



LESSON 6
PREPARATION NOTES

A New Life

A NEW LIFE IN BRIEF:

Choosing a Christ-centred relationship begins a new life of discipleship.

KEY ELEMENTS:

- It is strongly recommended, and perhaps should even be considered mandatory, that each participant meet one-on-one with the study leader for the *Discovery* Lesson 5 follow-up before this lesson. If that is not possible, still pursue setting up any remaining meetings after the completion of this lesson. These follow-up meetings are very effective in the evangelization process.
- The lesson looks at the personal and communal dimensions of growing in our faith and in our personal relationship with Christ. This is important to emphasize from a Catholic perspective. Becoming a disciple of Christ is not simply a “Jesus and me” thing.
- This lesson looks at practical ways to grow in our relationship with God: prayer, reading the Bible, going to Mass, going to Confession, fellowship, sharing our faith and serving others. These topics are explored more deeply in *Growth*, which follows *Source*.
- Be prepared to share the things that helped you grow in your faith, especially in the early days following your conversion.
- Participants will renew their baptismal vows as a way of concretely linking their Baptism to their adult choice to believe and follow Jesus.
- If someone is not yet baptized but feels that the baptismal promises express what they have come to believe, you can invite them to join in praying the promises. This can help them understand the promises they would make should they be baptized in the Church. It should be noted that praying with these promises in this small group does not replace baptism. If any unbaptized participants express a desire to pray the baptismal promises, we suggest meeting with them individually to discuss if they desire to be baptized in the Church and, if so, how they can join a local RCIA program.

RECOMMENDED READING:

- CCC 811-870—on the four marks of the Church.



LESSON 6

A New Life

1 Share what you thought about last week's lesson.



Introduction



Over the course of *Discovery*, we've been unpacking the richness of the Good News. Like pieces of a puzzle, the truths about Jesus have come together so that we can clearly grasp the beauty and scope of God's plan for our salvation. Last week we saw that the last piece of the puzzle is ourselves. Christ desires to be at the centre of our lives and he gives us the freedom to invite him in as our true Lord and our Saviour. We are choosing to become his disciple—his follower.

Review



Over the past five lessons, *Discovery* has outlined the basic message of the Catholic faith, often referred to as the *kerygma*, a Greek word that means to cry or proclaim as a herald. The *kerygma* is the message the Church has proclaimed from its very beginning, and includes these four key points:



1. God created every person to have a personal relationship with him.
2. Our relationship with God has been broken through our sins.
3. Jesus restores our relationship with God through his death and resurrection (known as the Paschal Mystery).
4. God invites us to this restored relationship; each person responds to this invitation by choosing a Christ-centred life.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides a summary of the *kerygma* in its first paragraph.

“ God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs to his blessed life. ”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1

Let's look at how this section of the *Catechism* outlines the basic message of the *kerygma*.

2 How does this section of the *Catechism* describe:

That we are created for a relationship with God?

| **ANSWER:** God freely chose to create human beings to share in
A his divine life. God draws close to us at every time and place. He
| calls man to seek, know, and love him.

The consequences of sin?

| **ANSWER:** We are scattered and divided, no longer in unity with
A each other or with God. We need a Redeemer and Saviour.
|

The solution to the problem of sin?

ANSWER: He calls all people together in the Church, his family. He sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior to invite us into relationship with him through the Holy Spirit.

Our relationship with God if we accept the gift of salvation offered in Jesus?

ANSWER: We are reconciled and gathered together into the family of God as adopted children and heirs to God's blessed life.

Personal Encounter

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“ Conversion means accepting, by a personal decision, the saving sovereignty of Christ and becoming his disciple. ”

St. John Paul II

Redemptoris Missio, 46



A conversion of life happens when we make a personal decision to invite Christ to be at the centre of our lives. This invitation is personal and we can expect to have a personal encounter with God. This might be a powerful experience, or it might be a delicate one. Although we won't know God fully and completely until we are in Heaven, we can certainly experience him in our lifetime. He desires for us to know him. If you want to experience him more, ask him!

3 Describe a personal experience you have had of God's presence.

4 How could you make yourself more available and open to God so as to encounter, know and love him better?

ANSWER:

- Take time for prayer. Talk to God as a friend as we practiced in the Lesson 1 challenge.
- Pray daily and give God permission to lead your life.
- Read the Bible every day. This is the best way to hear God's voice. A good start is to reflect on the Catholic Church's daily Mass readings.
- Examine your heart daily—ask yourself, “How have I done at keeping my activities, interests, and priorities aligned to Christ at the centre?”
- Go to confession on a regular basis—and as soon as possible in the case of serious sin.
- Read spiritual books to increase your knowledge of God and the Church's teachings.
- Share with others what Jesus has done for you. You will experience the fire of God's love in your heart when you share him with others.
- Be attentive when going to Mass—be sure to attend every Sunday.
- If you have not yet been baptized, find out how to prepare for this all-important sacrament.

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By *Sunday* we mean *the Lord's Day*, which includes Saturday anticipatory Mass. You can also mention other Holy Days of Obligation. In Canada, the Holy Days of Obligation are all Sundays, Christmas Day, and the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (January 1). The United States additionally observes the Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter (Solemnity of the Ascension), November 1 (All Saints), and December 8 (Immaculate Conception). For a full list of the Days of Obligation in your area, check with your country's Conference of Bishops.

All of these “to dos” could potentially lead us to slip into a “second image” mindset—we want to avoid this possibility. Remind the participants that our efforts cooperate with grace. God does not expect us to maintain a holy, faithful life by our own efforts. We have the grace of our Baptism, the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit!

Shortly after Jesus ascended into heaven, God sent the Holy Spirit upon the earth. It is through the Holy Spirit, active and living in us, that we are able to pray, and to know, love and imitate Jesus.

Through the Holy Spirit, active in the Church, we receive help! We receive ongoing mercy and grace in the sacraments—especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist. In the Church (the Body of Christ), we have community, friendship and the opportunity to serve and witness to others.

Personal Prayer



Prayer is an essential part of nurturing our relationship with God. Taking time each day to pray enables us to continually recognize our need for Christ and to commit ourselves to him. Our time of personal prayer does not have to be complicated—in fact, it is a lot like talking to a close friend.

5 What would be a good plan for you to make sure you pray and talk to Jesus every day?

LEADERS: The goal is to encourage participants to begin, or recommit, to a consistent, daily prayer time. You can suggest 10-15 minutes a day as a reasonable goal for most participants who are seeking to begin a consistent prayer time. For those who are already praying daily, you can encourage them to consider if they might add any additional time to their prayer routine.

Typically, people choose to take their prayer time in the morning or evening. The morning is often recommended for two reasons: first, it is an opportunity to offer the “first fruits” of our day to God; second, even the most well-intentioned plans for evening prayer can be derailed by fatigue, late-night activities, etc.

Your participants might be unsure about how to pray for 10-15 minutes. Ask them, “What could you do during your prayer time?” Suggest to them an acronym such as ACTS to help them remember what to include in their time of prayer.

A = Adoration: praise God, reflect on his greatness and character

C = Confess: confess your sins to God

T = Thanksgiving: give thanks to God

S = Supplication: petition; make requests for yourself and others

Another idea for prayer is to make a list of the days of the week and to put specific requests under each day, so that you can pray for many things through the course of the week. Also encourage participants to read the Bible (e.g. Mass readings).

Share your personal experience of prayer. This is important, as participants may feel overwhelmed with all the details if they do not see an example of how to put everything together. Tell them where you pray and when. Do not intimidate them by saying that you pray for an hour every day. Explain that prayer is like making an appointment with God and that he too is a real person who should not be “stood up.” In a gentle and loving way, ask them if you can talk to them about how their prayer is going the next time you see them; explain that accountability helps us grow. It may be beneficial to offer to help them develop their own individual plans for growth in their prayer life.

Communal Encounter

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We have emphasized the unique personal encounter we can have with Jesus. This is very real and beautiful, but it’s not all. Yes, we are personally known and valued by God, and at the same time we are united to all who are baptized in Christ. As children of God, we are brothers and sisters in the family of God, which is the Church.



“ He [God] calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church....He invites all men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs to his blessed life. ”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1

As the family of God we are a community of believers who share a love for the Saviour. This is one reason we gather in churches, have liturgies and serve together in ministry. God’s plan for us is not only an individual encounter. As the quote above notes, God has called everyone into “the unity of his family,” which is the Church. He desires for us to gather and publicly worship and serve together as the Church, the Body of Christ.

1 CORINTHIANS 12: 12-13A

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.

6 What are some examples of communal expressions of faith?

ANSWER:

- Sunday Mass—we gather as a people, universally around the world, to worship God. We are a visible sign to the world. We are not ashamed of Christ.
- Parish faith formation—together we can grow in our understanding of the faith.
- Parish ministry—together we can serve and witness to others, with brothers and sisters in Christ whose gifts complement our own.
- Public initiation into the sacraments—the sacraments unite us to God and his grace but they also unite us with each other. We have a shared experience and we can support and encourage those who receive the sacraments. This is also why we have godparents and confirmation sponsors to come alongside and support Christians in their faith development.
- Public profession of baptismal promises and marriage vows—these need to be done publicly to have witnesses and to make the vow more solemn and real to the one giving them.
- Apostolic succession and Church leadership—these link us to the Church universal around the world and, historically, all the way back to Peter and the Apostles.
- Church's Tradition and Magisterium—these protect against individualized and fragmented beliefs, and ensures authentic interpretation of the Bible and the teaching of the Apostles.

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7 How can our communal expressions of faith enhance our personal relationship with God?

ANSWER: As we have seen in the above quotations from CCC 1 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-13a, the Christian life is not meant to be lived in isolation from the community of faith. The following are some ways our communal expressions of faith help us in our personal relationship with God.

- We know we are not alone in our pursuit of a relationship with God. There are others who share in similar joys and struggles in their faith.
- We are connected to the faithful in the past, present, and future through our common beliefs (Scripture, doctrines and dogmas of the Church, the Apostles' and Nicene Creed), worship practices (the sacraments) and the Communion of Saints.
- We can confirm what we discover in our own search for God when it agrees with what we communally profess through the Church. For example, we can know we rightly believe that God is a Trinity of three persons in one nature because it agrees with what has been revealed to the Church.
- We can learn from and be encouraged by the combined wisdom of fellow Catholics. This includes wisdom and encouragement from our contemporary peers, and also from the great saints throughout the centuries.

Communal Prayer



There are many ways we can pray together as a community of faith. One of the most significant ways we pray together as a Church happens annually at every Easter Vigil Mass all over the world. In a solemn and special way, we renew our baptismal promises. Our response is a personal “I do”—but we all say it *together*. This is a powerful affirmation of how our faith is both *individual* and *communal*.

As we wrap up *Discovery* we will make this same personal and communal proclamation of faith. We will renew our baptismal promises together as a small group, just like we do at the Easter Vigil.

LEADERS: Give participants a brief moment to read and reflect on the baptismal promises. Assure participants that if, in any way, they do not feel ready to say this prayer, they can simply listen to the words and be witnesses to the faith that is professed.

If someone is not yet baptized but feels that the baptismal promises express what they have come to believe, you can invite them to join in praying the promises. This can help them understand the promises they would make should they be baptized in the Church. It should be noted that praying with these promises in this small group does not replace baptism. If any unbaptized participants express a desire to pray the baptismal promises, we suggest meeting with them individually to discuss if they desire to be baptized in the Church and, if so, how they can join a local RCIA program.

As you are about to begin, encourage participants to get settled and ready. Encourage them to listen carefully to the words. You can mention that the renewal of the baptismal promises will conclude with a prayer of commitment to Christ.

Allow for a few seconds of quiet before you begin.

After the renewal of baptismal promises, if you have time, you could continue the prayerful atmosphere, and ask if anyone has any prayer requests. You could take the lead in praying for any requests mentioned briefly, or perhaps group members will be comfortable to pray in the group.

+ Do you reject sin, so as to live in the freedom of God’s children?

R. I do

+ Do you reject the glamour of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin?

R. I do

+ Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness?

R. I do

+ Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

R. I do

+ Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

R. I do

+ Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

R. I do

Together:

Lord Jesus, I believe that you know me and love me. I have not always chosen to love you, and have broken my relationship with you through my sins. Thank you for proving your love for me on the cross so that our relationship can be restored.

I open the door of my heart and I invite you to be at the centre of my life—to be my Saviour and my Lord. Direct me and help me to live the Gospel with my whole life.

L LEADERS: Give a moment for your participants to reflect silently on this prayer (30 seconds would be sufficient).

Our individual commitment to God is how we live out being a child of God. This moment of communal prayer shows us how we become brothers and sisters who are part of God’s family, the Church. Our communal life as the Church is the completion of God’s vision for his children to live as one universal family.



The focus of *Discovery* has been to introduce you to the *kerygma*, the basic message of the Catholic faith, and to give you the opportunity to begin or renew your relationship with God. The journey doesn't end here! As we end this Faith Study, let's discuss where you will go from here in your relationship with God.

8 What is one element of your relationship with God that you would like to improve in the next month? What steps can you take to make this improvement?

Here are some practical steps to begin growing in your relationship with God:

- Talk to God every day through prayer.
- If you have not been baptized, talk to your group leader about pursuing baptism through a local RCIA (*Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults*) program.
- Read your Bible every day, beginning with the New Testament.
- Become involved in your local parish.
- Share your faith with others.
- Celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday.
- Go to Confession on a regular basis.
- Get to know the teachings of the Catholic Church, which can offer guidance on your journey with Jesus.

Summary

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At some point, we all need to make a personal, adult decision about whether to embrace the relationship with God that he has offered to us. Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Church as sources of real help and grace that can be experienced individually and communally as we live this new life in him.

LEADERS: Help make *Discovery* better. Be sure to encourage your participants to fill in the quick survey at cco.ca/faithstudyfeedback. This feedback gives us good information to help refine our faith studies and future editions of *Discovery*, and gives participants an additional chance to reflect on their relationship with God and what God has done for them over the course of the study.

Living It Out

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CHALLENGE

Foster your friendship with Jesus by taking time to pray and talk with him for at least 10 minutes every day. Foster your communal encounter with God by introducing yourself to someone at Sunday Mass.

MEMORIZE 2 CORINTHIANS 5:15

And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

LEADERS: Suggest getting together for a social gathering to celebrate the group's completion of *Discovery*.

Also, if you or your community are planning on continuing with the Faith Study series, be sure to let participants know when and where you will be offering *Source*, and personally invite them to join. You can use the Faith Study series summary on the back cover of their *Discovery* participant's guide to show them the progression of the rest of the series.

Leader's Journal



Take 15 minutes as soon as possible after finishing the lesson to reflect on how God moved during your study and how your small group participants responded.

1 Thanksgiving

Reflect and say a prayer of thanksgiving for specific ways the Holy Spirit was present in that small group.

- a. How did you experience the Holy Spirit helping you to lead the lesson?

- b. How did you experience the Holy Spirit moving in the small group today?

- c. What were the positives from today's group?

- d. What were areas for improvement?

2 Prophetic Listening

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you review the lesson. Think about each person in your small group as you prayerfully reflect on these questions.

- a. What are some indications that each participant caught the main points of this lesson?

- b. If you noticed gaps in any participant's understanding of the main points, is the Holy Spirit inviting you to do anything over the course of this week to help this person better understand?

- c. Are there any other ways the Holy Spirit is inviting you to intentionally care for or nurture your individual small group participants?

- d. Is there anything you want to remind yourself from what played out in this lesson for when you sit down to prepare the next lesson?

3 Intentional Accompaniment

Write down a plan to intercede for your small group participants based on the specific insights above, including how you will reach out to them and/or tailor the next lesson's introduction based on your reflections.