

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility

Catechetical Session Junior/Senior High School Lesson Plan A

Theme: The Call to Faithful Citizenship



Gathering

The first purpose of the opening movement of each session is to establish a sense of welcome and hospitality. The second purpose is to begin the session with the young person's human experience, i.e. her/his "story" or ideas. Have a Bible prominently enthroned in the room as the centerpiece for prayer and the proclamation of the Word.

Open the session by describing the theme in relation to the election year. There is a definite connection between being a disciple and being a citizen. Ask the young people to describe a "responsible citizen." Write the words RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN on newsprint and ask the young people to name characteristics or qualities of a responsible citizen. Next, do the same with the words FAITHFUL DISCIPLE. Third, ask the students what happens if you take the word "citizen" from the first set and put the word "faithful" from the second set with it. We now have FAITHFUL CITIZEN. Lastly, combine the two lists as appropriate, to make a list of characteristics of the faithful citizen.

Make the connection: Lead the young people to see that the Church teaches that being a faithful citizen is part of being a faithful disciple.

Opening Prayer

Call the group to prayer. After an extended pause, continue with these or similar words:

Let us pray.

Loving Father, we thank you for calling us to be disciples of your Son, Jesus Christ. Spirit that guides us, help us to be faithful disciples and faithful citizens. We ask this through Christ our Lord. (Amen).

Students are seated. Catechist takes Bible from enthronement and proclaims reading. Be sure reading is marked in advance.

Scripture Reading & Faith Sharing

The catechist makes the transition to this movement by describing that Jesus teaches us how to be good disciples and good citizens. He tells us we have to "love God" and "love our neighbor."

Proclaim the reading (Mk. 12:28-34):

A reading from the Gospel of Mark...

After the reading a brief period of silence follows. Then, the catechist asks these or similar questions:

- What did you hear in this reading? Name the word or phrase you most remember.
- What commandments did Jesus say are the most important? Why?

After the initial response, read the reading again.

A reading from the Gospel of Mark...

Then ask the following questions:

- How do the two commandments relate to the idea of faithful citizenship?
- Jesus says that both loving God and loving neighbor bring a person closer to the kingdom of God.
- How does a deep faith life help us to love others?
- How does being compassionate toward others affect us spiritually?
- The reading instructs that you should love your neighbor *as yourself*. How would our relationships and communities be different if we could really live this commandment out?
- What changes can you make in your own life to love God and neighbor better?

Faithful Citizenship Reading and Discussion

The catechist makes a transition from reflection on the Scripture to discussion on the teaching of the Church.

The bishops of the United States have written a document that emphasizes the importance of being a responsible citizen. An important part of being a faithful citizen is voting and making our voices heard on issues affecting human life, human dignity, justice and peace. In particular, the Church says we need to be aware of what we believe about topics such as:

- Human dignity. Protecting human life, especially unborn children
- Peace. Making our world not only safer, but more peaceful.

- The poor. Working to end poverty and ensure that all people have the basic necessities of life.

Even though you may not be old enough to vote, the Church tells us that being a responsible citizen is part of being a good Catholic. The Church says (*write quote on newsprint or blackboard*):

In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. This obligation is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us, “it is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person. . . . As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life” (nos. 1913-1915).

--*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility* (no. 13)

The following questions can be used to spark discussion:

- What does "participation in political life" mean for Junior High students? For High School students? Give examples. What principles from our faith should guide us as we participate in political life?
- Do you feel your "voice matters?" Why or why not?
- What can you do to make your voice heard?
- What can you do to be an active, faithful citizen? Brainstorm ideas. Choose one to put into action. See the "Putting Faith into Action" guide, which can be found in the Parish and School Leaders section of the website, for suggestions on implementing an action plan. Some ideas to consider include:
 - Participate in a local pro-life march or Catholic "lobby day" organized by your state Catholic conference.
 - Invite a local legislator to the class to talk about how he or she works to make sure the needs of the poor and vulnerable are addressed.
 - Visit the web pages of various departments of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (www.usccb.org) to learn more about public policy issues of concern and then write a letter to a legislator about one of these issues.
 - Make posters to put around your parish and school encouraging adults to vote and those younger than eighteen to take action in other ways.
 - Contact your parish or diocesan social concerns or pro-life coordinator or your diocesan social action director for additional ideas.

Closing Prayer

Gather students into a circle with the Bible reverently enthroned in the middle of the circle. Once all have quieted, the catechist walks to the center, picks up the Bible and proclaims Mark 12, verses 32-33 only. After returning the Bible to its place, continue with prayer.

Let us pray.

Loving God, we are your children. By the power of your Holy Spirit, help us to share our goods with those in need and to participate in shaping our society. Help us to always be active, faithful citizens. We ask this through Christ our Lord who lives and reigns forever and ever.

Amen.