question for you is this: **If God granted you the power of faith to do anything you wanted... Anything at all... What would you do?** I want you to use your imagination and write a short story or description in the bottom half of the handout about what you would do with your faith. If you want, you can also draw a picture. You have about 10 minutes, so go ahead and get started.

[Give the children about 10 minutes to draw a picture or write a short story about their "superpower," leaving 3 to 5 minutes out of the 18 allotted for this activity to share their ideas.]

5. Sharing and explaining their drawings

Catechist: Put your pencils/crayons down now, and let's have everyone pay attention. Would anyone like to explain what you would do with your faith?

[Let the children share their ideas, as the time allows. There is no need to pass judgment or make extensive comments at this point, just let them express their ideas. Be sure to give some of the quieter children a chance to share their ideas as well.]

Faith, hope, and charity – the “superpowers” of Christians (15 minutes)

1. How Jesus used his supernatural power

Catechist: It can be fun to dream about what we would do if we had superpowers, right? But we have to be careful, because power can be used for good reasons, like to help other people, or it can be used for selfish reasons that can harm us or the people around us. If some of you have seen the Spiderman movies, you might remember what Uncle Ben told Peter Parker: “With great power comes great responsibility!”

When we think about it, Jesus had all the supernatural power in the universe because he was the Son of God, but he chose to hold it in and offer himself as a sacrifice for each of us. He waited until his sacrifice was complete to use his power to come back to life on the third day after he was put to death. We call that the Resurrection, and it happened on one very special Easter Sunday morning almost 2,000 years ago.

2. Christians use their supernatural powers to become more like Jesus

Catechist: If we want to be like Jesus, we have to learn to use our supernatural powers very carefully also, and always for the good of other people, like he did. Wait a moment... Did you hear what I just said? Did you know **we** actually have supernatural powers as Christians? In a way, they are real superpowers, but they are not magic. We already mentioned faith, that's one of them. Does anyone know what some of our other supernatural powers are? What do you think?

[Give the children a chance to respond. There are lots of right answers: the Sacraments (especially the Eucharist), the Holy Spirit, the virtues, the gifts and fruits of the Spirit, the works of mercy, the beatitudes, the teachings of the Church, the community of believers, grace, forgiveness, the Good News, etc. If they have trouble naming any, try giving them some hints and see what they can come up with.]

3. The supernatural virtues

Catechist: As Christians who follow Jesus, we actually have a lot of superpowers, and we will discover more of them as we go through the year, but right now I want to focus on three: **faith, hope, and charity**. We call these the *supernatural virtues* because they are gifts that come from God, and they help us to do what is right and good. Let's take a look at our handout to learn a little more about these supernatural gifts from God.

[Pass out **Handout #2**. There are four questions and answers. Invite four children to read them out loud, one each. Pause after reading the explanation for each of the three virtues, and invite the class to suggest ways to live that virtue at home, at school, or with friends. If they have a hard time thinking of examples, offer some examples of your own.]

Learning to ask the question: "How can I help?" (12 minutes)

1. Believing in ourselves to make a difference

Catechist: So, faith gives us the belief that with God all things are possible. Hope gives us the eyes to see how good can conquer evil. And charity gives us the determination to actually do something about it! When we put it all together, and especially when we join forces with our brothers and sisters, we truly do have superpowers to change the world.

Some people say children are too young to make a difference. Do you think that's true? [Let the children answer.] How old do you have to be to make a difference in the world? How strong or how smart? [Let the children answer.] Do you think **you** are old enough to change the world? Why or why not? [Let the children answer.]

2. Visualizing making a difference

Catechist: I'm here to tell you, I don't believe children are ever too young, too limited, or too *anything* to be able to help with loving kindness when they see someone in need. [Tell a **brief** story of a child in your community or in your life who made a difference to you as an adult, and be sure to explain that their age did not stop them from making the world a better place.]

At the beginning of our class today, we prayed for people who were sad in the last week. Just take a moment and quietly think for yourself: how could you have used your Christian "superpowers" at that moment to change their world and make it better?

[Pause.] Now in your mind, I want you to imagine that you actually did that something to help out. What would that have looked like? How would it make you feel? [Pause.]

3. "How can I help?"

Catechist: Sometimes, when we see someone is hurting or is stressed out, our heart knows right away how to help. In that case, all we have to do is offer the help we see that they need... If it's someone we are close to, it might be as simple as saying "can I take out the trash?" or "can I give you a hug?" But other times we might not know what to do. When that happens, there are four words that can make all the difference to someone who is struggling. Those four words are: "How can I help?" Let's all try it together... Repeat after me: "How can I help?"

4. Connection to the Mass and the faith community

Catechist: I mentioned before that Christians have lots of superpowers, especially faith, hope, and love. But there is one more I want to tell you about today. Jesus left us a powerful gift to help us change the world for the better: it is Holy Communion. This is the most important gift God has given us as his disciples. In fact, it's so important that our Church celebrates and shares this gift every day!

At the Wedding of Cana, Jesus changed water into wine. For us, he performs a similar miracle at Mass when he changes the bread and wine into his Body and Blood. When Christians receive these gifts as food, another miracle happens—we become the Body of Christ on Earth, sent forth to use our superpowers to make the world a better place!

Catechist: [Optional: Check with your Parish Catechetical Leader or Director of Faith Formation to find out what the parish or school is doing for Respect Life month. Maybe it is a fundraiser, maybe it is a "Parish Baby Shower" to collect items for the local Pregnancy Resource Center, or something else. If the families of children in faith formation will be involved, then mention it here in these or similar words.] Sometimes we do that by ourselves or with our families, but other times we are called to do something as a community. Right now, our parish [or school] **N.** is asking our class

to help women and families in need because October is Respect Life month in our Church. Sometimes women who are expecting a baby do not have everything they need to take care of their child when he or she is born, and that can make them feel sad or even scared. When that happens, we should be ready to give the same response as the Angel Gabriel when Mary found out that she would soon have a child, even though she was not yet married to Saint Joseph... Saint Gabriel said to her, “Do not be afraid.” We can say the same thing, and we should always add, “How can I help?”

[Explain what activities the parish or school will be doing and how the children and their families can participate. If the families will be asked to bring something or do something, there should be a note sent to the parents about that. Always be sure to give various options, in case a family does not have the means to contribute an item or make a financial contribution. Even something as simple as offering a prayer as a family can be of great spiritual value.]

5. Homework assignments

Catechist: [Pass out **Handout #3**] Your homework for this week is to pay attention to the people around you. When you see someone who is sad, who needs help, or who seems to be struggling—even if they are older than you, like an adult family member or who you know well—I want you to ask them: “How can I help?” And then let the superpowers God has given you in Christ go to work! After you do that, I want you to write about what happened on your homework handout.

Catechist: I also want you to take a few minutes at home and do the matching exercise at the bottom of the homework page. You need to bring that back with you next week and we will review it in class. [Optional: If the parish or school is doing an activity that the fourth and fifth graders can participate in, or if their families will be asked to bring something or offer a prayer as a family, mention that as well, and pass out the note for the parents explaining what they need to do.]

Closing prayer and song (5 minutes)

1. Brief talk about the *Our Father*

[The session ends with a recitation of the *Our Father* followed by *The Servant Song*. Before reciting the *Our Father*, **take a moment to have a conversation with the children about the lines: “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”** Ask them: what do these lines mean to them? After a few children respond, explain that it has to do with us asking God to help us take care of each other with loving kindness, and to tell everyone the Good News about God’s love for them. (See CCC 2818, 2820, 2822, and 2825.) In other words, we are asking God to help us use our Christian superpowers to do everything we talked about today. So, tell them to remember that every time we pray the *Our Father*.]

[If the children have already memorized the *Our Father*, invite them to stand and pray it together. Otherwise, they should stand and recite each line after you.]

2. Recitation of the *Our Father*

Catechist: Let's all stand up now, as we pray: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

All: Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Catechist: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. [Make the sign of the cross] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

3. Sing together *The Servant Song*

[The melody of this song is simple enough for children to learn. Encourage them to sing along. Pass out Handout #4 so that the children can see the words for themselves. A recording can be found on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlhxxhPOwfc>) or it can be purchased as an MP3 file from OCP (<https://www.ocp.org/en-us/songs/13143/the-servant-song>). If time is short, it is not necessary to sing all five verses.]

Handout #1 – Faith the Size of a Mustard Seed



A Reading from the Gospel of St. Luke:

The apostles said to the Lord,
“Increase our faith.”
The Lord replied,
“If you have faith the size
of a mustard seed,
you would say to this mulberry tree,
‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’
and it would obey you.”

- Luke 17:5-6 – New American Bible Revised Edition

If God granted you the power of faith to do anything you wanted... what would you do?

* Royalty-free image by Maximo Cerezo Barredo. See <https://www.servicioskoinonia.org/cerezo/>.

Handout #2 – The Supernatural Virtues[†]

What are the three *supernatural virtues*?

The *supernatural virtues* are **faith, hope, and charity**. They are called “supernatural” because they come from God, they are connected to God, and they are the way we as human beings can get to God.



What is faith?

Faith is the power that allows us to believe that God is real, to believe that what he tells us is true, and to decide to follow him no matter what. Jesus told us that he himself is “the way and the truth and the life” (**John 14:6**). This means that we accept the teachings of Christ, handed on through the Church from generation to generation. It also means trusting and loving God with our whole heart, our whole mind, and all our emotional strength (**Luke 10:27**) so that we are ready to do whatever he asks us to do.

What is hope?

Hope is the power that makes us seek our true happiness and fulfillment with a joyful longing, knowing that God alone is our final and everlasting home. Hope means trusting in what God has promised us through the prophets and especially Jesus Christ, even though we cannot see it with our eyes in our earthly lifetime. God’s Holy Spirit is given to us so that we can patiently hope for the full revelation of the Truth at the end of time.



What is charity?

Charity is the power that transforms God’s love for us into acts of sincere loving kindness for our neighbors in need, without any expectation of repayment. Jesus places the commandment to love above all other laws. That is why charity—another word for love—is the greatest virtue, the energy that inspires all the other virtues and fills them with divine life.

“If I have all faith, so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.” **1 Corinthians 13:2**

[†] Adapted from *YouCat* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), nn. 306-309.

NAME: _____

Handout #3 – Homework Assignment

1. When you see someone in need, ask them “How can I help?”

- Describe the situation. Who was involved and what did they need?

- When you asked to help, how did they respond?

- What did you end up doing, and how did it make you feel?

2. Match the vocabulary words in the first column with their definitions in the second column by writing the letter in the space.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|---|
| A. Resurrection | _____ | God’s greatest gift which nourishes and strengthens us as the Body of Christ |
| B. Supernatural virtues | _____ | The power that makes us seek our true happiness and fulfillment in God, with a joyful longing |
| C. Faith | _____ | Super powers that come from God, are connected to God, and help us get to God |
| D. Hope | _____ | When Jesus showed his supernatural power by rising from the dead |
| E. Charity | _____ | The power to believe that God is real, to believe that what he tells us is true, and to follow him no matter what |
| F. Holy Communion | _____ | The power that transforms God’s love for us into acts of sincere loving kindness for our neighbors in need |

3. [Extra credit] Pay close attention the next time you go to Mass. At what point in the rite are we told to go make a difference in the world?

Handout #4 – The Servant Song[‡]

By Richard Gillard and Betty Pulkingham

Will you let me be your servant,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant, too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
we are trav'lers on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow
'til we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

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