

Catechist Handout

Week 15 – 3/6/2022

Epistles (Getting/Giving Advice)



SET THE WORLD ABLAZE!

OBJECTIVES

- Defining what an epistle is and what its purpose is
- Introducing the teens to the New Testament Epistles
- Understanding the role epistles (letter writing) played in the early Church
- Understanding the lasting influence the epistles have had for the Church
- Identifying some of the issues raised in the NT Epistles
- Having the teens compose an epistle to their parish community

OVERVIEW

5:15-6:45pm - Small Group Lesson Plan

LESSON COMPONENTS

Community Builders (15-20 minutes)

Lasting Influence Activity

Direct the teens to page 2 of their Teen Handout(TH). Instruct them to complete the first quiz before going on to second one. The teens may get a couple of the questions on the first quiz correct, but more than likely they will not know most of the answers. Whether or not they are able to answer any of the questions to the first quiz, they will be able to come up with at least three persons for each category on the second quiz. Once everyone has finished the quiz go to the discussion questions (TH pg. 3)

Lasting Influence Discussion Questions:

1. Which quiz was easier? Why?
2. What is it about the people in the second set of questions that makes them so special?
3. What stands out about them?
4. What person or group do you think are making a real difference in people's lives today?
5. For whom are you a major influence? Why?

CATECHIST NOTES

Since most of us no longer write letters, the teens will not have an immediate connection with this literary form. Some of them may have never written or received a letter. Help them understand why letter writing might still be a useful form of communication and how it similar to and different from the modes of communication they are more likely to use (text messages, tweets, social media posts...)

BACKGROUND MATERIAL

Short Articles

[Eusebius and Letter Writing in the Early Church | Marg Mowczko](#) – a short 1 ½ page article packed with good info

[New Testament letters - United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#) – 1 page overview

[Pauline epistles | Overview Bible](#) short article

YouTube Resources

Apostle Paul:

[Short Biography](#) ← Click here!

[19 Surprising Facts about St. Paul](#)

Answers to Quiz 1

- A. Houston Astros, Chicago Cubs, Kansas City Royals
- B. Amancio Ortega, Warren Buffett, Mark Zuckerberg
- C. *Pulitzer* - Thomas Friedman, William Faulkner, David McCullough
Nobel - Barack H. Obama, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela
- D. if you don't know this one...
- E. Moonlight, Spotlight, Birdman

Shared experiences by adults and teens (10-15 minutes)

- Direct teens to **TH pg. 1** and present in your own words some thoughts on letter writing and how it is similar and different to forms of current communication
- What are some advantages to letter writing?
 - the personal touch lets you know that you were important in somebody's life for them to invest the time and effort of writing and mailing a letter to you.
 - there is a sensory experience in holding and reading a letter. If you really want to tell someone that you care, involve his/her senses
 - when you look through the mail in your mailbox outside how many hand-addressed envelopes do you put in the trash bin? how many emails do you move to spam/trash folders before opening?
 - since not any people write letters nowadays, when you write one it will help you stand out in a good way
 - have you ever gotten a handwritten letter that you didn't open?
- Explore with the teens what an epistle is and what is its purpose

Scripture (20-25 minutes)

- Have a teen or teens read the section on the Pauline Epistles
 - Who was Paul?
 - Have the kids open to pg. 1485 of their Bibles and have a volunteer/s read it aloud
 - Show a clip from one of the documentaries on St. Paul or the trailer for the new film out now **Paul, The Apostle of Christ.**

Discussion questions

- Why was Paul such an important figure in early Christianity?
- Why did 13 of Paul's letters get into the NT?
- What would reading Paul's epistles teach us?

- Have the teens identify the authors of the Epistles (if they don't know, direct them to the Quick Summary sections of their own Bibles that precede the letters).
- Explore the importance of letter writing to early Christianity (see box on TH p 1). Discuss question at the end of the box.

Trailer for **Paul, Apostle of Christ**

www.youtube.com/watch?v=LyOqQZUDdO4

NOTE: We have 20 usable Chrome Books all with the correct adaptors for classrooms with projectors. If you want one to use this Sunday let Maureen know.

← This might be a good section to have a peer lead.

- Divide your teens into smaller groups (pairs, triads or groups of 4-5). Ask each smaller group to read over the many themes touched on in the Pauline Epistles that can be found in the **Understanding the Epistles handout on pp. 3-4 in the TH**
- Have each pair or group identify 5 themes they think are important to delve into for teens today.
- Call each group back and have them share the themes they thought were important. Keep a list of the themes mentioned. Notice if there is any overlap between groups.

Putting Faith Into Action (25-30 minutes)

Writing our own Epistle to the Church of Holy Family Activity

- Explain that each small group will be composing their own epistle to the Holy Family Community.
- Choose a theme. It could be one on the list of themes they identified or one of their own.

What message do we want to communicate to our parish community?

What advice do we have to offer about being a church?

Is there a particular issue the parish is facing we think is important and what wisdom do we have to offer?

Is our parish community in need of encouragement or appreciation that we could offer?

- Remind the teens that copies of their epistles may be sent to Fr. Terry & Published in the bulletin
This is a serious activity and they have to finish their epistle before leaving class tonight. What they write reflects on them.
- Direct teens to the traditional format of an epistle on **TH p 5**
- Assign the three sections to different pairs of teens
 - Letter's Beginning – have this group look at a few of the beginnings of NT epistles and re-write one in their own words. 1-2 sentences.
 - Body of the Letter – have this group state the main message in 1 or 2 sentences and then give 4-5 reasons for why they think this message is important (6-8 more sentences). 1-2 sentences warning what could happen if the message is ignored.
 - Letter's Conclusion – have this group write 2-3 sentences about what needs to be done practically to embody or enact the message and 2-3 sentences for a closing prayer.
- Have each group read their section out loud in order.

Keep your teens moving. Provide them with a time limit for this activity.

Remind teens this is a serious endeavor. They need to be focused. No one leaves till the class epistle is finished.

The class is writing between 18-22 sentences total. Spelling and grammar must be correct.

Divide and conquer. Assign a peer or catechist to oversee each group. One pair should be plenty for the Letter's Beginning. 2-3 pairs should work on the Body of the Letter. 1-2 pairs should be able to write the letter's conclusion. Let the teens use the NT testament epistles as models. It is fine if teens rewrite greeting, the closing prayer found in an epistle.

Have the various groups each read the section they wrote in order. Make any final edits. Turn your work into Teen Faith.