

Catechist Handout – F2

Week 14 - Feb 27, 2022

Lesson: Personalizing Spirituality



OBJECTIVES

1. The class realizes that they have a “spiritual dimension” as a part of themselves. God wills to be in relationship with them.
2. That we are each unique individuals! Due to this, of course, we will express our Catholic spirituality in various ways.
3. There are many different spiritual practices at their disposal! What works for one person may not work for another.

OVERVIEW

1. 4:00- 5:00pm - Mass
2. 5:15-6:45pm – Small Group Lesson Plan (NO teen handout, Catechists are leading the teens through experiences)

LESSON COMPONENTS

- A. Community Building (10 min)
- B. Shared experiences by adults and teens (15 minutes)
- C. Catholic Teaching/Insight
- D. Putting Faith Into Action

Setting the Scene – Introduction

The French Jesuit priest and philosopher, **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**, famously said, “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.” It seems that on a very deep and almost primal level, *we know this to be true!* That there is more to us than mere physical matter – that we have a divine element about us – the stuff of the *transcendent* or *eternal*. This is a deeply-rooted intuition shared by many religious outlooks. We know that we are more than just the sum-total of our thoughts, feelings, or present life situations. Although, it can be really hard for us to access this element of our being. Why? Because life and *all* its various distractions get in the way! Living in a society, especially like ours, conditions us to fall into set-routines that buffer us from a healthy spiritual life. A good question to ask would be, “Where is God’s presence in your everyday life?” Each teen will have a slightly different take on this!

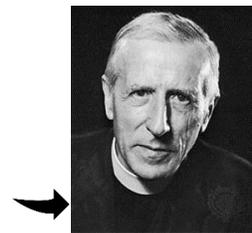
CATECHIST NOTES



As your teens progress through this faith year, we want to highlight that they need to make the faith their *own* for it to fully take root. This can be hard to do, to find meaningful spiritual practices that align with our unique sensibilities. We will provide *some* of these practices in this lesson plan to go over, but the effectiveness of this lesson will rest on open class discussion and sharing/participation.

Main articles used for this lesson!

1. <http://tinyurl.com/yyzu8csg>
2. <http://tinyurl.com/y54q43pe>



Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) was not only a Jesuit priest and philosopher, but an accomplished paleontologist and geologist. Last week, we talked about religion and science. Chardin is *another* example of a devout Christian who demonstrates that religion and the pursuit of scientific truth *are not* fundamentally at odds. See his famous theory called the “Omega Point,” [here](#).

If we are to move onward in our spiritual quest for true union with Jesus, we must learn to find ways to set aside the distractions (of our mind and society) and to encounter the divine. We have this capability! In Genesis, it clearly says that God stated, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). This is an important *foundational* belief in the Judeo-Christian worldview. That humans are not just another creature; humans are specially created beings that reflect (in many ways) God himself. Just like our children reflect our images and characteristics as they grow, so to do we reflect God. As we pursue a relationship with God, we can grow in this ability – we can grow in love with *all of ourselves* and with others. We can become “*whole*,” or individuals who are spiritually integrated.

In this lesson-plan, we will be covering various different Christian practices for drawing closer to God. Some of these practices are ancient... and some modern! God does not speak to everyone in the same exact way. Due to this, not every spiritual practice has the same effect on everyone – and *there is no shame in that*. We each are uniquely created, like an artistic expression! Let’s hammer this concept home with a community builder.

Community Builders

This is a set of two games called “**You and Me**,” and “**Me, Not you**.” You will play the second one immediately after the first. The description of the activity is below,

Group the participants in triads and have teens stand together with their teams. If there are fewer than nine participants, form pairs; one participant can be a team with a peer.

Give each team member a number: 1, 2, or 3. Tell the teams they will play a game called You and Me. Each team needs to come up with three (or two, if in pairs) ways they are all alike. The members should take turns asking one another questions until each member has discovered something all three (or both) have in common. They will need to remember the commonality, because they will each have to share it with people from other teams. Once they find the commonality, they may sit down to signal they are ready for the next part of the game. The first team to sit down wins.

Explain how you wish the participants to ask questions to find commonalities: For example, Person 1 might ask if everyone on the team is a teenager. Person 2 might ask if everyone goes to Holy Family regularly on Sundays. Person 3 might ask if everyone likes playing video games. If one person does not like playing video games, Person 3 might ask if everyone is homeschooled. If all three team members are homeschooled, this team has completed the game and can sit down.

After all teams are done, invite each team to share their commonalities. Have the winning team go first.

CATECHIST NOTES

? Have your teens ever felt shame because they haven’t felt a “spiritual experience” when they think that should have or expected they should have?

? During the *Knowing Your Gifts lesson on April 3rd*, your teens will fill out a document that asks them to specify a ministry to get involved with at the church. How can volunteering bring them closer to God?



← Our uniqueness as individuals doesn’t stop at our fingerprints or our biological make-up. In order to become “whole,” we need to fully embrace ourselves for who we are. This will inevitably lead us to *different* spiritual practices in our quest for understanding our “spiritual self,” and union with God.

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Now, invite the teams to play another game: **Me, Not You**. In this game, each team member tries to identify a way they are different from other team members. Again, after every team member identifies a difference, the entire team should sit down to signal completion. Have each teams share their differences.

You can process the game with these questions:

- Which was easier to find, commonalities or differences?
- Did anyone in the larger group share a difference with you?
- Were some of the differences surprising?
- Sometimes people are treated badly because they are different. Can anyone give an example? Is noticing that someone is different the same as treating someone badly? Should we be afraid to talk about our differences? Why or why not?
- What would our world be like if we were all alike in every way?

Help the teens understand that noticing differences does not need to lead to fear, hate, or any form of oppression. You might say:

“Noticing a difference is not the same thing as rejecting or criticizing someone because they are different. We often notice or discover differences between ourselves and other people, and it’s not a bad thing to respectfully talk about them. On the other hand, if we do not talk about our differences, it is easy to get into misunderstandings. We may start to think that everyone has the same experiences, beliefs, thoughts, and values that we do, and that is not true. As Catholics, we believe that God has made us similar in some ways, but different in others. We are each unique! Uniqueness is not only beautiful, but it is needed in the body of Christ.”

Shared Experiences by Adults and Teens

After taking some time to talk about how everyone is unique, please now take some time to, as Catechists and Peers, discuss how you believe yourselves to be unique. What makes you different from others? What are your different strengths and weaknesses? What kinds of different spiritual practices do you enjoy?

Once you’ve spent some time here, please move forward into discussing these various Catholic spiritual practices.

Catholic Teaching/Insight



Lectio Divina

Known as “transformative engagement with Scripture,” Lectio Divina is an ancient, rich practice of biblical spirituality which is enjoying a renaissance in our own time. The origin of this practice can be traced back to the desert fathers and mothers who spent much time ruminating on the biblical texts. We actually see this practice spelled out in Acts 8:29-39, where the Ethiopian court official of Queen Candace is

→ It’s *always* beneficial to highlight this with our teens. The main point of this activity is to show that we are alike in some ways and very different in others. Keep in mind that your teens, at this point, probably know a good amount about their peers. Challenge them to dig a little deeper.

reading and meditating on verses in Isaiah. He does not fully understand the passages, but reads and meditates on them. He appeals to Phillip for enlightenment and Phillip ends up converting the Ethiopian official to Christianity.

You can try Lectio Divina as a class! Open your bibles to **1st Corinthians 12-27**. Select someone to read the verses once and another to read them a second time. Catechists, please guide the class through the steps!

Lectio Divina is a four-step process,

1. (**Lectio**) Begin with a slow, leisurely, and attentive reading of a biblical passage(s). Once you have read through it, re-read it again. Internalize the text! Begin to delve into what it's meaning may be.
2. (**Meditatio**) Now we do some investigation! During this step we look at biblical commentaries, the scripture in it's use in the liturgy of the church, related texts from the Old and New Testaments, church documents and other forms of study. This step is for deepened understand of the scripture – with a special focus on how it relates to you in context of your own experience.
3. (**Oratio**) Next, we pray about our reflection on the scripture. We may be moved by our experience so far. We offer a prayers of thanksgiving, sorrow, repentance, resolve, etc. God that wants us to understand and read his word, so we always thank him for teaching ability (even if we cannot understand fully).
4. (**Contemplatio**) Finally, after an intense time of prayer we enter into a period of contemplation. A phrase the applies well here is “resting the grace of God.” Continue praying if you wish, but this phase is a time for us to just honor the friendship we have with Christ – ever thankful that he speaks to us in the Word.

The term “biblical spirituality” may be unfamiliar to your teens (it most likely is), but this has become a very famous form of reading scripture. It's not for everyone though, let's move onto another Christian spiritual practice!

Morning Offerings

Are you a morning person? Some of us are and some of us most definitely aren't! Regardless, I think we all agree that it would be helpful (no matter what time of the day we wake up) that we start the day grateful for another day to live our lives. *Nothing promises us that we will wake up tomorrow.* Every day we should be thankful for our lives, that we have been gifted another day to live for Christ.

Just as the birds consistently sing every morning, we should make it a habit every day to thank God (in some way) for our new opportunity to make a difference in the world. Let's move on to the next few.

CATECHIST NOTES



In the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo tradition the court official's name was “**Bachos**.” He is thought to have been an Ethiopian Jew. He is also said to be the first Ethiopian convert to Christianity. Today, the Ethiopian church has a membership of 40 to 46 million (most live in Ethiopia). Christians make up 60% of the country.

 *Seek by reading and you will find by meditating. Knock by praying, and it will be opened to you in contemplation – St. John of the Cross*

 *Example of a traditional “Morning Offering:” My God, I offer you my prayers, my works, joys and sufferings of this day in union with the holy sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of your Son's Sacred Heart, for the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, and the reunion of Christians. Amen.*



Fasting has been a constant practice in the church for *twenty* centuries. Although, over time the practice has slowly lost popularity as a spiritual discipline. In a time before, the practice of fasting was *inundated* with rules. Some of these rules concerned even the specific *weight* of food that was allowed to be eaten! At certain points during Lent, failing to fast was considered a “mortal sin.” After Vatican II, these things are no more. Due to this history though, you can see why the practice left a bad taste in many Catholic mouths (pun intended).

Not so fast, though! Should we re-visit this practice? Sometimes good things can lose their original purpose. It seems that over the years, fasting had aggregated many unnecessary rules. What is the true purpose of the moderation of food, or fasting?

1. Fasting calls a person to authenticity. It lifts our spirit beyond the mundane. It empties ourselves of all the nonessentials (literally).
2. Fasting confronts our consumer mentality – it reminds us of what it is like to be dependent on God. We don’t exist to merely pamper ourselves and engorge in food. We fast in solidarity with the poor, as well.
3. It helps us exercise control over our animal-like passions.
4. In order to be able to say “no” to others, we need to be able to learn to say “no” to ourselves.
5. It helps us listen to our friends and family better. Putting the needs of others first, before our own.

Fasting is a deeply personal practice and it can have great spiritual effects! It can help us quench our spiritual thirst. It’s just another tool our religious tradition has passed down to us for our use. Ask your teens what their “fasting” experiences have been like. Do they fast for lent?

Praying with Images

“A picture is worth a thousand words” is a really famous saying that we’ve all heard, but the early Christians new this very well. They noticed that there was a formative power that could be gained from visual images – spiritual lessons they could communicate. We are *inundated* with images today. If you’re an “Instagram” user you, most likely, spend on average as much as **53** minutes a day on the app. We see images/videos constantly on TV, memes on our phones, etc. There is no shortage of images!

These images we see every-day form our conscious and unconscious mind. Although, what are we intentionally viewing that helps form our “spiritual selves?” Are we intentionally choosing to contemplate and pray with the help of images? Chances are, you have pictures of family and friends around the house that carry deep

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Fasting of the body is food for the soul! – St. John Chrysostom

Common Reasons for Fasting:

1. Renewal of Faith
2. Mourning
3. Seeking a sense of purpose or direction
4. Struggling with a major life-choice
5. Overcoming addiction or personal crisis
6. Spiritual satisfaction

Warning: If your teens are thinking of trying a fasting practice, tell them to talk to their parents, or you, about it first! It’s good to get someone’s advice before we intentionally moderate our food-intake.



What images evoke a deep sense of wonder or speculation for you?

meaning for you. I'm sure that seeing the likeness of the people in the pictures makes them come to life. You *know* those people.

When we pray with images, we are thinking about the meaning and profound nature of the image, *below the surface*. That's the stuff of prayer! Images that carry spiritual meaning do not all fall under the heading of "religious art," understood in a traditional sense. Iconic art, representational images, impressionistic artwork and abstract art all have proven formative in orienting a persons' spiritual lives. What matters most is choosing an image that you can "get lost in," that "invites you in." Latino/a Catholic communities use this form of prayer very much so – it's time we all try to make use of this special spiritual practice.

Have your teens take out their phones and search for an image that calls out to them. Is it a painting? Is it a religious image of Christ or one of the saints? Or is it a picture of a loved one or family friend? No matter what they select, take a few minutes and pray as a class with your images. Below, are a few steps.

1. Choose an image with strong expressive power.
2. Contemplate the image with a spirit of openness and expectancy.
3. Notice the memories, associations and longings the image evokes.

Labyrinths

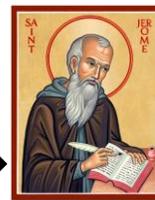
What is so healing about taking a walk? Has life ever just gotten so crazy that you just had to get out of the house and take a walk? Chances are most of you have done this. Life can oftentimes disrupt our sense of direction and inner peace. Walking labyrinths is a time-honored way of prayerfully re-routing and re-focusing our mind on what really matters – our journey with Christ. The path symbolizes our life's journey! Unlike a maze, a labyrinth is one path that leads to the center and then back out. They predate Christianity, but they have deep Christian roots...

<**F2 Connection**> Most likely, during the **F2 Retreat** your teens had the chance to walk the labyrinth that we laid out during the "prayer stations" activity. What was their experience like? What are ways you can employ this same type of spiritual practice in your everyday life, even if you don't have a giant labyrinth in your back yard?

Eucharistic Adoration

As Catholics, we differ from some of our other Christian brothers and sisters in our view on the "Eucharist" or "Holy Communion." We do not view the bread and wine as being only *symbolically* Jesus Christ's body and blood...we affirm and believe that the consecrated bread and wine quite *literally* turn into the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. For many this is truly a radical idea, but it is a central teaching to Catholicism – many of us will know of this doctrine as called "transubstantiation."

CATECHIST NOTES



"**Icons**" are a very particular type of Christian visual image in which Christians pray. With many layers of meaning, icons remind us that we are living in a spirit-filled world. Praying with icons remains an extremely popular spiritual practice for Eastern Orthodox Christians.



Some Ideas:

1. Draw a labyrinth
2. Make a spiral labyrinth out of fallen leaves.
3. Turn a neighborhood walk into your labyrinth path!
4. Find a labyrinth in your area by searching the web.

“Eucharistic Adoration” where you sit and pray before the blessed sacrament. This can be an intensely moving experience for many Catholics.

The un-leavened bread, or the consecrated communion host, is placed in either a locked tabernacle or placed in view inside a “monstrance” (which is a golden, sun-like in appearance holding stand). In the 1950’s and 60’s it was common to have Catholics stop inside a church (when passing by) and sit and visit with the Blessed Sacrament a little while. In the “adoration chapel,” it is an intentionally quiet place where one can spend time with God. Forget the distractions of the world! Our Lord wants us to come to him; he is present in the Eucharist unlike anywhere else.

If time allows, take a walk over to Holy Family’s “Adoration Chapel,” which is located right across from our Chapel in the narthex. Spend a few minutes there in silence as a class. It’s good that the teens understand this is a welcoming place that they can “drop in on,” when they wish.

<**F2 Connection**> On the **F2 Retreat** your teens also had the experience to sit with the Blessed Sacrament a little while. They got the chance to see a little of what “Eucharistic Adoration” was like. Ask them what they thought of it. Did they enjoy it? They had the opportunity to pick up a small wooden olive wood cross in our Adoration Chapel... see if they remember that experience!

♥ Practicing Hospitality

In the traditions shaped by the Bible, offering hospitality to those in need is a moral-imperative. Now, we all can be hospitable in differing ways, but what are some ways that jump to mind? How can you extend welcome to those in need?

The Christian Works of Mercy:

1. Feed the hungry
2. Give drink to the thirsty
3. Clothe the naked
4. Welcome the stranger
5. Visit the sick and imprisoned
6. Bury the dead

Putting Faith Into Action – Wrapping Up!

As you wrap up discussion, please go around the room and see what everyone’s **ending thought** is. Ask if they will commit to trying one of these spiritual practices moving forward – or if they will go and do some more research to find something that works for them. Thank them for being attentive and participating! Sometimes, in trying new things, we need to go out of our comfort zone a little bit to discover ourselves in new ways.

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Every Christian denomination that believes in the “*real presence*” of Christ in the Eucharist believes that when the bread and wine turns into Christ’s body and blood, *it is a miracle of the highest order*. I mean, right? That’s a pretty big deal! Well, we also believe that there are instances sometimes when God allows us to *visually* see this process take place. There are recorded instances of the bread turning bloody. When tested, secular scientists have found that what they found under the microscope appeared heart-tissue. Check this out → [Miracle of Lanciano](#).

? As a class, talk about these various actions and how we show Christ’s love through each of them. Have you as a class done any of these things together? How can someone who feels called or led to participate in these actions more on their own do that? We encounter strangers frequently, how should we be treating them? How can we become “whole” by helping others?

LESSON PREPARATION NOTES:

Is there something I want to pick up or go over from last week's class?

My community building activity this week will be

What parts of the lesson will the Peer Ministers lead/facilitate?

Do I need anything from the Faith Office prior to class?

Other

CATECHIST NOTES

Things I will need for class this week:

The Key Ideas/Objectives for this week are

Things I need to consult Teen Faith about
