

Leader's Guide for
CATHOLIC BASICS FOR KIDS
What Is the Bible?

Summary

This video invites us to deepen our appreciation and understanding of the Bible as God's Word for our daily lives and helps us understand that God's friendship with us will never end. Through prayerful study of the Bible we can grow in understanding ourselves and God's loving covenant relationship with us. This guide offers questions and activities for group discussion and reflection.

1. *What is the Bible?* (collection of books and stories which God inspired human authors to record using the ordinary language of their time) Talk about inspiration. (guidance of Holy Spirit that led biblical writers to set down the truth of God's Word in the language of their time) What is the Bible most like for you: a family history, a collection of stories, a book of poetry, a history book, a book of wise sayings, other. What Scripture stories do you find most meaningful? In what ways are people today the same as people in Bible times? In what ways are they different? Consider in Scripture the special forms of literature that embody and carry truths that can speak to people of all time.
2. *How is the Bible divided?* (Hebrew Scriptures and Christian Scriptures) Remind students that the Old Testament is called the Hebrew Scriptures and tells the story of God's loving relationship with Jewish people up to the time of Jesus. The New Testament is sometimes referred to as the Christian Scriptures and tells the story of God's loving relationship with us in Jesus. Ask: How many books are in Hebrew Scriptures? (46) Christian Scriptures? (27) How are these books divided? (Hebrew Scriptures—Law, Historical Books, Wisdom Books, Prophetic Books; Christian Scriptures—Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, Letters, Book of Revelation) What are some things we learn about in each of these?
3. *Why do you think biblical authors use dramatic stories to communicate their message?* Did Jesus carry on the storytelling tradition? How? To instill the classic stories of the Hebrew Scriptures in the imagination of children, choose and present one. Name a story from Scripture that has been helpful in understanding your life? What stories or passages in Scripture do you turn to in need?
4. *Why is Scripture so important to both Christians and Jews?* Discuss ways you can be more open to God's Word in the Bible. Why did people write down the story of the Israelites and their leaders? In words or pictures? Tell your own story about how all things were made by a loving, caring God. Share your work.

5. To develop skills in locating passages in Bible, place students in groups and offer a series of investigative questions. How many chapters in Gospel of Luke? How many verses in Chapter 12 of Mark? Read Mark 6:1-6, Luke 18:15-17, John 6:22-24. What are they saying? Add your own. Ask group to name the first five books in the Bible. What do they speak about? What Wisdom books have you heard about? What prophets can you name? Find and name the four Gospels. What early Christian communities did the Letters address?
6. *What is a covenant?* (a relationship or agreement between two parties usually sealed by a special ceremony). What are the most important covenants you have made? What do you find most challenging about a covenant relationship? What is the agreement (covenant) of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures?
 - a. Remind students that the covenant made at Mt. Sinai is our covenant, too, and continues today. Through whom was covenant made, repaired, renewed? Remind students that the word testament means agreement. What are some promises of faithfulness that Catholic Christians make during their lives?
 - b. Write a personal covenant between you and God. Include all the wonderful and great things God has done for you. Be specific about what you will do for God.
 - c. Have class write a group covenant. Display.
 - d. Talk about ways families show faithfulness and care. Write a family covenant.
7. *How do you use the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures in your prayer?* Which of the psalms do you pray? When? Why?
8. Read John 11:1-44. What qualities of friendship did Jesus ask of his friends Martha and Mary? Are these the qualities of your friendship with Jesus? With others? Jesus brought the Good News that being his friend meant friendship with God. Name some of the people Jesus called friends.
OR read John 15:15. Here the early Christian community is called a community of friends. What qualities of friendship make a good Christian? In small groups write a prayer of friendship for the closing prayer service. In what ways do you show faithfulness and friendship in your relationship with God and others? Rework into a skit a story of friendship from the Bible or your own life.
9. Make a bookmark based on a theme in the Bible.
10. Make up a story or parable about someone small, young or overlooked that triumphs in the end. Share with the class. Good News is the meaning of the word *gospel*. The Gospels tell us how to follow Jesus and live in God's friendship.
What is a gospel attitude you would like most to imitate?
11. Have you ever received good advice in a letter, sent or received a message of concern? Why were the Letters included in the Bible?

12. How can you continue to share and read the Bible?

CLOSING PRAYER OF FRIENDSHIP

Materials needed: a prayer table, two candles, matches, Bible, friendship prayers from #8.

WE GATHER

Leader: Gracious God, you are our gentle friend. Gift us with friendship. Open our spirits to find you in all our friendships. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our friend and companion.

WE LIGHT

We light two candles—one for the past as we remember all those who have walked with us as friends. (Light candle) And we light one candle for the future. In this light may we be watchful for the way in which God continues to come into our life. (Light candle)

WE REVERENCE

We process with Bible and place it between our two candles.

WE LISTEN

Sign forehead, lips and heart:

May we know the Word of God. May we speak the Word of God. May we love the Word of God.

A reading from John 15:12-15

Reflect: What does God's word say to us today?

What did Jesus say was the cost of being a true friend?

What sort of commitment was Jesus asking from his friends?

WE PRAY

We share our group prayers of friendship.

WE SEND

Place hands on each person's head and say:

You are a friend of God, and our friend, too. Thank you.

Go forth and live in God's loving friendship forever.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader's Guide written by: Gaynell Cronin

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Leader's Guide for
CATHOLIC BASICS FOR KIDS

What Is a Sacrament?

Summary

Sacraments are signs and symbols of the sacred that help us remember and celebrate our most important faith stories in our home church and parish church. They also challenge us to make those memories present today through service to others.

1. Share one thing you heard or saw in the video that lingers with you. With whom do you talk when you are upset? Who notices when your spirit is heavy with worry? When have you been for another like Juan?
2. Sacraments are signs and symbols of the sacred. What does this mean in your everyday life? In groups, define a sacrament. Give an example of a sacrament other than the seven sacraments of the Church. Have you ever thought of yourself or another person as a sacrament? Invite groups to share.
3. Sacraments are actions, not things we receive. What does this mean? Note the actions of the seven sacraments. Give examples that help others understand that sacraments are actions, e.g., at Baptism the minister, parents and godparents make the Sign of the Cross on the child's forehead, an action which reminds us all that the cross of Jesus saves us.
4. Jesus is the sacrament of God. He is the action of God that reminds us that God has always and will always love us. Did you ever think about Jesus as a sacrament before? Explain this to another person, a child or adult.
5. The Church, the people of God, is the sacrament of Jesus. We are signs and symbols of Jesus' love for all. This means that as the Church we must love one another through actions, so that all will see Jesus in our lives. How can we do this on a daily basis? Tell the story of someone whose life affected yours because of how that person lived each day.
6. Through rituals and symbols we can experience God's love. When, where, with whom and how have you expressed your love in this way?
7. The seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist (initiation), Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick (healing), and Marriage and Holy Orders (service) remind us of actions we can live to be more like Jesus. Give an example of two of them that impress you, e.g., the lighting of the baptismal candle reminds me to be a light in the world.
8. Like the names on refrigerators and memorial candles, what does your family, class, parish community do to express care, concern, and prayers for someone who is ill?

9. Invite someone from your parish RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) to share their story and experience of this rite in entering the Church.
10. Prayer
 - a. Have students write the names of people, like Andre's grandmother, and place them around a memorial candle.
 - b. Light the candle and read Isaiah 43:1-2.
 - c. Invite students into quiet by breathing in God's love and sending that love to surround the person who is ill.
 - d. Make the Sign of the Cross in each person's hand saying: "Go forth to heal and be healed."

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Leader's Guide for
CATHOLIC BASICS FOR KIDS

What Is the Church?

Summary

The Church is a community of believers whose faith in Jesus, his Father and Spirit gathers them together and unites them. This guide explores through discussion, prayer, Scripture and activities the ways we are Church as we gather in faith, remember and live the Jesus story, break bread together and offer service to the needy in Christ's memory.

There are many images for Church. As the Body of Christ we render mutual service according to the different gifts given to each person. As the people of God, we are a sign of God's presence in the world which points out Christ to others. The notions of home church, parish church, world church in this video challenge us to become a faith community who continues to do what Jesus did and taught in caring about others, especially the poor and needy.

1. The Church is a community of people called to follow Jesus. Ask: What is the Church? List responses on board. Read 1 Peter 2:3-5. How are we this living body? When we grow in faith, we build the Church. How do you grow in faith with your family? While the Church is built on traditions, we are the ones who make the Church a vital, changing, living body.
2. What are the ways in which family and parish are Church? How do you pray in Church and at home? Similarities? Differences?
3. The marks of the Church are contained in our creed. Describe where you see these marks of Church in action: *one, holy, catholic, apostolic*. How does your family show the marks of the Church? Decorate a banner with symbols representing these marks.
4. Read 2 Corinthians 3:2-3. What does it mean "you are our letter"?
5. The Church is a celebrating community. What are some of the holy times, feasts and seasons we celebrate in the Church. Talk about the cycle of the liturgical year? How do you celebrate these times at home and in your parish? Choose one holy day. Tell when, where and how it could be celebrated.
6. The word "church" refers to the Christian community, and secondly to the building where people celebrate. Draw a map of your parish church. Tell what takes place in each area. Draw a map of your home church and do the same.
7. Read Corinthians 12:12-27. List the parts of the body mentioned and add some more of your own. Match up everyone in your group with one of the parts (e.g., "Beth, you are a hand; you reach out to help."). How does every part need to work together? How do you do what you do best to serve the Church?

8. Read about the early Christian community in Acts 2:42-47. How does your parish Church community still fulfill each of these four actions today: build community, worship God, preach Christ's message, serve people in need? How does each of these actions still go on in your home today? Name one way you can become more involved in Church at home and in your parish.
9. What are some images that Christians use to understand the mystery of the Church? What do these images tell you about Church? Create your own image: The Church is like... Describe, draw or bring an object to the group and explain why you chose this image.
10. Pretend you are the only teacher in the world. What and how would you teach faith by what you say and do?
11. Create a poster that invites people to join you in telling others about the Church. Design a parish bulletin that reflects your beliefs.
12. As a sign of God's care and grace, what does it mean to call the Church the sacrament of Jesus
13. Create a group that would help young people discover Jesus in their lives. Note purpose (why does it exist?), membership (who can belong?), responsibilities (what must members do?) What makes it special and different? Give a name and symbol.
14. Reflect on this saying of Teresa of Avila:

Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours.
 Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion is to look out at the world.
 Yours are the feet with which Christ is to go about doing good.
 Yours are the hands with which Christ is to bless all people now.

Design a poster to illustrate this message.
15. How do you live faith everyday in your home? What are some non-verbal signs of that faith that speak of how God is with you? How do children "catch faith?" When we gather in faith, we remember Christ's promise to be with us always. Reflect on this Scripture passage: "Wherever two or three gather in my name, there I am in their midst" (Mt. 18:20).
16. In the video, Donna tells why it is important for Edie and Mark to go to Sunday Mass: "We want them to gather with other believers, remember what Jesus taught and did, break bread, and to feed people like Jesus did." Add your own reasons for going to Sunday Mass.
17. Prayer Service

Materials needed: Bible, reflections from #7, any posters or displayed images of Church from #s 3, 9, 11 or 14.

WE GATHER

We are a community of believers who gather in faith, remember and live the Jesus story, break bread together and offer service to the needy in Christ's memory. As the Church, we mark ourselves with the Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

WE LISTEN: A reading from 1 Corinthians 12:12-14.

WE RESPOND

We are the Body of Christ. Every one of us is a member of it. We share one way we are that body in our world today. (From #7)

Together we pray the Our Father, a sign of our oneness.

WE SEND

We are Church, a sign of God's love and care for others. We hear again the words of Teresa of Avila.

"Christ has no body now on earth but yours." Please respond: Amen.

"Christ has no body now on earth but yours." "Amen."

"Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion is to look out to the world." "Amen."

"Yours are the feet with which Christ is to go about doing good." "Amen."

"Yours are the hands with which Christ is to bless all people now." "Amen."

We bless ourselves. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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Leader's Guide for
CATHOLIC BASICS FOR KIDS
A Tour of a Catholic Church

Summary

Our parish churches are filled with signs and symbols which have a story to tell and a message to deliver. Tour the church with your students and discover together the names and meanings of the objects of our Christian faith that help us remember and celebrate God's presence.

1. What questions do your students have about what they see in church? Ask them to draw a map of their parish church, highlighting whatever takes place in each area. They might even create a guided tour of the church they can lead. Another day you may want to have them guide younger students on a tour of the church.
2. Read Acts 2:42-47 or 4:32-37. Where did the early Christians meet to celebrate? (Initially, they were few in numbers and met in homes to celebrate the Eucharist at the dinner table. As numbers grew and more room was needed, they began to meet in larger homes. Some people set aside their homes to be used by the community. These home churches date back to the year 250.) Read Psalm 84.
3. Ask students to design a welcome plaque for your church door, placing signs or symbols of hospitality on it. Doors remind us to welcome everyone who comes to our church with open arms and hearts.
4. Ask students to identify and research the name of their parish church, determining when and in what architectural style it was built. What part of the church brings them comfort? Why? Name the furniture that is there (e.g. pews, presider's chair, lectern or ambo, organ, altar table).
5. Sacramentals are objects that help us remember God's presence and are often used in community prayer and celebration. The word sacramental means, "something made holy." We treat sacramentals with respect because they remind us of God. Name three. How do you treat them reverently?
6. The Church uses color to help us understand what we are celebrating. Ask students to notice objects which change color according to the liturgical season (vestments, lectern (ambo) covering, banners, etc.) and reflect the cycle of seasons and feasts that make up the Church's year of worship. Ask students why they think the Church uses these colors (green for ordinary times, purple/violet/blue for Advent and Lent, white/gold for Christmas or Easter season, red for Holy week/ Palm Sunday/ Good Friday/Pentecost/Confirmation)? What feelings does each of these colors stir in them? Plan to make a banner with color and signs of a season to display in church or in your prayer space.
7. Ask students to design a prayer space, arrange the furniture, choose objects they would place there and share their meaning.

8. What do the cross and crucifix say to you? (Show Jesus' love for us in suffering, dying, rising from death and promising us that we will live with him forever) Research the different kinds of crosses that reflect the culture of the people in the expression of their faith.
9. Discuss the meaning of the baptismal water and the place of the font. Some churches use the baptismal font, and others have another font by the doorway where all are invited to dip their hands and bless themselves with the Sign of the Cross to remember their baptismal promises. Ask students to recall when and where they have been sprinkled (*asperges*) with water at the beginning of the Mass. Write and pray a blessing with water.
10. Originating in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, stained glass windows are an art form which tell the story of God's love and remind us that God, the saints, the holy ones, are still with us especially when we pray to them. Assign students to different windows and ask them to research the symbols portrayed and design a window for their own patron saint.
11. Blessed candles are sacramentals used in the liturgy of the Church. Ask students where they are present in your church (by the altar, the ambo, in procession, etc.) Do you have votive lights? What is the meaning of the paschal candle (symbolic of the risen Christ) and where is it placed during the liturgical season? What is its design? Ask them to recall its presence during the celebration of Baptism. As Christ is the light of the world, we too are called to be lights for others. Name ways in which we do this today.
12. Discuss where the holy oils are kept and when and how they are used (Baptism—rubbed on person's head and chest to make them strong in mind and heart. Anointing of Sick—rubbed on head and hands of sick people for strength, etc.) Pause to name and remember people who are sick.
13. Have students make flash cards for clothes worn by the presider (chasuble, alb, stole) for sacramentary and lectionary, for chalice, paten, cruets. Add other objects they have seen in church. Put a picture on one side of the card and a description on the other side. Divide the class into teams and play the game of "Jeopardy" with them.
14. Assign different Stations of the Cross to class members. Have them describe the scene according to design, color, and meaning.
15. What is the tabernacle? (Container in which the Blessed Sacrament is kept.) It means tent, or little house, a place of great reverence, which holds the blessed Bread of the Eucharist, especially for the sick. Many people come to pray privately here. Ask students to notice the sanctuary candle which invites us to pray. Take a moment to pray now. Discuss the ways God is present in the Word, the Bread and Wine, the people gathered.

16. Prayer Celebration

Choose a place at church to gather. Have a bowl of water, a sprig of green, two candles to represent the past and future. Ask students to write a line of blessing for one thing that they have seen.

GATHERING PRAYER

God of all time and place, we gather to recognize and acknowledge your presence living within and among us. You call us from our busy lives to spend time with you and one another. Thank you for this gathering and blessing place. Welcome.

LIGHTING OF CANDLES

We light a candle to the *past* and remember that we are never alone. We have a history, a heritage, a connection to people who have walked before us in faith. (Light candle.)

In the lighting of this candle to the *future*, we are challenged with the dream and hope of who we can become as one people of God. (Light candle.)

And in this sacred time of the now, the *present*, we pray to be honest about who we are.

READING: Listen to the wisdom of Psalm 84:1-6.

RESPONSE: Please respond: *Blessed be God forever.*

Blessed are you, Lord our God, for giving us people to celebrate your love. *Response*

Blessed are you, Lord our God, for giving us this gathering table. *Response*

Blessed are you, Lord our God, for giving us stories to hear and tell. *Response*

Blessed are you, Lord our God for giving us candles to burn. *Response*

(Students add their own prayers.)

SENDING PRAYER

God of Light, we are a holy people. In your light, may we know your presence in all the actions of our daily living. May we be lights to one another. (Using green sprig, sprinkle water in blessing.)

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