

Leader's Guide for
BECOMING CATHOLIC: AN ADULT'S FAITH JOURNEY
A Catholic Update Video

Please note: This leader's guide was originally written for those using this video program in its VHS format. Those now using this program on DVD may find some references that do not apply to their use (i.e., directions for locating segments, time notations, etc.). We trust that both VHS- and DVD-users will find this guide a valuable resource.

The Use of Video in Faith Formation

Jesus used the "media" of his day to teach. He was a master storyteller. His preaching is full of imagery. His parables are calculated to engage his audience. Through the ages, Christian teachers and preachers have followed Jesus in the creative proclamation of his message.

From the culture of Jesus' time, heavily dependent on *oral communication*—to the advent of *print communication*—to our own time and its dependence on *electronic media*—Christian teachers have adapted their proclamation to each new medium and its particular demands.

Media scholars like Marshall McLuhan remind us of the impact of the medium on the message it carries. *How* we communicate affects *what* we communicate. Electronic media offer us new ways to tell the story of our faith. Father Pierre Babin points out (see *The New Era in Religious Communications*, Pierre Babin with Mercedes Iannone, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1991) that the message, as well as the sender and receiver, will be re-shaped in the telling.

Catechesis, as a part of the total evangelization process, must touch the learners' hearts and shine the light of faith on their lives. It must connect to the learners' experience or risk being discarded as irrelevant. To be effective, catechists must learn how to make the best use of the electronic media available in our culture, aware of the particular medium's strengths and weaknesses.

Video is a very popular, familiar and accessible part of our electronic culture. It draws us in, captures our imaginations and touches us on a deep, emotional level. As it speaks to our experience and utilizes several of our senses, its message is more likely to be heard and remembered. By integrating quality video programs into the catechetical process, catechists can share the message more effectively.

At the same time, as television becomes a more pervasive part of our lives, we can be lulled into thinking that it can do everything for us—inform, entertain, shop, even worship. The reality is that it can't and shouldn't do everything. As Pierre Babin emphasizes, electronic media function differently than print media. They appeal first to the *emotional* content of our faith rather than the *intellectual* content. Video cannot begin to convey the amount of information print can. It cannot replace the live presence and personal witness of the catechist. But in a catechetical setting, it can be a powerful part of the "mix of

media” used in proclaiming the message.

How effectively video—or any electronic media—is used in the catechetical setting depends primarily on how prepared the catechist is to use it:

- A preview of the video is essential to determine the best use of the program with a particular group.
- The catechist should select a video program (or section of a video) based on the audience, the purpose, and the availability of competent teachers and other resources and activities to support the theme.
- Sufficient time should be available to introduce the video and to process the viewing experience.

Catechists must realize that *they* control the use of video in their sessions. They might approach a video program in one of two ways: as a skeleton on which to build a presentation or as a way to “enflesh” an existing skeleton.

A video program well-tailored to the needs of a group might be used in its entirety. At other times, catechists may creatively manipulate the video to fit their needs:

- An excerpt may be taken from a longer piece to illustrate a point.
- A video may be shown with the *sound off* to highlight an aspect of the program.
- The “pause” button can be used freely to interject explanations and examples or to elicit reactions.
- The program or excerpt may be repeated to emphasize a point.

The producers of this video program have attempted to craft both medium and message with an awareness of the power of the medium as well as its limitations. They encourage those who use it to study this guide and become familiar with ways to allow this program to supplement their own sharing of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Introduction to the Series

Catholic Update Videos are dynamic new media designed for use with today’s adult learners. Use them in RCIA, faith formation, liturgical and pastoral ministry, faith-sharing groups and sacramental preparation. *Catholic Update Video* offers catechists and pastoral ministers multimedia resources to enhance teaching, presentation and training efforts.

Catholic Update Video’s four segments—story, witness, teaching and musical reflection—are short and can stand alone or be used with others in the program. The format is flexible, making it useful in a variety of group settings as well as for individual viewing. The emphasis is on what video can do best, namely touch us through story (story segment), testimony (witness segment) and song (musical reflection segment) with images and the emotions they carry. But a more “didactic” approach (teaching segment) respects the need to convey a concise core of information.

The general model for catechetical process (life experience, message or doctrine, response) is respected by the order of the four segments, although at times a catechist may choose to use them alone or out of sequence:

- Each program begins with a **story segment** designed to draw viewers in and help them connect their life-experience to the faith-topic.
- The testimony of real-life Catholics in the **witness segment** helps viewers reflect on their own life experience and prepare for group sharing.
- Our teacher briefly highlights some aspects of the topic in the **teaching segment**. Relevant images help to illustrate the points being made. *(This segment is not intended to treat a topic exhaustively nor substitute for a more thorough presentation on the message or doctrine.)*
- Viewers are invited to respond in prayer using the *musical reflection segment*.

The program's host provides a context for each segment. This is designed to help viewers who will see the program from beginning to end. Catechists who use segments individually or out of sequence may wish to prepare their own lead-in. On-screen graphics provide viewers with a question for reflection or sharing between segments.

This leader's guide is an important tool for making the best use of this video program.

It includes the following features:

- **Summary and Suggestions for Use** for each segment.
- **Questions for Sharing** for the story, witness and teaching segments; facilitators can choose from them or use them as models for developing their own questions.
- **Suggestions for Use** for the musical reflection segment provide a model for using this segment in a prayer setting.
- **Resources for Further Study** are listed at the end of this guide.
- **Approximate times** are noted for where each segment begins. *(If the VCR is equipped with an "elapsed time" counter, reset the counter to 0:00:00 at the beginning of the tape and fast-forward to the time listed for the beginning of the desired segment. If the VCR does not have an "elapsed time" counter, the facilitator can fast-forward in the "review" mode [while the VCR is in "play"] to find the gray screen and Catholic Update Video logo that indicate the start of a segment.)*

BECOMING CATHOLIC: AN ADULT’S FAITH JOURNEY

Overview of the program

“Faith is a journey.” That’s a common metaphor—perhaps because it’s so true to life. To believe in God, to come to know Jesus Christ, takes a person on a lifelong journey of discovery.

Our “destination” is life with God, both here and hereafter. The journey may take us through a variety of religious experiences. Along the way, we encounter “fellow travelers” and “tour guides” who share the journey and teach us out of their own experiences. Like any journey, there are detours, periods when we may get lost, and the thrill of discovery that often comes from exploration.

One problem with our faith journey, however, is that there’s no “map” to follow. There are landmarks along the way. There are even fellow travelers. But because each of our journeys is unique, there’s no one route.

And yet, we all need to know where we are along the way. Continuing the “journey” metaphor, this edition of *Catholic Update Video* offers information about becoming a Catholic. It serves to introduce viewers to some fellow pilgrims. The teacher and our “tour guide,” Father Tom Richstatter, will point out some of the landmarks along the way.

The creators of this program envision it as a “rest stop” on the journey. Interstate highway rest stops often have a map posted for travelers, with an arrow that says, “You are here.” It helps to know how far we have traveled on our journey.

“Becoming Catholic: An Adult’s Faith Journey” has been created with this “journey” metaphor in mind.

Audience

The primary audience for this program is those who are inquiring about Christianity and Catholicism. This audience may include unbaptized individuals, already baptized Christians who are interested in becoming Catholics, and Catholics who wish to learn more about their faith.

The normal route for those seeking Baptism is to participate in some form of inquiry sessions, leading to entrance into the Church’s rite of initiation for adults. This video might be used in connection with an “open house” at the parish, held for those interested in learning more about becoming a Catholic before entering a formal program. It also may be useful to lend the program to those who call the parish seeking information about the Catholic faith.

With adaptation, this video program may also be used fruitfully with “cradle Catholics” who may wish to examine their own faith journey.

Note: Group leaders should be aware that the “journey” metaphor may be unfamiliar to some inquirers and viewers of this program. Some previewing preparation may be necessary to help viewers make the connection between journey and faith.

STORY SEGMENT: “Fishing Trip”

(Begins approximately 2:25 into program.)

Summary

“Fishing Trip” is the story of Cliff, a harried businessman who is trying to finish work at closing time on Friday. He’s anxious to get away for a weekend fishing trip with some of his buddies at a remote fishing lake where a friend has reserved a cabin. In the process of clearing his desk, Cliff inadvertently shreds the maps which spells out how to reach the lake. It’s too late to get another map, so he take directions over the phone from his friend Harry, with the warning, “You know me and directions!” Sure enough, Cliff encounters problems on his way to the lake: First construction traffic, then confusion in finding the landmarks in the dictated directions, and finally engine trouble along a lonely country road. Carrying his fishing gear, Cliff begins to walk toward his destination. He stops to get his bearings on a bridge spanning a small river where a young boy is fishing. When Cliff accidentally drops his directions over the side of the bridge, into the water, the boy fishes them out. Their chance meeting assures that the story wil have a surprising—and happy—ending.

Suggestions for use

“Fishing Trip” is a parable. Like the parables we find in the Gospels, it uses familiar images to teach a religious truth. We bring our everyday experiences and feelings to the story.

There are several ways to approach the story. To begin with, the story ought to stand on its own, without a “moral” being tacked onto the ending. A good story, offered in the context of a sharing session on faith and values, can suggest its own meanings. Allowing viewers simply to say how they felt about the story is a good way to begin to explore those meanings.

A parable often works around images and symbols that carry special meaning. In “Fishing Trip,” the map, the gear Cliff carries, the written directions, even the orange highway barrels, are all symbols of how we approach a journey and what happens there.

Note: A group leader at a parish’s welcome or informational session might choose to hold the story segment until a time of sharing. The teaching segment (see below) might make a better lead-off experience for an initial gathering of inquirers.

If the participants are ready to open up and discuss where they are on their personal faith journeys, one possible use for “Fishing Trip” would be as an introduction to a sharing session.

The leader can briefly talk about how faith is very much like the trips we take, especially vacations, or more extended travels (e.g., students traveling abroad, soldiers posted with the armed forces, etc.). Stress the unpredictable nature of travel, the surprises, the obstacles or delays, the adventure of discovering new people and places.

Then show “Fishing Trip,” inviting viewers simply to enter into the story. After viewing, allow a time for reactions. People may want to reflect silently or share something they saw or felt about the story.

Suggest that participants take a blank sheet of paper and trace their own personal journeys—chronologically, or by places where they’ve lived, or by listing jobs and states of life.

Have them write key words that describe their relationship with God at various points along the way. They can also note particular individuals who were influential in helping them. Stress that the journey continues.

If group sharing seems appropriate, it might be helpful to prepare some questions to help get things going. It’s important to stress that when personal faith is being discussed, the uniqueness of each person’s faith deserves respect. The questions should be asked in an open-ended way, with the understanding that not everyone may have something to contribute or feel comfortable sharing at a very personal level at an early stage in the inquiry process.

Questions for sharing

1. How do Cliff’s adventures in the story illustrate a person’s faith journey? What images, symbols or incidents stand out? Why?
2. In what ways does your relationship with God resemble a journey? How would you describe your relationship with God, beginning with childhood?
3. How do you understand or react to obstacles in your personal journey of faith?
4. Share a time when you were surprised by an insight or event that helped your faith to grow.
5. Who has been instrumental in assisting you to grow in faith? How have they helped you to grow?
6. How does prayer contribute to finding your way along the journey?
7. What is the destination of your personal faith journey?

WITNESS SEGMENT

(Begins approximately 12:30 into program.)

Summary

The witness segment consists of a “collage” of excerpts from interviews with ordinary Catholics. The individuals are real people, not actors. Many of them have been through the Church’s rite of initiation for adults (RCIA). All have a particular “faith journey” to share. The participants shared their own

experiences; their responses were not scripted.

The interview excerpts are grouped into three general areas:

1. where the person's faith experience is rooted (e.g., raised in a Christian tradition but never baptized; married or engaged to a Catholic; taken to church by a parent);
2. an incident or experience that was a turning-point of faith (e.g., the death of a close friend, meeting a Catholic family or spouse, the faith of one's children, illness of a loved one);
3. where the person is right now on the journey (e.g., still much to learn, not finished yet, ready to be surprised by new experiences).

Suggestions for use

Personal witness is important in most, if not all, groups where faith topics are being discussed. It is especially important in the RCIA process. In any group, as participants share their stories, they can begin to shape a small faith community among themselves. They can support the personal journey of others, and understand better the questions others may have. They can reflect on their own journey as well.

Showing this witness segment to a group might be a way to stimulate individuals to reflect and share on their personal faith experiences. The group leader should pick a time when group sharing seems appropriate. It is important to present sharing in a non-threatening way, respecting the privacy of all concerned, and the possibility that not all participants may be comfortable talking in a group at this point—or at any time.

Encourage the participants to identify key quotes which speak to their faith experiences, using the questions below as discussion-starters. An alternative for those who feel uncomfortable sharing would be to write a personal journal, for one's private use.

Questions for sharing

1. What childhood religious experiences are significant to you—negative or positive? Who influenced your faith as a child? What concepts or images of God can you recall from your childhood? What important religious traditions or experiences are significant for you or your family?
2. Has a “distancing” from God or religion ever been a part of your faith journey?
3. How have sad or even tragic events—such as the death of a loved one—influenced your faith? What other significant moments in your life have found you turning to God?
4. Why have you come to this inquiry session?
5. What is your current relationship with God?
6. How would you describe your prayer life?
7. Where do you hope to go next on the journey of faith?

8. What are you asking from this community of Christians?

TEACHING SEGMENT

(Begins approximately 19:00 into program.)

Summary

Father Tom Richstatter, O.F.M., is the featured teacher for this segment. He asks the basic question, “How do you become a Catholic?” His answer describes the general “components” and “stages” in the process. The following outline summarizes Father Tom’s presentation:

A. Each person’s faith journey is different.

B. Although each journey is unique, there are similar components.

1. Intellectual component

- a. To be a Catholic you would want to know what Catholics know.
- b. What’s most important is to know Jesus—and not only with the head but also with the heart.
- c. The basic “textbook” is the Sacred Scriptures.

2. Moral component

- a. The better we know Jesus, the more we will want to live and act like him.
- b. Wanting to imitate Jesus leads to a process of conversion—turning from selfishness to Spirit-filled generosity.

3. Liturgical component

- a. This inner process of conversion usually calls for an external expression: worship.
- b. Part of becoming a Catholic is worshiping with Catholics, praying in a Catholic way.

4. Ministry component

- a. A person who knows Jesus will want to tell others about Jesus, both in word and deed.
- b. Effective ministry is usually accompanied by mature faith of a long-practicing believer, but even a newcomer’s journey must have a ministry component.

Suggestions for use

As will be evident from viewing, this segment is directed primarily to those inquirers beginning the process toward Baptism. Other viewers—those already baptized or those seeking to deepen their Catholic faith—will profit from viewing this segment if the teacher or group leader places the teaching in the broader context of how all of us grow in faith throughout our lives.

Much of what Father Tom says can be applied to the whole baptized community. For example, even “cradle Catholics” may need to be challenged to move from a “head” faith based on information about

God to a “heart” faith based on the kind of conversion Father Tom talks about.

For those unfamiliar with the RCIA process, teachers may reproduce the chart found here, which shows the basic components and stages as outlined on the video. Inquirers will probably have questions that will require development of these points. Teachers and group leaders should be thoroughly familiar with the RCIA as it is adapted in their particular parish community, as well as the theory behind the RCIA itself.

It may be helpful to have a printed outline of how the RCIA is applied in the particular community, with the stages relating to the Church and parish calendars. It is important to stress, however, that the individual’s faith journey is respected in this process. Individuals proceed at their own pace, not according to a calendar!

This page may be reproduced.

Components of Your Faith Journey

1. Intellectual
2. Moral
3. Liturgical
4. Ministry

Stages on the Journey

1. Inquiry
2. Catechumenate
3. Period of Purification and Enlightenment (Lent)
*(Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism,
Confirmation, Eucharist—
celebrated at the Easter Vigil)*
4. Mystagogy (Easter season)

Questions for sharing

1. Which of the four components of the faith journey (intellectual, moral, liturgical, ministry) is most important to you right now? Why?
2. How do you understand the notion of “conversion” or “turning around” as part of the faith journey? How have you already experienced a conversion in your life?
3. What things have you heard or read about Catholicism that you want to know more about? What most interests you or appeals to you in Catholic worship?
4. How do you feel about external expression of your faith? What areas of service in your life currently relate to your faith journey?
5. In what ways have you come to know Jesus?

MUSICAL REFLECTION SEGMENT

(Begins approximately 27:00 into program.)

Summary

The musical selection for this program is “It’s a Long Walk” by Bobby Fisher and Ed Gutfreund and is performed by the Gathering Choral Society of Cincinnati, Ohio. The music and its performance are rooted in the African-American expression of faith and worship.

Images presented during the musical reflection are drawn from “Fishing Trip,” the story offered in this video program. It would not be necessary, however, for viewers to have seen the story to profit from the musical reflection.

Suggestions for use

The musical reflection can be used to open or to conclude a session. It could be shown alone or in conjunction with a prayer service. An outline for such a service might be as follows:

1. Begin with a time of silence.
2. Show the musical reflection segment.
3. Read Genesis 12:1-9 (call and journey of Abram)
4. Allow for more silence.
5. Read the following prayer as a meditation for the group:

“The Prayer of a Seeker”

Dear God, I’m walking this road without a map in my hand. Once I knew where I was headed on this journey, but now, I’m not so sure. Anyway, all I’ve got are a few directions scribbled down, some advice on how to read the road signs, maybe a place up ahead to ask the way when I get lost. Help

me set my feet toward you. Steer me to those who will guide me wisely. Send me true companions along the road. Teach me that feeling lost may not be cause for panic but may lead to new and challenging paths. Let me know that you are always walking with me. Amen.

6. Conclude with the Lord's Prayer. (Be sensitive to the fact that participants may be familiar with different versions or unfamiliar with the prayer altogether—a printed copy may help!)

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Scripture references:

Scripture frequently uses the “journey” image in stories of people of faith. The stories of Abraham (Genesis 12-14) and Jacob (Genesis 27-33) are especially rich in meaning, as is the account of the sojourn of the people of God through the desert in Exodus 12ff. St. Paul, in the fourth chapter of his Letter to the Romans, reflects on the story of Abraham.

In the Gospels, St. Luke particularly highlights the theme of journey in his account—portraying the journey of Jesus and his disciples to Jerusalem, and the missionary journeys of the apostles in Acts.

St. Paul's treatment of faith in his letters to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:11-13 and 2 Corinthians 5) describes the journey of the believer who “walks by faith.”

2. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* references:

The *Catechism* treats faith in several places: In terms of our response to God, see Part One, Chapters One, Two and Three. Note particularly numbers 153-165, which examine from a theological perspective the relationship between God's grace and human response, in faith.

With regard to the ritual aspects of initiation, see the treatment of Baptism in Part Two, Section Two: “The Seven Sacraments of the Church.” In Chapter One, the sacraments of Christian Initiation are considered, with Baptism covered in Article 1, numbers 1214-1284.

3. Available from St. Anthony Messenger Press

Please see our catalog at <http://Catalog.AmericanCatholic.org> for additional print (magazine, newsletter, book and pamphlet), audio (book and presentation) and video (DVD and VHS) resources to support your efforts in faith formation and personal spiritual growth.

Leader's Guide written by: Greg Friedman, O.F.M.

Editorial Assistance by: Conrad Kolis, Carol Ann Morrow and Margaret Warminski

© MCMXCV St. Anthony Messenger Press. All rights reserved.

NOTE: This guide can be printed and cut down in size to be stored with the DVD version of this video program. Simply cut ¾ inch from each side of the page for a guide that, when folded, can be placed inside of the DVD case or attached to the DVD or VHS case.

For use with:

Becoming Catholic: An Adult's Faith Journey on VHS (V2010) and DVD (D2010)

St. Anthony Messenger Press

28 W. Liberty St.

Cincinnati, OH 45202-6498

800-488-0488

www.AmericanCatholic.org