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LIGUORI CHRISTIAN INITIATION PROGRAM

Journey of Faith



FOR TEENS

ENLIGHTENMENT AND MYSTAGOGY LEADER GUIDE

Journey of Faith for Teens Enlightenment and Mystagogy Leader Guide (827150)

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Enlightenment and Mystagogy: A Review

The Period of Purification and Enlightenment

Since the earliest centuries, the Church has set aside the season of Lent as a particular time for repentance, conversion, and preparation for the sacraments. The RCIA process and celebration of baptism is centered on the Easter Vigil, with the rites of election and calling, scrutinies, and entire catechumenate scheduled in relation to that feast (RCIA 17, 20–26; CCC 1168; CIC 856).

Because repentance and conversion require personal and internal preparation, the *Journey of Faith for Teens, Enlightenment* lessons focus on guided, prayerful reflection. The lessons will assist the participants in their internal preparation for the sacraments, and encourage them to live out their faith in hands-on ways.

“[Enlightenment] is a period of more intense spiritual preparation, consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction, and is intended to purify the minds and hearts of the elect as they search their own consciences and do penance” (RCIA 139).

While the elect do not fully possess the graces and gifts of discipleship during the period of purification and enlightenment, they should feel ownership of their Christian faith. Baptized candidates, as members of the Christian Church, should begin to identify themselves as Catholic and express their faith in keeping with sacred Tradition.

The sessions and events during the enlightenment period should enable participants to experience Lent along with the parish community, who is also undergoing spiritual renewal and preparing to celebrate the paschal mystery more deeply (RCIA 138). At the Easter Vigil, the faithful will renew their baptismal vows as the participants profess their faith in Christ and the Catholic Church. This unity and integration will grow throughout the period of mystagogy, which usually corresponds to the Easter season.

Rites and Sacraments During the Period of Enlightenment

The enlightenment and purification period begins with the rite of election. Please refer to the *Catechumenate Leader Guide* and other *Journey of Faith for Teens* materials for details.

The Scrutinies

Rather than examination, interrogation, or harsh judgment, “the scrutinies...are rites for self-searching and repentance,” designed “to inspire in the elect a desire for purification and redemption” (RCIA 141, 143). The prayers and intercessions encourage the elect to strive for the narrow gate (Matthew 7:13–14; Luke 13:24–28). Through the exorcisms, they “are freed from the effects of sin and from the influence of the devil” (RCIA 144). Having previously been instructed in the nature of sin and expressed their desire and commitment to receive the sacraments of initiation, participants are strengthened and sent forth to make their discipleship a reality.

The questions, activities, journal prompts, and other material in these guides help to prepare each participant for this stage in their faith journey. The bishop or priest will “question the candidates individually” in the formula for the profession of faith at the Easter Vigil (RCIA 224–25). Should a participant express doubts or concerns about their conversion, meet with him or her privately to determine what additional support can be provided.

The Presentations

The *Presentation of the Creed* should be celebrated during the week following the first scrutiny and, whenever possible, within a Mass so that the faith community may be present (RCIA 157; CIC 837). It prepares the elect to memorize the Creed, for the *Recitation of the Creed* (see Preparation Rites), and to profess their faith on the day of their baptism (RCIA 148).

During the *Presentation of the Creed*:

- The prescribed readings, which replace the regular weekday readings, are proclaimed during the Liturgy of the Word (RCIA 158).
- After the homily, the priest calls the elect forward to receive the words and mysteries of the Creed. The Nicene or Apostles’ Creed may be used, depending on the parish’s tradition (RCIA 160).
- The priest begins to recite the Creed and the assembly joins in.
- The priest prays over the elect and dismisses them prior to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. If they are to stay, he reminds them that they cannot participate fully, but that they remain “as a sign of our hope that all God’s children will eat and drink with the Lord...” (RCIA 163).

E1: Election: Saying Yes to Jesus

Catechism: 422–429

Objectives

- Compare reactions to Jesus' life and teachings throughout the Gospels and history.
- Connect Jesus' universal invitation to discipleship to the signing of the *Book of the Elect* in the rite of election.
- Practice self-examination.

Leader Meditation

John 21:1–19

Jesus Christ has made you a fisher of young men and women. The participants in your class are the fish in your net, the net you dropped at the Lord's command, the net you hauled up and have carried to shore. It is time to present the fish to the Lord. The Lord asks Peter if Peter loves him. The first time Peter says "yes," Jesus tells Peter to feed the Lord's lambs. The second time, the Lord tells Peter to tend to the Lord's sheep. The third time, the Lord says to Peter to feed his sheep. In doing these things, Peter will act on his love for Jesus Christ. You are like Peter. You will bring the sheep to the Lord, and he will invite them to say "yes" to him. Pray for the necessary grace to lead the participants well and for sufficient grace that they will respond with a firm "yes."

Leader Preparation

- Read the lesson handout, this lesson plan, the Scripture passage, and *Catechism* sections.
- Be familiar with the vocabulary terms for this lesson: discipleship, testimony, *Book of the Elect*. Definitions are provided in this guide's glossary.

Welcome

Greet participants as they arrive. Check for supplies and immediate needs. Solicit questions or comments about the previous session and/or share new information and findings. Begin promptly.

Opening Scripture

John 21:1–19

Ask a volunteer to light the candle and read aloud. Share with participants that this lesson is all about Jesus inviting us to become his disciples. He is offering us the opportunity to say yes to him, to do his will, and to love his people. Before beginning your discussion of the lesson handout, ask participants ***what it means to truly be one of Jesus' disciples.***

"From this loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim him, to 'evangelize,' and to lead others to the 'yes' of faith in Jesus Christ."

CCC 428





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In Short:

- Christians have reacted in many ways to Jesus' message of discipleship throughout history.
- As members of the elect, you are called to discipleship.
- As you grow in your faith, you will be asked to engage in self-examination.

Election: Saying "Yes" to Jesus

Maria is twenty years old and the mother of an active two-year-old boy. She works forty hours a week but still struggles to make ends meet. She left high school during her senior year.

Maria's parents begged her to remain in school, and her favorite teacher tried to convince her of the benefits of hitting the books and toughing it out. But Maria wasn't convinced. Working in the real world seemed to be the smartest choice. She'd still learn, but she'd also be making money and getting work experience.

Now Maria is beginning to wonder what would have happened if she'd said "yes" to finishing high school. It will be difficult to go back to school now that she's a mom with more adult responsibilities, but she feels called to say "yes" to this opportunity now. It won't be easy, but she still has her family's support for a new life experience she knows will help her.

Rite of Election: An Opportunity for Commitment

"From this loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim him...to lead others to the 'yes,' of faith in Jesus Christ. But at the same time the need to know this faith better makes itself felt."

CCC 429
CCC 422-429

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Rite of Election: An Opportunity for Commitment

- Ask participants to think about how they've responded to God's call in their lives so far. If you have time, share your own experience of saying yes (or no) to God's call as you grew in your faith.
- Discuss as a group why some people may say "not yet" to God's call. Use the story of St. Peter as an example; why did Peter deny God only to give a wholehearted yes later.

Suggested responses may include: We may not fully understand our faith yet, we may be letting a bad experience with a person influence how we see faith, we may secretly be afraid of what happens if we say yes, etc.

Election: Saying Yes to Jesus

- Give participants a chance to read the introduction to the lesson handout on their own and think about their answer to the reflection question. Ask any participants who feel comfortable sharing to do so. Think about this reflection question yourself and share any relevant experience with the group.
- Discuss what it means to be a disciple and why true discipleship might be difficult in today's world.

Suggested responses include: Pressure to fit in with secular society, fear of being made fun of, fear of standing out or being singled out, etc.

- Discuss the reflection question together. Emphasize to participants that while faith does not require total understanding, and isn't measured by our understanding, we can't give a wholehearted "yes" to a faith we don't understand in any way.

"I will, but first..."

- Discuss with participants why it's tempting to tell God "yes, but first..."
- Ask participants why we shouldn't wait to give God our "yes."

Suggested responses may include: The timing may never be perfect, like the apostles we have to serve God where we are, God may be calling us where we are for a reason, etc.

"Some of Jesus' teachings are just too hard to follow."

- If you have time, read the story of the Samaritan woman in full (John 4:4–42). Discuss with participants what about Jesus' message would have been easy to say yes to and what would have been difficult.

Suggested responses include: He promises the woman living water, he proves he is a prophet and offers her salvation, he asks her to give up the beliefs she's known, he asks her to go out and tell others about him.

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On the first Sunday of Lent or close to the beginning of Lent, the catechumens celebrate the rite of election. Election comes from a word that means choose, and the whole ceremony reflects this theme. God has chosen us and called us. How have you responded to that call?

After the Church community hears **testimony**, that is, public statements from the catechumens and their sponsors on how the catechumens have chosen to respond to God's call, the community is then asked to accept those catechumens who are ready to receive the sacraments. The catechumens say "yes" by stating their desire to join the Church and then writing their names in the **Book of the Elect**.

The rite of election begins the stage of purification and enlightenment, the final stage of the journey for catechumens and candidates. You've asked questions about the Church, and you've become part of the community. Now it's time for you to examine your life and to think about what Christ asks of you.

At the time of Jesus, some said "yes" to his call, while others said, "no, not yet." What made the difference?

Today Christ has called you. How will you respond? As you reflect on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, have you ever used any of the following excuses when you felt Jesus' call?

"I will, but first..."

"Desire for true happiness frees man from his immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that he can find his fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God."

CCC 2548

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke both describe Jesus' invitation to potential disciples who say they desire to follow him but not just yet: "Lord, let me go first and bury my father" (Matthew 8:21). In Jesus' time, this meant "let me come after my father is dead." In Luke's Gospel, the hesitant disciple says, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home" (Luke 9:61).

To us, Jesus' response may seem cold and harsh: "Let the dead bury their dead....No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:60,62). But what the Gospel writer is trying to tell us is that we can't follow Christ only when it fits into our schedule. We aren't true disciples of Jesus if we live as disciples only when it's safe and convenient. We have to follow the Lord's commands when we're out with our friends and when we're at home with our parents. True followers of Christ aren't part-time, only-when-no-one's-looking disciples.

When we accept Jesus' call we must do so enthusiastically, making it our top priority. The Galilean fishermen "left everything and followed him" (Luke 5:11). Matthew, the tax collector, "leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him" (Luke 5:28). Our family, relationships, hobbies, and activities, all take on their true meaning in our lives only when following Christ is our first priority.

"Some of Jesus' teachings are just too hard to follow."

"The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just."

CCC 1733

When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well, he said many things that would have been hard for her to hear (John 4:18). But Jesus promised her "living water" that would keep her from ever thirsting again.

The Samaritan woman could have reacted with embarrassment, resentment, or anger. Jesus was asking her to radically change her life. But she didn't get upset or defensive. She ran back to her town to tell people Jesus was the Messiah. While the truth is often difficult for us to hear, we, like the Samaritan woman, must be open to receiving it.

"But I have so much stuff."

Of all Jesus' conversations with would-be disciples, maybe the one we can relate to best is the one with the rich young man who asked, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?...? Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, 'You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions" (Mark 10:17–22).

In this conversation, Jesus is telling us that it's not good to become too attached to things. If we look to our stuff for happiness, we will always be aching for something more, something that really matters.

The rich young man couldn't let go of the false security of his possessions. He wasn't sure that he would find in Jesus, and within himself, something more valuable than his wealth.

This story challenges us to ask ourselves, "What things do I hold on to that may keep me from following the Lord? What do I own that is more important to me than God? More important than other people?"

"I do not know him."

Probably the saddest loss for Jesus came when, after his arrest, his closest friends ran away. Peter, who had sworn he would die with Jesus, denied three times that he even knew Jesus.

Many of Jesus' disciples thought he would lead Israel to glory and bring about an earthly kingdom. They weren't prepared for the truth of the cross.

It's easy to understand how frightened they were! None of the Twelve, except perhaps John, attended Jesus' crucifixion or burial. Just when Jesus needed them the most, they ran away and locked themselves in a room because they were afraid.

But not everyone ran in fear. "Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala" (John 19:25). No matter what the danger, these women stayed by Jesus. These brave women stayed by him and later went out to the tomb to anoint his body (Matthew 28:1–10).

• *Is it easier for you to follow Jesus when it's the popular decision or your prayers are being answered the way you expect? Why?*

• *Have you ever said "no" to a cross Jesus asked you to bear? Why? Is it a decision you'd change if you could?*



Our Response to Jesus' Call

Jesus must have felt very sad as he listened to all these excuses, as he watched all the would-be disciples turn and leave him. Many of them almost said "yes," but out of fear or attachment to things, they said "no" to the only one who could give lasting purpose and direction to their lives.

Our prayers and practices during Lent help us discover the strengths and weaknesses of our own responses to Christ's call. There is a little bit of the *would-be* disciple in each of us. It's difficult to give an unconditional "yes" to Christ—to embrace the cross that he asks us to carry with him. But Jesus didn't abandon his disciples. He sent them the graces they needed to say yes again. God won't force us into discipleship, but he will answer when we say, "yes, but help!"

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"But I have so much stuff."

- Discuss with participants why it's difficult to let go of material security.

Suggested responses include: We feel secure when we have lots of physical things, material success is judged on how much money or stuff we have, etc.

- Discuss with participants why we need to let go of this false security before saying "yes" to God.

Suggested responses include: We have to trust in God as our security, we can't be attached to things of this earth, etc.

"I do not know him."

- Give participants time to answer the reflection questions on their own.
- If you have time, ask participants why fear may cause people, like St. Peter, to deny their faith.

With a partner or as a group, list as many excuses for following Jesus as you can think of in two minutes. Then pick a gift or fruit of the Holy Spirit that helps overcome that excuse, and explain how. (Gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit are listed in sections 1831–32 of the CCC.)

Suggested responses include:

An attachment to earthly goods and possessions could be countered by generosity.

Frustration that God is taking too long to answer our prayers could be countered by patience.

ENLIGHTENMENT

JOURNEY OF FAITH

With a partner or as a group, list as many excuses for following Jesus as you can think of in two minutes. Then pick a gift or fruit of the Holy Spirit that helps overcome that excuse, and explain how. (Gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit are listed in sections 1831–32 of the CCC.)



What keeps you from following Christ more completely or consistently? Use the excuses discussed in the lesson to help you evaluate yourself as honestly as possible.



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Journaling

What keeps you from following Christ more completely or consistently? Use the excuses discussed in the lesson to help you evaluate yourself as honestly as possible.

Closing Prayer

End with a few moments of silence and ask for petitions. Close with this prayer:

Lord, God our Father,
It is a blessing to know that you are our Lord, Creator, and Savior. You love us with an eternal love. It's difficult to comprehend this kind of love. You have given us the gift of free will, knowing that we may choose to walk away from you or we may choose to receive this love and say yes to it. Give us the grace to say yes, for it's our heart's desire to love you, to know you, and to serve you. Amen.

Take-Home

Ask participants to really think about their response to the journal prompt this lesson and spend the time between now and the next session to try and turn any "not yet's" into "yeses."