

# CATECHETICAL SESSION JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL LESSON PLAN A

These lesson plans are designed to be used in parish religious education and youth ministry programs and in Catholic schools. We encourage local educators to adapt them or to create their own resources to share the message of Faithful Citizenship.

*The following four sample sessions correspond to the Adult Education/Small Faith Community sessions and the session for Elementary Age Students. One option is to make the sessions intergenerational where families and individuals of all ages gather for prayer and then break out into age appropriate groups. Or, these sessions can be done independently as part of a more traditional catechetical setting or in a Catholic school classroom.*

## **Theme: The Call to Participate in Public Life**

### **Gathering**

*Be sure to begin each session by establishing a sense of welcome and hospitality. If participants do not already know one another well, you may wish to do an icebreaker. Once everyone is comfortable, the session begins by connecting the session topic with the young person's human experience, i.e. her/his "story" or ideas. Have a Bible prominently enthroned in the room as the centerpiece for prayer and the proclamation of the Word.*

Open the session by describing the theme in relation to the election year. There is a strong connection between being a disciple and being active in our communities and in the world.

Write the words "FAITHFUL DISCIPLE" on a dry erase board or newsprint. Ask the young people to describe a "faithful disciple." List the characteristics the young people name.

Next, write the words "ACTIVE COMMUNITY MEMBER" on the board and ask the young people to name characteristics or qualities of an active community member. If they need help, ask, "What types of things should a community member do to be engaged and involved in their community?" (For example, join community organizations, be part of Neighborhood Watch, go to community events, vote, volunteer, donate to local organizations that help the poor, pick up litter on the sidewalks, etc.).

Finally, write the following on the board: "FAITHFUL DISCIPLE = ACTIVE COMMUNITY MEMBER." Ask the young people to say what they think you mean by this.

*Make the connection:* Explain that what you mean is that a faithful disciple is an active community member. Our faith calls us to be active in our communities. Lead the young people to see that the Church teaches that being members of the Church community is not limited to what we do inside of Church on Sundays; we are also called to live out our faith in the world and work to transform the wrong in our communities. We are called to be faithful disciples who are active in our communities, both local and global.

### **Opening Prayer**

Call the group to prayer. After an extended pause, continue with these or similar words:

**Let us pray.**

**Loving Father, we thank you for calling us to be disciples of your Son, Jesus Christ. Spirit that guides us, help us to be faithful disciples who are active community members. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*Students are seated. Catechist takes Bible from enthronement and proclaims reading. Be sure reading is marked in advance.*

### **Scripture Reading & Faith Sharing**

*The catechist makes the transition to this movement by describing that Jesus teaches us how to be faithful disciples who are active community members. He tells us we have to "love God" and "love our neighbor."*

Proclaim the reading (Mk. 12:28-34):

### **A reading from the Gospel of Mark...**

*One of the scribes, when he came forward and heard them disputing and saw how well he had answered them, asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, 'He is One and there is no other than he.' And 'to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself' is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that [he] answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions.*

After the reading a brief period of silence follows. Then, the catechist asks these or similar questions:

- What did you hear in this reading? Name the word or phrase you most remember.
- What commandments did Jesus say are the most important? Why?

After the initial response, proclaim the reading again.

### **A reading from the Gospel of Mark...**

Then ask the following questions:

- How do the two commandments relate to the idea of being a faithful disciple who is an active community member?
- Jesus says that both loving God and loving neighbor bring a person closer to the kingdom of God.
- How does a deep faith life help us to love others?
- How does being compassionate toward others affect us spiritually?
- The reading instructs that you should love your neighbor *as yourself*. How would our relationships and communities be different if we could really live this commandment out?
- What changes can you make in your own life to love God and neighbor better?

### **Faithful Citizenship Reading and Discussion**

*The catechist makes a transition from reflection on the Scripture to discussion on the teaching of the Church.*

The bishops of the United States have written a document that emphasizes how disciples should be active in public life. An important part of being a faithful, active disciple is making your voice heard on issues affecting human life, human dignity, justice and peace. In particular, the Church says we need to be aware of what we believe about topics such as:

- Human dignity. Protecting human life, especially unborn children.
- Peace. Making our world not only safer, but more peaceful.
- The poor. Working to end poverty and ensure that all people have the basic necessities of life.

For people who are old enough and who are citizens, voting is a very important part of making their voices heard. But all Catholics, no matter who they are, are called to be faithful disciples who are active community members. This is part of being a good

Catholic. The bishops say (*write quote on newsprint or blackboard or project it on a PowerPoint slide*):

In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. . . . The obligation is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us, "It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person. . . . As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life" (nos. 1913-1915).

--*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility*(no. 13)

The following questions can be used to help students understand several important concepts in the quote:

### **Participation in Political Life**

- The bishops say that "participation in political life" is a responsibility that we have. What does "participation in political life" mean? (Possible answers: learning about an issue that affects people in the local or global community; holding a community prayer service about an issue facing the local or global community; helping to educate others about that issue by writing a letter to the editor; calling or writing a letter to an elected official; voting; running for public office; etc. The bishops list a number of ways people can participate in no. 16.)
- What does "participation in political life" mean for someone your age?

### **"Moral Obligation"**

The bishops say that participation in political life is a "moral obligation."

- What does "obligation" mean? (Answer: a duty or responsibility that we have)
- What does "moral" mean? (Answer: having to do with right or wrong)

Explain that therefore, we participate in political life because doing so is the right thing to do. We are responding to a duty or responsibility that we have, for the good of our community.

- The bishops say that this "obligation" or duty is based in our faith in Jesus Christ. How does the duty to participate in political life relate to the commandments to love God and love our neighbors that we discussed earlier?

## **"It is necessary that all participate"**

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says that it is necessary that "all participate" in political life, and that doing so is related to our dignity as human persons.

- Why is it important that everyone have the opportunity to participate in political life? What does this have to do with our human dignity?
- Do you feel your "voice matters?" Why or why not?
- What can you do to make your voice heard?
- What can you do to be an active, faithful disciple and community member?  
Brainstorm ideas.

Choose one of the ideas to put into action. See the "**Developing Faith-based Action Plans**" guide, which can be found in the Parish and School Leaders section of the website, for suggestions on implementing an action plan. Some ideas to consider include:

- Participate in a Catholic "lobby day" organized by your state Catholic conference.
- Invite a local legislator to the class to talk about how he or she works to make sure the needs of the poor and vulnerable are addressed.
- Visit the web pages of various departments of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops ([www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)) or the USCCB Action Center to learn more about public policy issues of concern and then write a letter to a legislator about one of these issues, or contact the Diocese of Duluth Office of Social Apostolate.
- Make posters to put around your parish and school encouraging adults to vote and those younger than eighteen to take action in other ways.
- Contact your parish or diocesan social concerns or pro-life coordinator or your diocesan social action director for additional ideas.

## **Closing Prayer**

*Gather students into a circle with the Bible reverently enthroned in the middle of the circle. Once all have quieted, the catechist walks to the center, picks up the Bible and proclaims Mark 12, verses 32-33 only. After returning the Bible to its place, end with the below prayer.*

### **Let us pray.**

**Loving God, we are your children. By the power of your Holy Spirit, help us to share our goods with those in need and to participate in shaping our society. Help us to always be faithful disciples and active community members. We ask this through Christ our Lord who lives and reigns forever and ever.  
Amen.**