

Session 1



THE JOURNEY OF FAITH

Nihil Obstat: Ben Akers, S.T.L.

Imprimatur: Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L., Archbishop of Denver

August 1, 2013

Copyright © 2014/2016 Augustine Institute. All rights reserved.

With the exception of short excerpts used in articles and critical reviews, no part of this work may be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in any form whatsoever, printed or electronic, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Excerpts from the *Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition* © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. Used with permission. All rights reserved. No portion of this text may be reproduced by any means without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Some Scripture verses contained herein are from the Catholic Edition of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright ©1965, 1966 by the Division of Christian Educators of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the United States of America, copyright ©1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modification from the Editio Typica* copyright ©1997, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Writers: Sean Dalton, Woodeene Koenig-Bricker, Lucas Pollice, Dr. Edward Sri

Media/Print Production: Brenda Kraft, Justin Leddick, Kevin Mallory, John Schmidt

Graphic Design: Stacy Innerst, Jane Myers, Nicole Skorka, Jeffrey Wright

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude the many catechists, teachers, and diocesan leaders from across the country that have given invaluable advice and guidance in the development of Symbolon:

Michael Andrews, Keith Borchers, Steve Bozza, Dr. Chris Burgwald, James Cavanagh, Chris Chapman, Fr. Dennis Gill, Jim Gontis, Dr. Tim Gray, Lisa Gulino, Mary Hanbury, Deacon Ray Helgeson, Dr. Sean Innerst, Ann Lankford, Deacon Kurt Lucas, Sean Martin, Martha Tonn, Kyle Neilson, Michelle Nilsson, Ken Ogorek, Dr. Claude Sasso, Scott Sollom, Deacon Jim Tighe, Mary Ann Weisinger, and Gloria Zapiain.

Augustine Institute

6160 South Syracuse Way, Suite 310

Greenwood Village, CO 80111

Information: 303-937-4420

Formed.org

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-0-9966768-9-2

THE JOURNEY OF FAITH: Trinity, Faith, & the God Who Is Love



LEADER PREPARATION OVERVIEW

An old proverb says the longest journey begins with a single step. This week your participants enter into a journey of faith development that will last for a lifetime and will, hopefully, end in Heaven.

Like all journeys, this one begins with a single step—the step of faith. Without that first step, the journey would simply be an intellectual exercise into the teachings of the Catholic religion. With faith, the journey becomes the foundation for deepening a loving relationship with God.

Whether you are a small group facilitator, parent, or catechist, you undoubtedly want to give your best in guiding and teaching the people God has entrusted to you in this faith formation process. But you should also realize that God is the one who is drawing his people near to him. Trust that he goes before you, and will continue to go before you as you travel in faith and prayer with the participants in this program. As you watch the participants grow in faith, trust also that he is taking you deeper into your faith and relationship with him, for in the words of St. Paul, “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

Over the next weeks, you and your participants will be delving deep into the heart of the teachings of the Catholic Church and exploring many of the great and beautiful mysteries of the faith. We begin today with a brief mention of some fundamentals like the Creed and the Trinity—because all great journeys must begin with a first step.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **The God who is Love—the mystery of the Holy Trinity**
- **Why God made us and the relationship he wants to have with us**
- **How faith is our response to God’s invitation**
- **How to live our relationship with God: three practical tips for prayer**

STEP # 1

OPENING PRAYER



SAY: Welcome to our opening session.

Have participants turn to page 9 of their Guide to find the Opening Prayer and discussion questions.

This week we are starting our journey into the heart of the Catholic faith. Like pilgrims of old, we are embarking on a sacred excursion. Over the next several weeks, we will be learning about many aspects of Catholicism—such as the Bible, the person of Jesus Christ, the Church, and the Blessed Virgin Mary—but before we begin, let us pray in the words of Psalm 139.



“O LORD,
you have searched me
and known me.
You know when I sit down
and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts
from far away.
You search out my path
and my lying down,
and are acquainted
with all my ways.
Even before a word
is on my tongue, O LORD,
you know it completely.
For it was you who formed
my inward parts;
you knit me together
in my mother’s womb.
I praise you,
for I am fearfully
and wonderfully made.”

—Psalm 139:1–4, 13–14

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

(Optional)

**Suggested Scripture readings for a
Celebration of the Word of God**

(see Introduction to the Leader’s Guide)

Hebrews 11:1–3, 32–40

Ephesians 3:12

Hebrews 10:22

1 John 3:23

STEP #2

INTRODUCTION

 **SAY:** Why are you here now, taking time to learn more about the Catholic faith? Some of you may be thinking, “It’s because my spouse or my friend brought me here!” Others of you may be curious regarding what Catholicism is all about. Still others may be seeking to deepen the faith you’ve had since childhood. Whatever may be the case, know that the real reason you are here is because God has brought you here. God desires to take you deeper into relationship with him and the Catholic Church. So I welcome each of you as we begin this sacred journey, a pilgrimage of faith.

Here are just a few of the many topics we’re going to explore in today’s session:

- The God who is Love—the mystery of the Holy Trinity
- Why God made us and the relationship he wants to have with us
- How faith is our response to God’s invitation
- How to live our relationship with God: three practical tips for prayer

We will start by watching a short video.

STEP #3

VIDEO PART I: OUR PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

 *Play video Part I, which will play for approximately 10 minutes.*

STEP #4

PROCLAMATION

After the video has stopped,

 **SAY:** We heard in the video how we are all on a journey of faith. Let us now consider the importance of this spiritual pilgrimage by reflecting on who God is, why he made us, and the purpose he has for our lives.

God, who is perfect and happy on his own, did not create us for his own happiness, but he freely chose to create us so we can share his blessed life. We are created by the God who is love and we are made for his love. God calls each of us to draw near to him, to love him and seek him. God, in fact, is the Holy Trinity, a communion of love. God has only one divine nature, but that divine nature is expressed in the communion of three distinct persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

STEP #5

VIDEO PART II

FAITH: OUR RESPONSE TO GOD



SAY: In our second video segment, we will explore three fundamental questions:

- Why did God make us?
- Who is God?
- And, what is our appropriate response to God?

Let's listen now to the presenters as they address these questions.



Play video Part II, which will play for approximately 20 minutes.

STEP #6

BREAK

After the video is finished,



SAY: Now let's take a short break. When we come back, we will discuss some of the things we learned in this last video segment.

Break should be about 10 minutes.

STEP #7

DISCUSSION

Have participants turn to their Guide to find these questions.



SAY: Welcome back. Let's talk a little about what we learned in the last video segment.

DISCUSSION QUESTION #1

Faith is our response to the God who longs to make himself known to us. How do we make that response and how is faith in God more than just believing in God?

(Faith is both an assent of the mind as well as a personal commitment to God. We respond in faith by hearing the invitation of Jesus, who says, "Come, follow me" and saying "Yes" to that call to discipleship. That "Yes" to Jesus involves assenting to all he has revealed, and lovingly entrusting our lives to him and following his commandments. Therefore, faith is much more than just simply believing that God exists; it is having and continuously developing a personal relationship with God.)

DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

The Holy Trinity is revealed to us through Jesus Christ. In other words, God wanted us to know, as the *Catechism* says, that “God is one but not solitary” (CCC 254).

Why do you think God wants you to know that he is not solitary?

(The inner life of God is a communion of self-donating love. God, out of his sheer goodness, has created us to share in this love. He invites us into his inner life. Each of us has the opportunity to be transformed by his love and to love as he loves.)

DISCUSSION QUESTION #3

According to the video, what are three key elements of prayer?

(Jesus gave us the model for prayer in the “Our Father.” The first element is praise and thanksgiving. We focus on God, expressing our love and gratitude, acknowledging that God loves us and is in control of our lives. The second element consists of asking God for the things we need. Although God already knows our needs, he desires that we express them to him. Finally, we ask his forgiveness for the ways we have failed, the ways we’ve sinned, and at the same time, we forgive those who have offended us.)



STEP # 8 (OPTIONAL) SUMMARY & EXHORTATION

At this point, the facilitator, small group leader, or catechist has the option to give a summary of the main points that have been presented in the video segments. Here are some key points you may want to cover.

- God, who is infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, did not create us to increase his own happiness. He freely chose to create us out of his own love and goodness, so that we could share in his blessed life (CCC 1, 293).
- We were created by the God who is love and we are made for his love. As St. Augustine says, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in him” (CCC 27–30).
- At every moment of our lives, God draws near to us, calling us to seek him, to know him, and to love him (CCC 1).
- There is only one God (CCC 200–202), but this one God has revealed himself as a communion of three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (CCC 221).
- By sending the Son and the Holy Spirit to us, God has revealed his “inmost secret”—that his very being is a communion of love. As the *Catechism* teaches, “God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange” (CCC 221).
- The Holy Trinity is Three Persons in One God. As the *Catechism* teaches, “We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance; for the person of the Father is one, the Son’s is another and the Holy Spirit’s another; but the Godhead of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal” (CCC 266).
- Faith is our response to God who has made himself known to us. Faith has two key aspects. On one hand, it is an assent of our minds to all that he has revealed. On the other hand, it is a personal adherence to God in which we entrust our lives to him (CCC 150).



DIGGING DEEPER

Why Two Creeds?

We normally say the Nicene Creed at Mass, although The Apostles’ Creed is often used during Baptisms. So why do we have two creeds or basic statements of faith handed down from the early Church, since both proclaim belief in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? It has to do with clarity. The Apostles’ Creed is one of the earliest creedal statements of Christian belief originally used in Rome for Baptisms. By 325 AD, the Nicene Creed in its original form was written to address questions that arose about the Holy Trinity and Christ’s divinity. The Church preserves both of these traditions, using the Apostles’ Creed at Baptisms and the Nicene Creed ordinarily at Sunday Masses and major feasts.

STEP #9

CALL TO CONVERSION



SAY: Spend a few moments asking Jesus to help you accept God's invitation of love. Use your Guide to write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

1. Jesus says in the Bible, "Come, follow me." Envision Jesus saying that to you right now. How would you respond? What fears or hesitations might you have about following Jesus in your life? Remember that Jesus repeatedly said, "Do not be afraid."
2. As in any relationship, a relationship with God involves conversation. What can you do this week to make more time for prayer—for talking to God—in your life? Choose a time of day that you will reserve for getting to know God better. You may want to put it as an appointment in your calendar so that you don't forget.
3. Reflect on the following quote about prayer from St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the order of Jesuits:

"We must speak to God as a friend speaks to his friend, servant to his master; now asking some favor, now acknowledging our faults, and communicating to Him all that concerns us, our thoughts, our fears, our projects, our desires, and in all things seeking His counsel."

What is your experience with prayer? Have you ever spoken to God as a friend? Do you feel comfortable sharing all of your thoughts, even your fears and desires, with God? Write down one fear and one desire that you could share with God this week.

4. Jesus called those who came to him to believe in him, that they might have life abundant. Not everyone, however, answered the call to follow him. How will you respond?



STEP # 10

CLOSING PRAYER



SAY: I hope you take time this week to reflect on this journey of faith we are beginning.



Let's close our time together today by praying Psalm 23:

The LORD is my shepherd,
there is nothing I lack.
In green pastures he makes me lie down;
to still waters he leads me;
he restores my soul.
He guides me along right paths
for the sake of his name.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff comfort me.
You set a table before me
in front of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Indeed, goodness and mercy will pursue me
all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of the LORD
for endless days. —Psalm 23:1–6



FOR FURTHER READING:

For more in-depth reading about the journey of faith, see the following *Catechism* passages:

Why God made us: CCC 294

The Trinity: CCC 238–248

Faith as our response to God: CCC 166

Prayer: CCC 2725, 2737, 2742–2745

OTHER RESOURCES:

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapters 1, 5, 35, 36

Time for God by Jacques Philippe

Introduction to the Devout Life by St. Francis de Sales

Praying Scripture for a Change by Tim Gray

