

GRACED

Introduction to Sacraments, Jesus the living Sacrament, Church as Sacrament

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

Goal for the Life Night

The goal for this night is to introduce the theme of the semester on the seven sacraments of the Church. This night will help teens understand why Christ gave us the sacraments and why they are vital to the Christian life. Finally, this night will clarify some of the common misconceptions about the sacraments.

Life Night at a Glance

This night is an introduction to the semester on the sacraments. This night gives teens a brief overview of what a sacrament is and why each of the seven sacraments is necessary for the Christian life. The night begins with an empty ritual the teens will perform to be fully prepared to enter into the semester. The ritual will lead into a teaching on sacraments in general, the Church as giver and guardian of the sacraments and common misconceptions about the sacraments. Small groups will break open the teaching and lead into the Send. The Send will give the teens an opportunity to commit themselves to Christ, the sacraments and the semester. The night will end with a short time of worship and prayer.

Environment

OUTSIDE

The outside environment should be set back in a grassy or wooded area. Try to make this environment look as “tribal” as possible (think *Survivor*). Set a perimeter around a large open space with lit tiki touches. If possible, have colored spotlights shining and a fire in a fire pit/camp stove in the middle of the open space. Use big rocks or benches or blankets around the fire for the teens to sit on. The Core should be dressed up in grass skirts, tribal-looking headdresses and have their faces painted. Have tribal music playing to complete the feel of the environment.

INSIDE

The inside environment is set up in the normal meeting space. The idea for this environment is to draw the teens into the sacredness of the sacraments. The house lights should be kept low and the room lit up with candles. Across the front of the room have three tables set up. Each table will represent each of the types of sacraments. Cover each table with a white cloth and have two large candles burning on the ends of each table. On the Sacraments of Initiation table have all the elements and

symbols for Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Have a clear bowl of water, the oil for catechumens, a baptismal gown, baptismal candle, an unconsecrated host and chalice of wine. For the Sacraments of Healing have all the elements for the Sacrament of Penance and Anointing of the Sick. Have a large crucifix, purple stole and the oil for the sick. On the Sacraments of Service (vocation) table have all the elements for Holy Orders and Holy Matrimony. Have wedding rings, a bouquet of flowers, a Christian Prayer (Liturgy of the Hours) book and the priestly vestments. Behind the three tables have a large cross made out of wood. Have white cloths coming from the cross and draped over the center of each table. The cross will be used for the Send of the night. For an added element to the environment, have the smell of the incense filling the room.

MASS ANNOUNCEMENT

As the youth minister is giving announcements have three or four Core members come forward dressed in their tribal costume with a big pole and playing instruments. Have the youth minister finish his/her announcements, invite the teens to Life Night and exit by hanging onto the pole and be carried away by the tribal men/women.

GATHER *20 Minutes*

Empty Ritual (15 min)

As the teens come to gather at the regular meeting space, have a sign on the door that will direct them outside to the area where the “ritual” will take place. Have one or two Core standing at the door to direct the teens. As the teens gather at the new location have a few Core members ready to briefly paint the teens’ faces. The rest of the Core should be dancing around and playing makeshift instruments like pots and pans with wooden spoons. Once all the teens have gathered, the chief (youth minister) should sound an air horn and call for order. He or she should explain in his or her best crazy tribal voice that before the beginning of the new semester the teens must be brought through a new initiation ritual (that means absolutely nothing). The chief will then bring up the Core team. Have the Core perform a short dance and explain that the teens must copy exactly what they do. Have the teens imitate four or five ridiculous actions included in the dance (i.e. lay on their back and shake

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SEND *15 Minutes*

Recap (5 min)

The youth minister or a Core member should gather all the teens back together from small groups. Prepare the room for a time of prayer by dimming the lights and lighting the candles around the room. The youth minister should briefly recap the teaching and lead the teens in a time of prayer and commitment. He/she should begin the time of prayer by explaining that before we can talk about the sacraments, we must first start with the cross. Upon the cross Christ died for us. The cross is his sign of love and his commitment to us. He poured out his life that we might receive it. The sacrifice of the cross forms the foundation of the sacraments. It is uniquely through the sacraments that we receive the very life of Christ.

Commitment to Semester

—Signing the Cross (10 min)

Invite your music minister to lead the teens in a time of worship. Challenge the teens to come forward to sign their name on the cross as an outward sign of their commitment to Christ, the sacraments and the semester. Have two Core members standing by the cross to hand the teens markers to sign their name. Once all the teens have had a chance to come forward to sign the cross close with a short time of praise and worship. End the night with the Hail Mary and Ave Maria.

Commitment Card

As the teens leave, hand each of them a commitment card for the semester. If possible, print the semester schedule on the back of the commitment card.

A sample commitment card can be found on page 19.

Community Connection

- Bring the cross that the teens signed to every Life Night as a reminder. The cross can also be displayed at Mass when where the teens can see it and remember their commitment to Christ and to the program.
- Ask a few parents to build the cross for the Life Night.
- Ask some teens who are involved in drama and/or dance to come help with the “empty ritual.” Particularly, seek out teens who do not regularly attend Life Teen.
- A great snack for the night would be tropical punch, fruit, and kabobs (any food common to a luau).
- Ask your priest(s) to be present for the Send of the Life Night and to bless the teens and the coming semester.

Making It Work

- Depending on how big your group is, you may want to have more than one cross for the teens to sign.
- Advertise well in advance for the new semester. Use Facebook, email, bulletin announcements, etc.
- If you cannot have the Gather outside, create an indoor luau in a different room than your main meeting space. Obviously, the tiki torches and fire pit won't work, but a fake fire can be created with tissue paper and a fan.

In fact, Jesus Christ Himself is present in the Church. He is present in the Mass in the person of the celebrant (the priest), also in the Eucharist. He is present in Baptisms, for it is really “Christ himself who baptizes.” He is also present in the reading of the Gospel. He is present in the assembly of the people. The Church is always part of Christ, as through the liturgy we become part of the Body of Christ in heaven and on earth.

Since Jesus Himself is the source of grace and a sacrament, any time we are gathered together as one Church in unity with all of mankind, the Church itself becomes a sacrament. Just as God is one in the Holy Trinity, in the same way the Church is one when she gathers together all of her members in the Body of Christ. God makes our unity possible and our unity speaks to the unity of God in the Trinity. In fact, the Church sees all of Creation as a sacramental reality that points to God. So when we speak of sacraments, we are speaking of the Church and how she helps us receive the grace that God has for us.

Redemption in the Sacraments

The Eastern Churches use the word “mystery” for sacrament and celebrate the sacraments in a similar but different way. Both the word “sacrament” and “mystery” come from the Greek word “mysterion.” sacrament represents the visible while mystery represents the hidden reality of the sacraments.

Just as fire changes everything it touches, so too the Holy Spirit through the grace of the sacraments. Each of the sacraments brings the grace that they signify because of the faith that we have in the Father, who always hears the prayers of the Church.

Grace is the free and undeserved help of God that is given to help us become His children. We cannot become part of the divine love of God in heaven with our own natural powers because the divine love of God is supernatural, beyond our ability.

Sanctifying grace is the grace received in Baptism that makes us a new creation. It enables us to act by His love. This is not an act of God that hits us on a retreat, or during Adoration. This is the type of grace that works on our hearts our entire lives, leading us steadily to God.

CCC 1084-1085, 1115-1116, 1123, 1127, 1129, 1131, 1145-1152, 1421, 1996-2005,
Genesis 1:31
Wisdom 13:1
Matthew 7:20
Mark 7:33, 8:22
Luke 8:10, 9:31, 22:7-20
John 1:12-18, 4:14, 7:38-39, 9:6, 13:1, 17:1, 3
Acts 14:17
Romans 1:19, 6:10, 8:14-17, 12:6-8
1 Corinthians 2:7-9, 12
2 Corinthians 5:17-18
Hebrews 7:27, 9:12
2 Peter 1:3-4
Lumen Gentium #12
Sacramentum Concilium
Council of Trent “Canons on the Sacraments in General”
St. Augustine “Confessions”

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TEACHING

Anyone can always pray directly to God. Think about it this way, though. If God had an established way to teach us how to follow him, to give us His grace, would we not follow Him? God, through His son Jesus Christ gave us the Church and the sacraments so that we might be saved. Why would we not take advantage of that gift?

Usually when someone makes that type of claim, they really don't have a problem with the sacraments, they have a problem with the Church and feel that they should be able to make their own rules in regards to God and their faith.

The truth is that the sacraments provide us with an encounter with Christ that is unique and full of grace. Better than what we can find in creation, each sacrament is a deliberate way that the Body of Christ can celebrate our unity and our identity as part of the Body of Christ.

But aren't the sacraments just a way that we can mark big moments in our life like birth, death and everything in between?

Think about it this way, are the sacraments important because of the events or are the events important because of the sacraments?

It is at these moments in our life that God gives us the grace we need to move to the next stage in our lives. So it isn't that the sacraments are just parts of our transitions in life, they are the very elements that makes these transitions moments of grace, moments of holiness, moments when Christ gives us the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we need to be holy, to be part of the ever growing Body of Christ.

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Introduction to Sacraments, Jesus the living Sacrament, Church as Sacrament COMMITMENT CARDS



This card serves as a sign and reminder that I have committed my life to Christ and His work in me through the sacraments. I am also committed to being present at Life Nights this semester and participating and praying as best I can.



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Core Planning Team:

Date of Life Night:

One month prior to the Night:

- Give copies of the Life Night to each of the members of the planning team. Each person should read the Scripture and Catechism references as well as review the planning guide before the brainstorming meeting.
- Get the planning team together for a brainstorming meeting (this should last no longer than 1 hour). The team prays and discusses where the teens are in their faith journey in relation to this topic. Then using this planning guide as a starting point, the team adapts the Life Night to meet the needs of the teens and the parish. Create a detailed outline with any changes and/or adjustments.
- Assign the person responsible for each part of the Life Night:

Environment _____

Introductions _____

Empty Ritual _____

Signing of the Cross _____

Two Weeks Prior to Life Night:

- Turn in a detailed outline of the Life Night to the youth minister. Allow youth minister to give feedback and make any necessary changes.
- Create a list of needed supplies and materials. Assign a person to be responsible for collecting and/or purchasing the materials needed.
- Decide the people that will be doing the following things. Make sure they have a copy of the script and/or teaching outline. Inform them of any practices and/or deadlines.

Teaching _____

Week of the Life Night:

- Written outline of the teaching is given to the youth minister and practiced.
- Run a dress rehearsal of the Life Night. Youth Minister gives feedback.
- Create environment and collect needed supplies.
- E-mail entire Core team an overview of the night and small group questions.

Day of the Life Night:

- Set up the environment. Make sure the room is clean and presentable.
- Set up audio and video needs. Test the video clip to make sure both picture and sound work.
- Walk the entire Core team through the Life Night. Make sure all transitions are ready and everyone knows their roles.
- Pray! Pray for the teens attending the Night. Pray for God's will to be done through the night. Pray over those involved.