

Lesson 2: Our Desire for God and Salvation History

Curriculum Goals:

- Developing a relationship with God is at the core of any religious education program. Helping the candidates in this regard will be done through examples of people of prayer as well as various modes of prayer. The Sunday Eucharist, Holy Mass, is to be taught and understood as the center of their Catholic Christian lives. It is important to help the candidates realize that God is in their lives even when things may appear otherwise.
- Understanding of the Catholic Church: its sacramental system, doctrines, history, and hierarchical structure.
- An understanding of the seven Sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony) is essential to knowledge of the Church. The doctrines of the Church, as found in the Nicene Creed, provide the candidate with a working knowledge of the beliefs of the Church. A summarized history as well as knowledge of the Church's organization highlight the basic movements of the Church through time. In order to understand the present Church, one needs to know the Church's history, beginning in apostolic times.

Lesson Plan Overview:

1. Intro and Prayer (3 mins)
2. Reflection Activity I: More than Anything Else in the World (5 mins)
3. Confirmation Series Episode 2: Our Desire for God and the Old Covenants (11 mins)
4. Discussion Questions and/or Worksheet Activity: Old Covenant Hero Poster (15-30 mins)
5. Teacher Presentation: God Reveals Himself and Invites Us! (15 mins)
6. Closing Activity: Something We All Have Been Searching For (15 mins)
7. Closing Prayer: (2 mins)

1) Introduction and Prayer

2) Reflection Activity I: More than Anything Else in the World

Develop a short "bell-ringer" style activity in which students are asked to remember what it was they desired most of all when they were 4 years old, when they were 8 years old, when they were 10 years old and what they think they desire the most now. They should then reflect on how these desires change over time and that none of them was really the "ultimate thing" that they want. Examples of possible activities include:

-Think-Pair-Share: First, ask the students to think about what they desired at ages 4, 8, 10, and now, pausing between each of the ages to have them reflect. Then have the students pair up

and share each others' experiences. When discussion time comes, each students shares what their partner said.

-Four Corners: Divide the students between the 4 different corners of the room. Assign one age level to each corner (4 years old, 8 years old, 10 years old, Now). Then, give each group 1 min to determine what it is that someone from each age group would most desire. Conclude by having each group present their thoughts.

The point of this exercise is to challenge students to see that the desires of this world can never satisfy the human heart since it is made for the Infinite Love of God.

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3) Episode 2 of the Confirmation Video Series: The Desire for God and the Old Covenants

(These are the Key Points from the Catechism of the Catholic Church that are covered in the video. They are provided here in their entirety as a reference to aid your interaction with students should they have any questions after viewing the video.)

- CCC 27 The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for: The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator.
- CCC 28 In many ways, throughout history down to the present day, men have given expression to their quest for God in their religious beliefs and behavior: in their prayers, sacrifices, rituals, meditations, and so forth. These forms of religious expression, despite the ambiguities they often bring with them, are so universal that one may well call man a religious being:
 - From one ancestor (God) made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and

find him - though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "in him we live and move and have our being."

- CCC 29 But this "intimate and vital bond of man to God" (GS 19 # 1) can be forgotten, overlooked, or even explicitly rejected by man. Such attitudes can have different causes: revolt against evil in the world; religious ignorance or indifference; the cares and riches of this world; the scandal of bad example on the part of believers; currents of thought hostile to religion; finally, that attitude of sinful man which makes him hide from God out of fear and flee his call.
- CCC 30 "Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice." Although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness. But this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, "an upright heart", as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God. "You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure. and man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you" (St. Augustine, *The Confessions*)
- CCC 54 "God, who creates and conserves all things by his Word, provides men with constant evidence of himself in created realities. and furthermore, wishing to open up the way to heavenly salvation - he manifested himself to our first parents from the very beginning." He invited them to intimate communion with himself and clothed them with resplendent grace and justice.
- CCC 55 This revelation was not broken off by our first parents' sin. "After the fall, (God) buoyed them up with the hope of salvation, by promising redemption; and he has never ceased to show his solicitude for the human race. For he wishes to give eternal life to all those who seek salvation by patience in well-doing." Even when he disobeyed you and lost your friendship you did not abandon him to the power of death. . . Again and again you offered a covenant to man.
- CCC 71 God made an everlasting covenant with Noah and with all living beings (cf Gen 9:16). It will remain in force as long as the world lasts.
- CCC 72 God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. By the covenant God formed his people and revealed his law to them through Moses. Through the prophets, he prepared them to accept the salvation destined for all humanity.
- CCC 73 God has revealed himself fully by sending his own Son, in whom he has established his covenant for ever. the Son is his Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after him.

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4) Discussion Questions and/or Worksheet Activity: Old Covenant Hero Poster

Lead the group in the discussion questions from the video and/or distribute the worksheets for Confirmation Series Episode 2 and have the students complete them. Encourage them to be as creative as possible. Feel free to help the students to remember the key Old Testament Covenants:

Covenant 1: Adam and Eve with Creation and God

Covenant 2: Adam and Eve are promised a Redeemer that will be their offspring.

Covenant 3: Noah and the Flood

Covenant 4: Abraham and the Blessing of His Family

Covenant 5: Moses and the 10 Commandments/Passover

Covenant 6: David and an Eternal Kingship

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5) Teacher Presentation II: God Reveals Himself to Us! Key Points *(Use these annotated paragraphs from the Catechism of the Catholic Church to prepare a brief presentation on the topic. Also, feel free to draw on appropriate personal experiences of how reading and praying with Scripture has helped God reveal Himself to you and deepened your relationship with Him.)*

- CCC 50. By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation. Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. This he does by revealing the mystery, his plan of loving goodness, formed from all eternity in Christ, for the benefit of all men. God has fully revealed this plan by sending us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

- CCC 51 "It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will. His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature."
- CCC 52 God, who "dwells in unapproachable light", wants to communicate his own divine life to the men he freely created, in order to adopt them as his sons in his only-begotten Son. By revealing himself God wishes to make them capable of responding to him, and of knowing him and of loving him far beyond their own natural capacity.
- CCC 53 The divine plan of Revelation is realized simultaneously "by deeds and words which are intrinsically bound up with each other" and shed light on each another. It involves a specific divine pedagogy: God communicates himself to man gradually. He prepares him to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that is to culminate in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.
- CCC 68 By love, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. He has thus provided the definitive, superabundant answer to the questions that man asks himself about the meaning and purpose of his life.
- CCC 69 God has revealed himself to man by gradually communicating his own mystery in deeds and in words. St. Irenaeus of Lyons repeatedly speaks of this divine pedagogy using the image of God and man becoming accustomed to one another: the Word of God dwelt in man and became the Son of man in order to accustom man to perceive God and to accustom God to dwell in man, according to the Father's pleasure.

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6) Reflection Activity III: Something We All Have Been Searching For

Develop a short activity in which students are asked to consider how everyone in the world seems to be searching for something. They should consider whether that one thing is temporary or permanent. Is it just for one person or group, or should it be for everyone? Is it some material thing or something greater? Examples of possible activities include:

-Process of Elimination: Show the students a list of all the things that people strive after in life (money, fame, sports success, career achievement, higher education, pleasure, an attractive spouse or partner, etc). Then, challenge the students to come up with reasons why each one of these might fail to satisfy all of the longings of the human heart.

-Small Group Sharing: Split the students up into small groups and ask them to share a time when something that they really wanted failed to live up to their expectations. Then, ask the groups to come back together as a whole class and ask the students for some of the common themes that they heard from their classmates.

The point of this activity should be to get students to see that only God can be “all things to all people” and that only He can make a promise to give us what we have all be searching for.

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9) Closing Prayer

Additional Lesson Suggestions:

-In discussing our desire for God, you can talk about how nothing on earth, even very good things, gives us perfect and lasting satisfaction. Coming up with different examples, and how they fall short, can be a good interactive activity. This unquenchable desire for satisfaction helps to demonstrate that we are built for something beyond this earthly life.

-In explaining our desire for God and how we can come to know God, it is worth discussing the point that belief in God is not opposed to our reason (CCC 35).