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Section One

Using the Catechist's Manual

This *Catechist's Manual* is part of the ON THE JOURNEY series of books intended to be used for the Order of Christian Initiation. This *Manual* is designed to be a practical help to the catechist by offering a structured way of preparing for and presenting the catechetical portion of an RCIA session. Together with the companion *Participant's Book*, this *Manual* should enable catechists to prepare thoroughly for each teaching and to present the faith both systematically and organically (see CT 21; GDC 67). In order to understand the structure of each lesson plan and its context within the catechumenal process, it is essential that each catechist read with care all of the introductory sections of this *Manual*.

The Purpose of Section Two

This section provides a summary of the structure of the RCIA process. This highly simplified explanation offers a basic context for the following sections, which then elaborate on the *catechetical* aspect in detail. The enclosed foldout RCIA Overview Chart (discussed below) is a useful companion to this section. The *liturgical* and *pastoral* aspects of the RCIA process receive much more significant treatment in other publications of the ON THE JOURNEY series, particularly the *RCIA Leader's Manual*.

The Purpose of Section Three

The RCIA ritual book directs that catechesis should shift in emphasis and, to some degree, in method as a participant goes through the process (see RCIA 4-7). This section explains, in practical terms, how those changes serve the process and help foster conversion. The lesson plans provided in this *Manual* are primarily written for the Catechuminate period, which is usually the longest and most densely catechetical. As the character of the catechesis in each of the other periods is described, this section should assist the catechist in adapting these lesson plans to suit teaching during other stages in the RCIA process.

The Purpose of Section Four

The lesson plans are designed according to a teaching structure suggested by Msgr. Francis D. Kelly in his book *The Mystery We Proclaim: Catechesis for the Third Millennium* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2nd edition, 1999) in chapter three of part five, as an "Ecclesial Approach to Catechetical Methodology." This section explains the rationale behind that structure in the context of the distinctive demands of RCIA catechesis and the adult learning model.

The Purpose of Sections Five and Six

These sections are written with two goals in mind. The first purpose is to examine how to present the truths of the faith in an orderly and cohesive manner that fosters conversion and a deep hunger to know the God who reveals such wonders. Addressed here are two interrelated issues: how to teach the truths of the faith *systematically*, and how to teach them *organically*. Section Five treats the systematic question — ways to determine the order of RCIA teachings by using pastoral, liturgical, and catechetical means. Section Six treats the organic question — ways to teach the relationships among doctrines by using salvation history, the theological virtues, and the pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The second purpose of these two sections is to address certain problems that are commonly found in catechesis today, especially in the Western world. Within the Catholic Church, there has developed the problem, or perhaps the crisis, of dissent. Exploring in detail the sources of what Pope Paul VI called the "leaven of infidelity to the Holy Spirit" (PCB 41) is beyond the scope of this *Manual*. However, the effort to not perpetuate the problem is very much relevant to this discussion of catechizing those entering the Catholic Church. In RCIA catechesis, attempts are often made to initiate adults into the faith without due consideration of the cultural context of dissent, in which their adherence to the truth will be constantly challenged. If the faith has not been taught in an authentically systematic and organic manner, their hold on the truth is endangered. Participants may develop a fragmented,

emaciated, and unenthusiastic view of divine truth, wherein the outright rejection of certain revealed truths or passive lack of formation of conscience becomes accepted as normal. The results of this kind of catechesis range from nominal adherence, lukewarmness, or cynicism, to outright absence from the visible fold soon after initiation. To counter this, this *Manual* suggests the necessary, demanding, and wholly wonderful challenge of being what Pope John Paul II calls a “true catechist” (CT 30), who can genuinely say, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received” (1 Cor 15:3).

The Purpose of Section Seven

The sixty lesson plans that form the heart of this *Manual* are presented with three Tables of Contents for the sake of suggesting important considerations to the catechist. First, the lesson plans are listed in alphabetical order so as to give the catechist the freedom to determine the order of catechesis. Second, the lesson plans are listed by dividing them into the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Third, the lesson plans are listed by dividing them into the four pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The rationale behind these divisions is discussed in Sections Five and Six.

Sixty lesson plans can carry a parish well beyond a twelve-month period, allowing flexibility in organizing a catechumenal process that can grow beyond the bounds of the “school-year model,” and more towards the ideal of a year-round process. Because many RCIA processes operate in a period of a year, or even less, catechists in these situations will have to decide how best to combine two or more lessons, depending on their experience of what aspects of the faith need most attention in a given circumstance. In parishes with a year-round process, catechists may opt to teach some of the more content-rich lesson plans over the course of more than a single session. Appendix II provides examples of how some parishes have chosen to combine or expand certain lesson plans using the methods presented here.

The Purpose of the Appendices

The seven appendices are intended to make this *Manual* easier to use as a catechist prepares a teaching, and as the RCIA director decides what handouts to use from the companion *Participant’s Book*. Used carefully in tandem with the lesson plans, these appendices will add to the ability of musicians, catechists, and the rest of the team to stay unified on a theme in a manner that takes full advantage of the adult learning model and the potential of liturgical catechesis.

The RCIA Overview Chart

The foldout Overview Chart enclosed with this *Manual* looks daunting at first, but the idea is to provide a picture of the whole process, from start to finish. Many parishes have found this chart valuable for training their RCIA teams. Across the top are the names of each of the periods of the RCIA process and the status of the participants, as well as terms used to identify them at any given stage. Notice that no timeframes are specified except for the period of Purification and Enlightenment, which normally coincides with Lent, and the Neophyte Year, from one Easter to the next. All of the references quoted in the chart are taken from the RCIA ritual book; as with all ecclesiastical documents, the numbering refers to paragraphs, not pages. Down the side, the journey of each possible type of participant is tracked (Unbaptized in *green*, Baptized Uncatechized in *red*, and Baptized Catechized but not Catholic in *blue*), as well as the responsibilities of the Church in each period of the catechumenal process. The gray bars denote the major liturgical gateways of the process, and continue to use the color scheme, with the combining of red and blue to make *purple* in the case of Baptized participants, since both of these categories of people can go through the same gateways. Each period is divided into the three aspects: liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral. This has been done to make information in the guidelines of the ritual book more accessible and to undo some of the confusion that arises when using it. When reading through the remaining introductory sections of this *Catechist’s Manual*, the Overview Chart should be opened and examined to aid in grasping the larger context of the particular subject at hand.

As a final note to set the tone for the rest of this *Manual*, it is important to place this work in proper relation to its goal: conversion to and discipleship in Jesus Christ. Authentic conversion and discipleship to Christ means learning “more and more within the Church to think like him, to judge like him, to act in conformity with his

commandments, and to hope as he invites us to” (CT 20; see also the initiatory catechesis section of the GDC). Conversion is a gradual turning from the darkness of sin, and turning to a desire for holiness, which involves:

...being led into the mystery of God’s love, who invites [participants] to establish a personal relationship with him in Christ. Under the movement of divine grace the new convert sets out on a spiritual journey by means of which, while already sharing through faith in the mystery of death and resurrection, he passes from the old person to the new who has been made perfect in Christ (see Col 3:5-10; Eph 4:20-24). This transition, which involves a progressive change of outlook and morals, should be manifested in its social implications and effected gradually during the period of the catechumenate. Since the Lord in whom he believes is a sign of contradiction (see Lk 2:34; Mt 10:34-39) the convert often has to suffer misunderstanding and separation, but he also experiences those joys which are generously granted by God (AG 13).

The catechetical endeavor native to the catechumenal process serves a deeply personal end for the catechist — discovering at an intellectual level not simply how an individual learns the faith, but how a participant falls in love. The goal of catechumenal catechesis is far more than imparting that which must be believed — it seeks to prepare participants for a new union, an embrace. This embrace is human and divine, unifying the two as water into wine, inviting participants to thereby quench the deepest call of relationship that Jesus gives — “I thirst” (Jn 19:28).

Baptism

Catechist Preparation

Consider the following statement: Baptism regenerates a person as a child of God. It forgives original and all personal sin and fills the soul with grace. It confers the virtues of faith, hope, and love.

Keeping the above statement in mind, read and meditate on the following passages:

Scripture (in order by book):

Gn 7:1-8:19	Noah and his family are saved from death by water in an ark
Ex 14:10-30	The Israelites are saved from Pharaoh by God's miraculous parting of the waters
Mt 13:17	Jesus is baptized by St. John and anointed by the Holy Spirit for his ministry
Mt 28:18-19	Jesus commissions his apostles to baptize all nations in the name of the Trinity
Mk 16:16	Belief in God must be accompanied by Baptism
Jn 3:1-18	Belief in God is necessary for salvation, and regenerative Baptism is also necessary
Rom 6:3-11	Baptism into Jesus is Baptism into his Death, and the Resurrection of Christ means that we too might have eternal life
1 Cor 12:27-13:13	The virtues of faith, hope, and love are greater than the gifts of ministry
2 Cor 5:17	The person in Christ is a new creation
Eph 4:4-6	In the one Body of Christ, there is one Lord, one faith, one Baptism
Eph 5:25-27	Christ's Paschal mystery was for the purpose of sanctifying his Bride, the Church, through Baptism, which regenerates the Church as a perfect, holy Bride
Col 2:12	Buried with Christ through Baptism, we are brought to new life with him
2 Pt 1:3-4	God has called us to everlasting life and to partake of his own nature

Catechism (in order by paragraph number):

537	Baptism sacramentally joins the Christian to Jesus
977-978	Baptism is the principal sacramental means for forgiveness of sins and birth into new life, a forgiveness so complete that every sin, including original sin, is gone
1113-1130	The sacraments in general
1127-1128	By their very action, the sacraments accomplish what they symbolize, working by the power of Christ and not by the holiness of the minister of the sacrament
1213-1274	The sacrament of Baptism: names, prefigurements, in the New Testament, how it is celebrated, who can receive it, who can administer, its necessity, its graces

Key Term:

Ex opere operato: A sacrament's effects depend on the valid administration of the sacrament itself, not on who administers it
Form: The essential words and actions of a sacrament (this use of the term is analogous only, since the primary meaning of the term is as a constituent of material substance, together with matter)

Indelible: Of a permanent and eternal character

Matter: 1) one of the intrinsic elements of creation, which, together with form make material substances;
2) in an analogous use of the term, regarding the essential material substances used in administering a sacrament (such as water or oil) or, in the broad sense of the concept of matter, it also is an action, such as the manifestation of contrition in the sacrament of Reconciliation

Regeneration: The completely new life conferred by Baptism, becoming a son or daughter of God

Sacrament: A efficacious sign of grace instituted by Christ and administered by the Church that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, imparts divine life

Seal: A permanent change in the soul resulting from certain sacraments

Theological virtues: The supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and love that equip human nature for participation in God's own life which are infused by God at Baptism

Suggested Hymns and Songs for Catechetical Session:

Awake, O Sleeper, Rise from Death (tune: Azmon)	Spirit, Move upon the Waters
Baptized in Water	The River Is Here
Breathe on Me Holy One	This Is the Spirit's Entry
In Your Light	We Know That Christ Is Raised
Make My Heart Your Dwelling Place	When John Baptized by Jordan's River
Now You Have Called Us	With Joy You Shall Draw Water
Sing Praise to Our Creator	

Baptism

Catechetical Session

Preparation — Liturgy of the Word:

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: Rom 6:3-11

Response: Ps 33:1-5, 11-15, 18-22

Gospel: Jn 3:1-6

Proclamation: Baptism regenerates a person as a child of God. It forgives original and all personal sin and fills the soul with grace. It confers the virtues of faith, hope, and love.

Explanation:

The seven sacraments were instituted by Christ to give grace

The sacraments give us God's life and help for daily Christian living at special times in our lives

They are dispensed and celebrated by the Church and connect us to the Body of Christ

Sacraments consist of a specific form (rite) and specific matter (such as water or oil) or, in the broad sense of the concept of matter, it also is an action, such as the manifestation of contrition in the sacrament of Reconciliation. God uses material things to both signify and accomplish spiritual outcomes (the sacramental principle); the sacraments therefore work *ex opere operato*

The sacraments are necessary for our salvation — they serve the plan of the Father to transform us and be united forever in the divine life (see Jn 3:5 and Jn 6:53-58)

Names and purposes of the sacraments

Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist are the sacraments of initiation

Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick are the sacraments of spiritual and physical healing

Holy Orders and Matrimony are the sacraments at the service of the Church

Baptism is the first sacrament of initiation (see Acts 2:37-38)

Baptism was prefigured in the Old Testament

The words from Mt 28:19 are the form of Baptism

Water (immersion, or poured or sprinkled) is the matter of Baptism, a washing unto new life

The rite also includes prayers, especially the Litany of the Saints, and material symbols of Baptism's effects,

including anointing with the blessed Oil of Catechumens and the consecrated Holy Chrism, the giving of a lit candle, and the clothing with a white garment

It makes an indelible spiritual mark on the soul and so is never repeated

Baptism gives us new life in Christ (see 2 Cor 5:17)

It removes original sin, all personal sin, and all punishment for sin, and fills the soul with the grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit (see Col 2:13-14 and Acts 2:38)

We die with our Lord in Baptism and are born into the new, spiritual life of Christ, and are clothed with him

We are given access to the Father through Jesus

We are incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church (see 1 Cor 12:13)

We receive the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and charity (see Gal 5:5, Ti 3:5-7, Gal 5:22)

Faith is the foundation of our relationship with God

Hope is the sure pledge of our salvation

Charity is the vocation and strength to live the Christian life of love

These virtues are not human, but supernatural, equipping us to become partakers in the divine nature

Application — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. How is Baptism similar to a birthday?
2. How do the physical aspects of Baptism (for example, the water) help us to focus on the eternal meaning of the sacrament?
3. When have you been given a chance to turn over a new leaf? How is Baptism similar to this?
4. Why is Baptism so important in our spiritual lives?

Celebration — Suggestions for Closing Prayer:

1. Pray for the grace to desire Baptism and become a “new creation” in Jesus and a child of the Father.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray the Litany of the Saints (see *Participant's Book*)

The Universal Call to Holiness

Catechist Preparation

Consider the following statement: Jesus has called us to the perfection of his Father, perfection in love. Holiness is the call of all the baptized. Our wholehearted response to God's grace will fill us with joy surpassing human understanding.

Keeping the above statement in mind, read and meditate on the following passages:

Scripture (in order by book):

Lv 11:45	Because God is holy, Israel is therefore to be holy
Prv 3:11-12	Do not hate the suffering sent by God, for he is perfecting us as his children
Hb 3:18-19	The God of my salvation is the source of my rejoicing and my strength
Mt 5:3-12	In the Beatitudes, Jesus promises rewards for holiness and virtuous behavior
Mt 5:48	Our call is to be perfect as God the Father is perfect
Mt 6:25-34	Do not be anxious about anything; your Heavenly Father will take care of you and your needs if you seek first his Kingdom and holiness
Mt 10:37-39	To be worthy of Jesus, we must love him above all and take up our cross; to find our life, we must lose it for his sake
Mt 11:29-30	With Jesus as our model and master, virtue becomes easy and not burdensome
Mt 19:26	It is impossible to save ourselves, but God makes holiness possible
Mt 25:31-46	We will be judged according to how we have loved others
Jn 15:4-5	Jesus is the true vine and we are the branches; we must abide in him to bear fruit
2 Cor 5:17	In Christ we become a new creation
Gal 5:16-26	Living in the Spirit means renouncing the desires of the flesh so that we can attain Heaven; living in the Spirit gives us love, joy, and peace and strengthens our virtues so that we can crucify the flesh
Eph 4:22-24	Put on our new nature, made in the image of God in virtue and holiness
Col 1:9-10	Paul prays that we be filled with a knowledge of God's will so that we can live worthily, bear good fruit, and know God more and more
Heb 12:1-13:17	The plan for holiness

Catechism (in order by paragraph number):

459	Jesus is our model and standard
825-826	We are called to perfection; love shapes and perfects holiness
828	Canonized saints are examples of holiness
1716-1729	The Beatitudes, our charter for holiness
2013-2015	The requirements of our call to holiness and intimate union with Jesus
2030	Christians fulfill their vocations to holiness within the Church

Key Term:

<i>Holiness:</i>	A state of complete self-mastery, complete self-gift, heroic virtue, and sinlessness made possible only by the grace of God and the merits of Jesus Christ
<i>Joy:</i>	An abiding sense of happiness that comes from union with God which is not diminished by suffering, trials, or persecution
<i>Love:</i>	The theological virtue by which we love God for himself alone more than ourselves or any creature, out of love of God, we love our neighbor as ourselves

Suggested Hymns and Songs for Catechetical Session:

Bring Forth the Kingdom
Come into My Heart
Everyday
Go Make of All Disciples
Let All on Earth Their Voices Raise
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
O Breathe on Me, O Breath of God
O For a Heart to Praise My God
Refiner's Fire
Take My Life
Where Charity and Love Prevail (*Ubi Caritas*)
Where True Love and Charity Are Found (*Ubi Caritas*)
You're Worthy of My Praise

The Universal Call to Holiness

Catechetical Session

Preparation — Liturgy of the Word:

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: Eph 4:22-5:2

Response: Ps 24

Gospel: Mt 11:29-30

Proclamation: Jesus has called us to the perfection of his Father, perfection in love. Holiness is the call of all the baptized. Our wholehearted response to God's grace will fill us with joy surpassing human understanding.

Explanation:

Human nature and the nature of our call (see 1 Pt 1:6-9)

Within each of us is a God-implanted desire for happiness that only he can fulfill

Holiness is not optional; on earth, authentic happiness is achieved only through sanctity: the joy of holiness

In Heaven, happiness is participation in Trinitarian love, joy beyond measure

The nature of holiness: forming ourselves into "other Christs" (see Rom 13:8-14)

Jesus Christ, Son of God become Son of Mary for the salvation of all humankind, came among us as the visible image of his invisible Father

Holiness is being like Christ, conforming ourselves to him as our model of holiness

The more clearly our intellects grasp Jesus, the more powerful will be the action of our will (see Phil 1:9-11)

The Holy Spirit is our source of strength to be like Christ; holiness manifests the Spirit's fruits (see Gal 5:22-25)

The pursuit of holiness in this world (see Rom 12:2)

The lifeblood of holiness is charity: the more we die to self and lay down our lives in love to others, and the more vigorously we work to sanctify the world, the more we attain holiness and the easier it becomes for others to become holy (see Col 3:9-17)

We offer up life's sufferings, which Jesus sanctified and made redemptive for ourselves and others

God asks us to do only what he gives us sufficient grace to do (see 1 Cor 10:13)

The obstacles to our call

Salvation is the responsibility of each person, but for good or ill, others influence our efforts and we influence theirs

All Christians discover that the world is hostile to our efforts to attain holiness (see Jn 15:18-20)

The flesh, that is, our own disordered desires make us prone to sin (see Rom 7:18-20)

The Devil ceaselessly tempts us to pursue counterfeit pleasure and happiness (see 2 Thes 2:9-12)

The resources to answer God's call (see Eph 1:5-23 and Eph 3:8-12)

Mother Mary has been given to us as a model of holiness and our prime intercessor with her Son

The Church gives us all that we need for salvation, including the truths God intends us to know, the graces of the sacraments, and the witness of holiness of the saints

Frequent reception of Jesus in the Eucharist and of the sacrament of Reconciliation fill us with supernatural life and strengthen us against sin

The Christian family is the school of holiness, the most basic unit of the Body of Christ

The Christian fellowship of the faithful offers example, support, encouragement, and inspiration

A relationship with God developed through prayer intensifies our yearning for him and desire to please him

The heart of holiness is to will what God wills, for the sake of love

Application — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Does God expect too much of me? Is it really possible for me to be holy in this world?
2. What are some concrete ways that I can follow Jesus?
3. What can I learn about holiness by focusing on Jesus on the cross?
4. What ways would the world be worse without the Church?

Celebration — Suggestions for Closing Prayer:

1. Pray for an ever-stronger desire for holiness in the world and to see God's face forever.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together Psalm 33 or Psalm 34 (see *Participant's Book*)

The Virtue of Faith

Catechist Preparation

Consider the following statement: We believe because of the authority of God who reveals. Our response is a gift of his grace. We must remain steadfast in faith to see God.

Keeping the above statement in mind, read and meditate on the following passages:

Scripture (in order by book):

Gn 6:5-7-16	Noah responds to God's command to build an ark in faith
Gn 15:6	Abram put his faith in the Lord and obeyed his command
Gn 22:1-19	God tests Abraham's faith by asking him to offer his son Isaac
Ex 14:21-29	Moses parts the Red Sea and the Israelites pass through it dry-shod
Mk 9:17-27	Everything is possible to one with faith; we must ask God for help to believe
Lk 1:26-38, 45	Mary believed that God would do what the angel told her
Jn 3:36	Belief in Jesus gives eternal life, but failure to obey him leads to condemnation
Jn 6:44	All who come to the Father have been invited
Jn 6:60-69	Many abandon Jesus because they cannot accept a hard teaching
Jn 20:19-29	Belief without visible confirmation is greater than faith based on seeing
Eph 2:1-10	We are saved through faith by grace; it is not from us, but is a gift from God
Eph 6:16	Faith is a shield against Satan
Col 1:21-23	We must be steadfast in our faith
1 Tm 6:11-12	We must strive to sustain and live our faith
2 Tm 4:6-8	We receive our reward after a lifetime of keeping our faith
Heb 11:1-12:2	We have many forebears and witnesses to faith in God
Jas 1:2-8	Our faith should be steadfast and our prayer must be without doubt in God
Jas 2:14-26	Faith must be living and active, and manifests itself in works of charity
1 Pt 1:3-9	Faith is tested by suffering

Catechism (in order by paragraph number):

26	Faith is our response to God
35	We can know God by reason and revelation; faith does not oppose reason
142-143	We respond to God's invitation to know him by belief and submit in obedience
144-165	Models of the obedience of faith; belief in the Trinity; characteristics of faith
166-175	Faith within a community; the Church; creeds; unity of the faith
185-197	Professions of faith
1266	The theological virtues are infused at Baptism
1812	The theological virtues adapt us for our participation in God's nature
1813-1816	The theological virtue of faith
2087-2089	The duty of faith and sins against faith

Key Terms:

Deposit of Faith: The entirety of revelation, contained in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition

Faith: The theological virtue that responds to God in belief, trust, and obedience

Theological virtues: The supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and love that equip human nature for participation in God's own life which are infused by God at Baptism

Virtue: A disposition to do good that is both firm and ongoing

Suggested Hymns and Songs for Catechetical Session:

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus
Day Is Done
Eye Has Not Seen
Faith of Our Fathers
For All the Saints
God Is Our Fortress and Our Rock
God of My Life, I Believe
The Joy of the Lord
The Lord Is My Light
We Walk by Faith

The Virtue of Faith

Catechetical Session

Preparation — Liturgy of the Word:

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: Heb 11:1-13

Response: Ps 146

Gospel: Jn 14:1-6

Proclamation: We believe because of the authority of God who reveals. Our response is a gift of his grace. We must remain steadfast in faith to see God.

Explanation:

The theological virtues: faith, hope, and love (charity) (see 1 Pt 1:3-9)

These virtues orient us directly to God, who desires eternal fellowship with us

~ By faith, we believe in God; by hope, we cling to God; by charity, we love God

~ They are the basis for a life lived according to the Father's plan

~ They dispose us for eternal life with the Trinity and are thus necessary for salvation

They are undeserved gifts from God, infused by God at Baptism

They are the foundation of the moral life in Christ and give it its special character

They are grown and developed in human hearts by our cooperation with the promptings of the Holy Spirit

Faith: the root of the supernatural life (see Eph 2:1-10)

God offers the gift of faith to all; it is ours to accept or reject

Faith is more certain than acquired human knowledge

The object of our faith is the Deposit of Faith: we find the living Christ in the living Church

Faith and reason are always in agreement, for God is the source of both

~ Reason prepares us for faith and helps us to see the reasonableness of faith

~ Faith is not a blind leap, but is based on knowledge of and trust in God's authority

~ Faith does not oppose, but rather enlightens understanding

~ Faith yields and reveals truth, exposing reason to ultimate truth and stirring reason beyond its

isolation to obtain truth, beauty, and goodness

Faith is the basis and substance for our hope

Faith is the only true foundation of charity

Ways to lose faith — always a deliberate choice (see Eph 6:10-18)

Persistence in ignorance of God or his revelation, or indifference to him

Misplaced priorities, such as a love of riches or power (see 1 Tm 6:9-10)

Choosing to be influenced by the bad example of some believers

Refusal to obediently submit to the Church's teachings, leading to schism, heresy, and apostasy

Revolting against God by deliberately doubting or rejecting him, and outright hostility to religion

Ways to obtain or increase faith (see 1 Tm 6:20)

Ask the Holy Spirit for faith in prayer

Participate devoutly and frequently in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Confession

Read spiritual works, most especially Sacred Scripture, the *Catechism*, and lives of the saints

Seek the companionship of true believers

Exercise faith by professing it, declaring it, defending it, and doing good works (see Jas 2:14-36)

Application — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why does the modern culture often seem closed to the possibility of faith in God?
2. Why is faith a gift that only God himself could give us?
3. Why wouldn't God just show himself directly and obviously to us so that we could more easily believe in him?
4. Why is it important that faith be living and active? What can we do to make our own faith more meaningful and active?

Celebration — Suggestions for Closing Prayer:

1. Ask God for the desire to accept the gift of faith that he offers, and the grace to increase our faith daily.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together Act of Faith (see handout on Well-Known Catholic Prayers from *Participant's Book*)