



# **WHAT MAKES US CATHOLIC?**

**Discovering Our  
Catholic Identity**



## **LEADER'S GUIDE**

**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.

## **CATHOLIC UPDATE VIDEO**

### **Introduction to the Series**

*Catholic Update Video* is a video magazine resource designed for use in the RCIA, catechist formation, sacramental programs for parents, faith-sharing groups, study groups, and high school religious education.

*Catholic Update Video* is inspired by *Catholic Update*, the popular print resource from St. Anthony Messenger Press. Bringing that publication's popular approach to video, *Catholic Update Video* draws from Catholic life and practice to present a single topic in a "video magazine" format. An on-camera host guides viewers through four different approaches to the topic:

- 1) the story segment:** a fiction or non-fiction story highlights the faith-topic;
- 2) the witness segment:** real-life Catholics from all walks of life share their faith as lived in today's world;
- 3) the teaching segment:** an expert in a particular aspect of Catholicism presents a concise approach to the topic;
- 4) the musical reflection segment:** inspired by the popularity of the music video, Christian music and images re-present the theme.

The on-camera host provides a context for each segment, while on-screen graphics provide viewers with a question for group sharing.

### **How to Use the Programs**

*Catholic Update Video* is a flexible resource for group or classroom use as well as for individual viewing. As with any multi-media resource, a preview of the video will help the facilitator determine the best use of the program with a particular group.

- Each program stands alone and may be viewed from start to finish.
- The facilitator may stop the program after each segment. A question to use in personal or group reflection appears on-screen.
- Each of the four segments within a *Catholic Update Video* program is independent, and knowledge of material in an earlier segment is not presumed. The facilitator may show segments individually or even out of sequence.

*(To view a particular segment, the facilitator can fast-forward the VCR in the “review” mode (i.e., while the VCR is in “play”) to find the gray screen and Catholic Update Video logo which indicate the start of a segment. This study guide also gives approximate time locations within the program where each segment begins.)*

- The *story segment* can lead off an instructional session or prompt a group to discuss a theological concept previously presented. The story in itself may offer ideas for discussion.
- The *witness segment* models individual sharing in a small group or classroom setting.
- The *teaching segment* briefly highlights aspects of the topic. It is not intended to treat a particular topic exhaustively nor substitute for a thorough presentation of Church teaching or practice. For this reason, the facilitator should preview the segment to plan their own content presentations. Careful preview will help the facilitator anticipate questions, consider ways to reinforce the on-screen teacher, and make plans to supplement the video material.
- The *musical reflection segment* need not be

shown in sequence with the other segments. It might be used at the beginning of a group session to set the theme. It can be repeated later to review and reinforce the theme or to surface ideas and feelings experienced during the session. It may also be used in a prayer setting (see example given below). In some cases, scenes from the story segment are included in the musical reflection, but the music and images can stand on their own. Viewers need not have seen the story to benefit from the reflection.

- This guide offers summaries of each of the segments of this *Catholic Update Video*. Accompanying the summaries are suggestions for using the segment in various settings.
- Questions for group discussion are suggested throughout this guide. Facilitators should consider them as models for developing questions suited to their situations.
- Various resources for use with this video program are listed at the end of this guide.

## **WHAT MAKES US CATHOLIC? Discovering Our Catholic Identity**

### **Overview of the Program**

Each of us can answer the question “Who am I?” based on our unique combination of roles, relationships, beliefs, values, aspirations and activities. Changes in our lives, either unexpected or brought about by choices we make, lead us to ask other important questions which sometimes challenge and often help us further define our personal sense of identity.

When we encounter something new, we want to see if it “fits” us. We get to know the identity of a new city to which we’ve moved, a new job we’ve taken or a new group we’ve joined over time. We want to learn how to function in this new setting and find out if it will be constructive or destructive to our sense of self.

RCIA participants and others who are seeking to know more about the Catholic faith are trying to figure out if the Catholic Church “fits” them. This video program can help answer some of their early questions. In its four segments, viewers will find four different ways to look at Catholic identity. The picture of Catholicism painted in this program is done in broad brushstrokes, attempting to give viewers a sense of the “big picture” and inviting them to further exploration.

The *story segment* presents a day in the operation of a Catholic radio station, WMIH, in Cleveland, Ohio. Here we meet the staff of the station — people who have made sharing their Catholic identity their life’s work. As we walk through a workday with them, we see practices, attitudes, beliefs and values which show various aspects of “Catholic identity.”

Saundra Willingham’s story in the *witness segment* is significant in helping viewers recognize that

really coming to “own” one’s faith often comes about after some searching and questioning. Her return to the Catholic Church after a time away is indicative of “something special” that made the Church “home” to Sandra.

That “something special” is further defined by Sandra DeGidio, O.S.M., in the *teaching segment* and artistically expressed in the *musical reflection segment*. Sister Sandra addresses “What makes us Catholic? What makes us different?” Her response describes the “sacramental” vision of creation, rooted in the Incarnation, that sets Catholics apart. The song “Without Seeing You” in the *musical reflection segment* stresses our faith in the God whom we cannot see but who is visible to us in Jesus Christ.

## **Audience**

This program is intended for an adult or teenage audience, which may encompass several groups:

- RCIA participants preparing to be baptized or received into the Catholic Church;
- Adults inquiring into the Catholic faith;
- Catholics looking for an “update”;
- Catholics who are returning to active participation in the Church after some time away;
- Persons of other religious traditions who are interested in learning more about Catholicism;
- Interfaith couples preparing for marriage or a child’s Baptism;
- High school students in their religious education curriculum—especially in Confirmation preparation.
- Religious education program and school catechists for enrichment and formation.

## **STORY SEGMENT**

*(Begins approximately 0:26 into program.)*

### **Summary**

The story segment of this video presents a day in the operation of a Catholic radio station.

In the 1960's, 1260 AM was the "top 40" station for the Cleveland area. During the early 90's, lawyer Steve Kurdziel began to form the vision that would become the nation's first commercial radio station to serve a Catholic audience. Kurdziel's vision was of a station serving an audience of predominantly Catholic listeners with a variety of programming, including inspirational music, stimulating discussions of religion and spirituality as well as worship and devotional programming:

- Morning host Father Wally Hyclak's involvement in WMIH goes far beyond the news, weather and traffic reports typical on a morning show. His other contributions include a reflection on the Scripture readings used at daily Mass, a "saint of the day" feature, Father Wally's Question Box and teachings about the sacraments and Catholic spirituality.
- Sister Juanita Shealey hosts "The Living Word" each weekday morning, offering advice, prayers and a listening ear for her audience.
- "Homeward Bound," the "afternoon drive" show hosted by Steve Kurdziel, is a call-in forum for discussion of issues and events important to Cleveland's Catholic community.

The programming at WMIH Radio is intended to mirror the Church, so it's not surprising that devotional prayers such as the rosary, novenas and the daily Mass can be heard throughout the broadcast day. Listeners are invited to phone in petition requests, helping to

create an on-air community of prayer and sacramental worship as well as fellowship and mutual support.

Although WMIH operates independently of the local Church structure, station owner Steve Kurdziel maintains a policy of keeping the Catholic diocese informed about issues being discussed on the air and welcomes the bishop and his representatives to express the official Church position.

WMIH is an apparent hit among Cleveland's Catholics. As a radio station operating with a clear Catholic identity, WMIH is establishing and maintaining a Catholic presence in local media and meeting a need among Church members and others who are interested in what Catholics believe and how we practice our faith.

### **Suggestions for Use**

With some preparation and reflection, this story can help viewers reflect on Catholic identity. The story offers a “jumping off point” for discussing what it means to be Catholic and how we bring our faith to our work and the world beyond ourselves.

Before viewing the video segment, establish with participants that *identity* involves the characteristics that make us who we are. Invite participants to write down words that reflect their personal identities—roles, relationships, beliefs, values, aspirations and activities. Model this exercise for them by sharing words that help identify you. Invite sharing—especially if this is an initial or early gathering of inquirers for RCIA—as a way to “break the ice,” set the stage for future sharing, and prepare for the video segment.

Ask for responses to the question, “What do you think of when you hear the word *Catholic*?” Without commenting on or discussing the responses, move right into viewing the video. As they are viewing the video,

have group members jot down the things they see in the video story of WMIH that relate to Catholic identity.

After viewing the video segment, invite sharing of findings. Discuss. Make sure the point is made that visible and external parts of anyone's identity are expressions of the spirit of that person or group. This is true of the Church as well.

### **Questions for Sharing**

- 1) If there were a Catholic radio station in your area, would you listen? What segments of the WMIH programming most appeal to you?
- 2) The staff of WMIH make it their job to share their faith with others. We are all called to share our faith. How do/can you "make it your job" to do so?
- 3) What parts of Catholic identity do you feel good about? proud of?
- 4) What don't you understand about the Catholic Church or wish you understood better?
- 5) Do you ever find yourself being misread—that another person puts more weight on a part of your identity than it warrants? Do you think people do that with religions too? How do you see this being done with the Catholic Church?

### **WITNESS SEGMENT**

*(Begins approximately 13:55 into program.)*

#### **Summary**

The witness for this segment is a woman whose story will be familiar to many—mirroring their own story or that of a family member or friend. Her story has the "happy ending" not always achieved by others.

Sandra Willingham shares some of her journey—a path of estrangement and then reconciliation with the

Catholic Church. An experience of anger led to her separation from the Church but not from Christianity or from the Lord. She was—in her own words—“just mad at the Church.” She found God working through her seven-year-old daughter to bring her back.

Her anger with the Church came as a result of its very human character. She expected people within the Church to act as members of the Body of Christ. Sadly, she encountered racism, sexism, rejection of fellow Christians and a lack of awareness on the part of those individuals whose actions and attitudes were counter to that of Christ. Her efforts to “get through to” these people were fruitless. She was so upset that she decided to leave the Church.

Her participation in other Churches met some of her needs, but they never felt like home to her. She wanted more of the Bible and got that in her worship with other Christian communities. She missed the Mass and the sacraments the most while she was away. Although she worshipped in other Christian Churches, the word *Protestant* never fit her view of herself. As angry as she was, she could never say anything against the Catholic Church. “It’s like talking about your own family or putting your mother down. I couldn’t do that,” she says.

It was Sandra’s daughter who helped her return to the Catholic Church. When her young daughter wanted to go to the Catholic Mass (because it was a shorter service), Sandra felt God tugging at her heart, calling her home. Her daughter had been baptized but not catechized, so Sandra walked with her through the RCIA process. Again she saw this as God drawing her back.

The Church to which Sandra returned was different from the one she remembered. She thought that the Church had “grown so, and had awakened” to many things that she was looking for.

She compares her rejection of the Church to teenage rebellion. Sometimes one needs to make a break and return in order to find the true value in something. She says, “You don’t really get it until you get away and see.”

### **Suggestions for Use**

The witness segment should be introduced as the experience of a real-life Catholic — a person chosen precisely because she is an ordinary person of faith. Stress with participants that the woman interviewed shared her own thoughts and experiences, not scripted ideas.

Personal witness is important in most, if not all, groups where faith topics are being discussed. As participants share their stories, they can begin to shape a small faith community among themselves. By supporting the personal journeys of others, they can better reflect on their own journey.

This segment will be useful for small group sharing in a variety of settings.

For RCIA participants, it will be helpful to see a Catholic who struggled with the imperfection of the human Church and yet returned for the good she found there. Some of them might be coming from other faith traditions and may recognize that need for the “something more” Sandra also sought on her return. Some might be struggling with certain aspects of Catholicism and be relieved to know that searching and questioning can be healthy parts of a faith journey. Their questions should be encouraged and answered with sensitivity and honesty.

Another use for this segment is within a program to “welcome home” Catholics who have left the Church and desire to return. This could be a good opener for sharing—the witness of a person who had also left the

Church and returned. Each person's reasons for leaving are very personal and often charged with emotion. This video segment might help to make a connection to the group—especially if none of the facilitators has had a similar experience.

High school students and young adults might find this segment particularly interesting. Their stage of development often includes rebellion in the process of individuation. For some, the Church is as much an object to rebel against as parents and other authority figures. It may be healthy for them to see an adult who also rebelled against the Church yet returned. This segment might be comforting to parents who worry about whether their children will return to the Church. They may need reassurance that a “no” at this stage might actually turn out to be a “not yet” or “not now” and that a “no” to Church isn't necessarily a “no” to God.

Any group could use this segment to help identify what makes a person Catholic. Discussion might be facilitated by use of the questions that follow.

### **Questions for Sharing**

- 1) In what ways is the Catholic Church different from other Christian churches?
- 2) Which of these differences draw you to the Catholic Church?
- 3) In your opinion, what could the Catholic Church learn from its Christian brothers and sisters?
- 4) Have you ever left a group disappointed and angry? What did you learn from the experience? Did you ever return?
- 5) What do you think of the attitude of many toward the Catholic Church—“I don't like everything I find here, but I'm committed to it and know that I have a better chance to bring about positive change from within than from without”?

## **TEACHING SEGMENT**

*(Begins approximately 19:43 into program.)*

### **Summary**

Sister Sandra DeGidio, O.S.M., is the featured teacher for this segment. She addresses the basic questions, “What makes us Catholic? What makes us different?” Her answer describes the “sacramental” vision of creation that sets Catholics apart and is manifested in our beliefs and practices. The following outline summarizes Sister Sandra’s presentation.

#### **A) The Catholic approach to Christian faith is rooted in a “sacramental worldview.”**

1. We look for and see God and God’s grace in all things.
2. Despite evil, we remain loved and blessed by God as affirmed in the Incarnation—God became human in Jesus, a sacrament for us.

#### **B) Certain moments of human life ought to be specially celebrated.**

1. This is done in our seven sacraments, “visible signs of invisible grace.”
2. Through the use of visible symbols such as bread, wine, water, oil and the lives of ordinary people, God makes real the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

#### **C) Sacramentals such as rosaries, crucifixes and blessed ashes can help to remind us of God’s presence and call us to a closer relationship with God.**

**D) The human person is basically good and holy, created by God and redeemed in Christ.**

1. The Church is called to be a “sacrament” to the world, a visible sign of Jesus.
2. We find help and support in the example of others, such as Mary and the saints, who have responded to God throughout history.
3. We look for God’s presence in Catholic parishes and through the human hierarchy who give structure to and serve the Church.

**E) We trust that God’s Spirit is working in the Church.**

1. We accept the Church’s authority to teach and interpret the Bible.
2. We believe that God is at work in Tradition, the living accumulation of human wisdom and experience, transmitting our beliefs down through the ages.

**F) We embrace the world—living and working in it to help make Christ’s presence known.**

**G) We cherish the whole person.**

1. We maintain a good, healthy and balanced view of the human person—body, mind and spirit.
2. We believe that human knowledge and truth—philosophical, scientific and artistic—can lead us to God.

**H) The presence of God in the world invites our response to a strong call to justice and equality.**

1. We strive to bring God’s saving grace to sinful situations and transform them.
2. Our Church knows no boundaries of human differences.

## Suggestions for Use

This segment uses broad brushstrokes to paint a picture of a Church whose history, belief system and practices are so wide and deep that they cannot be captured in a brief presentation. This segment does not intend to list or explain particular points of Catholic doctrine. The attempt here is likewise not to answer every question viewers might have about the Catholic Church but to give them a sense of the “big picture,” the essence, of Catholicism.

- **For use in the RCIA process**, this segment is suggested for an early session in the inquiry stage. Although inquirers might come with questions about the details of practices and beliefs (which can be addressed simply at this stage), they don’t need to be overwhelmed with too much information at first. This segment will be helpful in extending the invitation to explore Catholicism more deeply.
- **For use with Catholics who are returning to the Church after some time away**, this segment can be used as a very general updating after some of the emotional issues of their leaving the Church have been shared and accepted. While these individuals may need more significant updating not intended to be accomplished by this video or even by a “welcome home” program, this segment can very gently and positively invite them back and reorient them to the Church. It can also be used as a starting point for reference before beginning to deal with their questions in a more in-depth way.
- **For interfaith couples preparing for marriage within the Catholic Church or for their child’s Baptism**, this segment can be a tool to orient the non-Catholic partner to the Catholic faith, a starting point for education about the approaching sacramental celebration.

As is the case with all *teaching segments* in the *Catholic Update Video* series, this segment can also be used for catechist enrichment and formation.

### **Questions for Sharing**

- 1) What had been your biggest question about Catholicism? What questions do you still have after viewing this segment?
- 2) In what ways does the Catholic “sacramental worldview” fit your personal worldview?
- 3) Despite human sin and excesses, Catholics trust that God’s Spirit is working in the Church. In what areas of the Church do you see the Spirit working?
- 4) How does the fact of the Incarnation affect your sense of self as a human being? How does it affect your relationship with God?
- 5) What questions do you still have concerning the role of Mary and the saints? the Bible and Tradition? the hierarchy?

### **MUSICAL REFLECTION SEGMENT**

*(Begins approximately 29:15 into program.)*

### **Summary**

The musical reflection for this program is “Without Seeing You.” The song stresses our faith in the God we cannot see, who is visible to us in Jesus Christ. Familiar Catholic scenes, symbols, and images relating to the sacraments accompany the music.

## Suggestions for Use

This musical reflection can be used to open or conclude a study or faith-sharing session. It could be shown alone or in conjunction with a prayer service. An outline for such a service follows:

- 1) Begin with a time of silence.
- 2) Share Scripture: John 20:24-29.
- 3) Show the musical reflection.
- 4) Invite silent reflection on everyday events and people in which we see God.
- 5) Invite each person to share a response to the statement/prayer, "I see you, my Lord and my God, in..." Conclude with a prayer of thanksgiving for the ways God is present and known to us.
- 6) Pray the Lord's Prayer as a group. (Be sensitive to the fact that participants may be familiar with different versions. A printed copy may help!)
- 7) End with a shared sign of peace.

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

### 1) Scripture references:

Scripture references to support the *story segment* focus on the theme of faith in action as found in James 1:23-25 and James 2:14-26. Saundra Willingham's story in the *witness segment* reminds one of the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7) and the psalmist's praise of God's faithfulness (Psalms 62:6-9, 105, 121) and God's mercy (Psalms 103:6-10, 106:44-47, 130, 136). Sandra DeGidio's summary of the Catholic faith in the *teaching segment* finds much scriptural support. Some of the themes which stand out are Incarnation (John 1:14, John 3:16, and all stories of the nativity); Goodness of Creation (Genesis 1:31, Psalm 104); Mary (Luke 1:26-38, John 2:1-12, John 19:25-27); Pope and

Church Hierarchy (Matthew 16:18, Matthew 28:16-20); Call to Justice (Micah 6:8, Wisdom 8:7, Leviticus 19:15, Psalm 92:13-16); and Hope (Romans 5:1-5). Hebrews 11:1 and the story of “doubting Thomas” in John 20:24-29 support the song in the *musical reflection segment*.

**2) *Catechism of the Catholic Church* references:**

The *Catechism* addresses several of the topics found in this video: Work (2427); Vocation to Follow Christ (1694); Conversion (1432, 1489); Incarnation (470); Sacraments (1117-1118); Church, Visible and Spiritual (771); Church as Sacrament (774-76); Sacramentals (1667-73); Popular Piety (1674); Goodness of Creation (339); Hierarchy (874, 1919); Tradition (78); and Scripture and Tradition (80-82).

**3) Resources for further study from St. Anthony Messenger Press and Franciscan Communications:**

**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.

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