

BEYOND THE LITURGY

 LIFE TEEN



INTRODUCTION

As we face times of uncertainty, we know that connection to the Eucharistic liturgy is critical. A close second is community. We recognize that there are circumstances where a parish may have chosen to or be required to suspend any ministry outside of the Mass. It is always a gift and blessing to receive the Eucharist and attend Mass. Where there are opportunities for additional worship and ministry, we should seek to take advantage of those opportunities.

This resource provides three session outlines for worship and community that link up to a Sunday liturgy. By attaching this additional ministry to a Sunday Mass, it allows a community to gather where they may not be able to gather otherwise and to do so in the larger flow of a Sunday experience.

This is a great option for parishes that have suspended ministry outside of the Mass, but can be utilized by any parish in any circumstance. Gathering your community for an XLT following the Mass or holding a penance service prior to Mass are great ways to elevate the “Sunday experience” of your parishioners and draw people of all ages together.

In that way, this is not a “COVID19 pandemic” resource, though it has immediate application in that context but another tool you can utilize in your ministry to help reach teenagers, families, and your parish community.

USING THIS RESOURCE

There are three session outlines and six talk outlines included in this resource, along with a section with song suggestions. The session templates are designed to get you started in planning a penance service, XLT, or time of extended worship. All will require planning and some adaptation to your particular context. They are a great starting point and will get you far ahead in your planning.

Use the talk outlines to help deliver a Proclaim in each of the session outlines. You do not need to be limited to these outlines; they are provided to offer some thematic ideas that relate well to a penance service, XLT, or extended time of worship. If your team discerns a different topic or theme, utilize that. If you want to utilize a different outline, many of the Proclaim outlines found in Life Teen and Edge retreats will work well – simply be aware that some contextualization may be necessary in those Proclaims if they are given apart from each retreat.

Once you’ve chosen the talk and thematic direction, your team can begin planning and preparing. Invite your community to event and explain how the flow between the service and the Mass will work.

Finally, pray throughout all steps of the process. The goal of this resource is to empower your team to do the important and challenging work of relational ministry while creating an environment where your community can worship together in a way that supplements the Sunday Mass. Bind all of your efforts in prayer, and God will bear great fruit.



PENANCE SERVICE TEMPLATE

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

GOAL

This session outline provides a framework for an penance service at your parish prior to Mass. Utilize the talk outlines provided on pages 13 to 35 to select a topic for the penance service.

SETTING UP

This session outline is designed to be used to host a penance service prior to a Mass. This is a great opportunity to safely offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation to your community by employing social distancing guidelines and by linking it to the liturgical celebration of Mass.

Several weeks prior to the penance service, invite priests from your local area to come to hear confessions. Set up various “staging areas” that allow for social separation where people wait for the sacrament. Set up “confessionals” that place a screen or fabric between the confessor and the penitent, allowing them to be slightly closer to each other to provide privacy. Be sure to allow extra space between those waiting in line and those receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, as both priest and penitent may need to speak louder in order to be heard and understood.

Invite your music ministry to be present for the service to lead worship music. This is more than background music; the ministry should have moments where they encourage prayer and worship. This should never become the focus, but be an opportunity for people to pray as they wait.

Set aside two hours for the service; it should end just before Mass. Work through the logistics of the community gathering for Mass and those waiting for confession. It is wise to end approximately 15 minutes before your scheduled Mass time. Encourage those that attend the penance service to attend Mass, as well. Consider projecting an examination of conscience for people to reflect on as they wait. If this is not possible, consider passing out paper versions that penitents keep with them and do not return.

GATHER

Welcome and Opening Prayer with Worship

The parish priest welcomes everyone to the penance service and offers any housekeeping reminders regarding social distancing, mask usage, etc. He leads an opening prayer and invites the music ministry to lead a song of worship.

PROCLAIM

The Message (15 minutes)

Prior to the penance service choose a talk outline found on pages 13 to 35 and designate a person to give this message. This person can be a youth minister, core member, priest, or even a well coached teen or parent. This reflection should prepare penitents to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The priest introduces the individual giving the reflection.

BREAK

Instructions for the Sacrament of Reconciliation (45 min)

After the Proclaim, instructions are given for receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These instructions can be

given by the same person that delivered the Proclaim or the parish priest may give these instructions.

At this time it is appropriate to review some of the basic aspects of the Sacrament of Reconciliation but not an entire catechesis on the sacrament. It is important to walk through the logistics of how penitents will receive the sacrament, progress forward in line, and where they should move to pray penance and remain for Mass.

Act of Contrition

Pray an act of contrition together as a group. This should be projected so everyone reads the same version or should be included on the paper handout that has an examination of conscience on it. Praying ahead of everyone receiving the sacrament will allow the penitents to move through the sacrament more expediently.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Invite penitents to receive the sacrament through the process that was explained. Set up an additional area for penitents to pray their penance and wait for Mass.

SEND

Transition to Mass (5 min)

The parish priest returns to begin the transition into Mass. He should thank everyone for coming and invite them into silent prayer as he prepares to celebrate Mass.





XLT TEMPLATE

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

GOAL

This session outline provides a framework for an XLT at your parish following Mass. Utilize the talk outlines provided on pages 13 to 35 to select a topic for the XLT.

SETTING UP

This session outline is designed to be used to host a “XLT” - a liturgical celebration of Eucharistic Adoration that includes worship music, a message, and a period of Eucharistic Adoration with benediction.

The outline is written for implementation immediately following a Mass. Please work with your parish priest and liturgical musicians to determine the best logistical framework for your parish. If you are going to have a musician other than the liturgical musicians at Mass lead worship music during the XLT, coordinate the change so that there is not a break between Mass and the XLT. One should flow immediately into the other; i.e. the closing song of Mass is the opening song of the XLT.

Prepare necessary materials for the XLT prior to Mass, including the monstrance, incense, additional candles, and kneelers near the altar.

For further instruction on the planning and execution of an XLT, watch the Webinar Wednesday, “Avoiding Awkward Worship: How to Run an XLT,” found online at lifeteen.com.

GATHER

Mass Closing Song / XLT Opening Song and Welcome (15 - 25 min)

The closing song for Mass should also be the opening song of the XLT. Depending on your community, the worship musician may choose to utilize another song for prayer. These songs should be upbeat and re-engage the congregation following Mass.

After this brief period of worship music, the host of the XLT welcomes everyone and introduces the theme of the XLT. This theme will be based upon the talk outline you’ve chosen.

The host leads an opening prayer and the worship leader plays another worship song that is in line with the theme of the XLT.

PROCLAIM

The Message (15 minutes)

Prior to the XLT choose a talk outline found on pages 13 to 35 and designate a person to give this message. This person can be a youth minister, core member, priest, or even a well coached teen or parent.

The host introduces the individual giving the Proclaim.

BREAK

Instructions for Praise and Worship (45 min)

After the Proclaim, the speaker transitions into a time of extended praise and worship and Eucharistic Adoration by handing the XLT over to the worship leader.

The altar should still be set from Mass; at this time altar servers or another appropriate person may discreetly set up

the monstrance, light candles, and prepare incense.

For song suggestions, see the *Song Suggestions* handout found on pages 37 to 38

The following are instructions for worship leaders to lead teens in praise and worship using the Temple Model:

The Temple Model follows the structure of the Jerusalem Temple. The temple can be broken down into four main parts: the outer courts, inner courts, holy place, and holy of holies. Worship will typically move from high praise (or fast music) into deep worship (or slow music) to contemplation (no music). The goal is for the worship leader to guide the assembly into a state of contemplative prayer – where heart speaks to heart.

Outer Courts (10 min)

Scripture instructs us to “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise!” The first step is to begin with a time of high praise and fast music. This is an expression of our excitement about coming into the presence of the Lord. This is the time to have fun. After a series of high praise songs, transition into the inner courts.

Inner Courts (5 min)

The inner court is where we begin quieting ourselves and preparing ourselves for a deeper encounter with God. The music moves into a more moderate tempo, neither fast nor slow. We are moving toward the destination of the holy of holies (the place of contemplative prayer). But first, we enter the holy place.

Holy Place (10 min)

The holy place is where worship of God becomes authentic adoration of God. The music is much slower, the lyrics are simpler, the volume becomes softer, and the content of the songs speaks more to the pure adoration of God. Here you might repeat a chorus like, “How Great is our God,” “I

Exalt Thee,” or simply “Holy.” These lyrics speak directly to God in a way that is deep, profound, and loving. Now, the assembly is ready to enter the holy of holies.

Holy of Holies and Eucharistic Adoration (25 min)

In the holy of holies, the music itself begins to cease. Our hearts have quieted. In the days of the Old Testament, the high priest spoke little when he entered this sacred place. Instead, he would remain silent and in awe of the presence of the Lord. This was the place where God’s very presence resided. Here we give God the opportunity to speak into the quiet of our hearts as we soak in His presence.

During this phase, have your parish priest or deacon expose the Eucharist, and encourage the teens to acknowledge the reality that God is and rest in His presence.

Allow for time of silence. At the right moment, the music minister, priest, or deacon invites the teens to behold Jesus beholding them as discussed in the Proclaim.

To conclude Eucharistic Adoration, have your parish priest or deacon give benediction and lead the teens in praying the Divine Praises. Have the responses for benediction and the words of the Divine Praises on the projector.

Concluding Praise (5 min)

End with an upbeat song or two, thanking God for His presence.

SEND

Concluding Remarks (5 min)

The host returns to the stage, shares highlights from Eucharistic Adoration, and gives thanks for the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. He or she then challenges the teens to continue to take time to adore God everyday.



WORSHIP SERVICE TEMPLATE

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

GOAL

This session outline provides a framework for a period of extended worship following a Mass. This is very similar to an XLT, but does not include Eucharistic Adoration.

SETTING UP

This session outline is designed to be used to lead an extended time of worship after Mass, including a message. This is not an XLT; it is a great option if your parish priest or deacon is unable to lead Eucharistic Adoration after Mass.

The key to executing an extend period of worship after Mass is that the transition is seamless between the Mass and the extended time of worship. If you have two different sets of musicians for each, this will need to be coordinated so there is no “down time” between the closing song at Mass and start of the extended worship.

Another important difference to note between this outline and an XLT outline is that there is no “host”. The music ministry will invite people into prayer, introduce the speaker giving the message, and will close the time of prayer.

Communicate this event to your congregation ahead of Mass and remind them about it again before Mass. There will be members of your congregation who choose to attend this Mass because they want to pray longer, a few that choose to attend a different Mass, and some that will feel more comfortable leaving after the closing song. Do not “surprise” your congregation with a longer time of worship.

GATHER

Mass Closing Song and Worship (15 - 25 min)

The closing song for Mass should also be the opening song of the extended time of worship. After this song, the music ministry invites people to continue to pray and remain for a message, as well. The music ministry leads a couple of worship songs and then introduces the speaker.

PROCLAIM

The Message (15 minutes)

Prior to the worship night, choose a talk outline found on pages 13 to 35 and designate a person to give this message. This person can be a youth minister, core member, priest, or even a well coached teen or parent.

BREAK

Praise and Worship (45 min)

After the Proclaim, the music ministry continues to lead worship. A list of possible songs to choose can be found on pages 37 to 38.

SEND

Closing Prayer (5 min)

The music ministry closes the session with a prayer and invites the congregation back to Mass next Sunday.



WORTHY OF ADORATION

A PROCLAIM ON WORSHIP AND ADORATION OF GOD

MUSIC THAT MOVES YOU

Music has a way of moving us. Sometimes we listen to music that matches our mood and we feel those emotions as we listen. Sometimes we play music to pump us up and get us ready for something exciting. Sometimes we go to a concert and feel connected to others as we share in the experience of an artist together.

Consider singing pieces of one or two of your favorite songs. Have fun with the songs, sing along dramatically, and get the teens to join you in singing along.

Music can move us powerfully in prayer, as well. You may have experienced deep and profound prayer during worship at a retreat, conference, or at Mass. God can use music to move our hearts in a way that is emotional.

This isn't always the case, though. There are times we may not "feel it" when we pray and when we worship. While music can often move us, sometimes in prayer and in worship we don't catch that same emotion. This can be discouraging, especially if we've had profound experiences of prayer before.

Praise and worship is not about us and what we feel or get out of it. The focus of praise and worship is God. It's about praising Him because He is worthy of praise. Any experience or feeling is a gift, but it is not a result of whether or not we praised God well or whether or not God is present. Worship isn't about us - it is about God.

A NEW FOCUS

Share a personal story about a time when a desire to praise flowed from an experience of praise and worship in which you directed your focus on God rather than on what you would get out of it.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes adoration of God as "the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before His Creator." Adoration is primarily a recognition of the reality that God is — that He is Father God and we are His children; that He is great, He is mighty, He is in control, and He cares for us.

CCC 2628, 2096-2097

Adoration of God is simple. It praises God for His own sake and gives Him glory not for what He does, but simply because He is. Saying, singing, and believing the words "God is" is adoration of God. We don't need to sing songs with more lyrics than that. However, lyrical songs remind us of our human experience and can help us connect to the reality that "God is."

CCC 2639, 2649

FULLY PRESENT

When we recognize that "God is" we enter into a profound reality; God is with us. God is present to us. In this moment, wherever we are emotionally and mentally, God is present to us. Simply saying the statement, "God is" reminds us of this presence. Are we present to God, though? Do we make ourselves available to the Lord or are we distracted?

We can become aware of the holy presence of God anytime and in any place. We can be aware of God's presence in our daily prayers; at home in our room, in

our car, or in a chapel. However, we are given a unique opportunity to adore God, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in Eucharistic Adoration and at Mass.

CCC 1378

In the Eucharist, God is with us. When the priest, at Mass, consecrates the gifts of bread and wine through the Eucharistic prayers a spiritual and physical transformation takes place called “transfiguration.” When this happens, the bread and wine retain their physical appearance but become the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. God is with us and present in a real and tangible way.

Share a personal story about a time when you experienced the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Even though Jesus is present to us in the Eucharist, we need to still recognize that presence and be present to Jesus. If we aren’t willing to enter into prayer and adoration, we are going to miss the great gift present to us in God’s presence,.

Enter in and recognize that God is present – even if we don’t feel God’s presence – to you right now. He is inviting us to worship, we simply need to respond.





THE FATHER SETS US FREE

FREEDOM THROUGH THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

FREEDOM!

Share a story about a time you felt “freedom” in your life. Keep this story a bit lighter and even humorous.

There is something incredible about the feeling of “freedom.” Whether you’ve experienced that feeling after your last exam of a school year or when you finally leave a job you didn’t enjoy. Maybe you’ve experienced a deeper sense of freedom when you overcame a habit or even an addiction. There is no better feeling than the feeling of being free.

God is a God of freedom and throughout human history God has worked to liberate people from oppression. This is demonstrated when God freed a whole group of people, the Israelites, from slavery and Egypt.

Read Exodus 7:1-6. God set His people free from slavery and oppression in Egypt by revealing His power and might through the ten plagues. Through witnessing the power of God the pharaoh’s heart was eventually changed and he let the people of God’s people go.

Share thoughts or reflections on the story of the plagues or consider showing a video clip of this popularly recreated story.

PERSONAL EXODUS

Just like God worked many wonders to set His people free from slavery to the Egyptians, God wants you to see

His power and wants to set you free from the slavery and darkness of sin. He does this through Jesus Christ and in particular the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

By God’s power, we are set free from the slavery of sin. He comes to rescue us, He hears our cries for help, He is merciful, and He is loving. Our relentless Father will go to any length to save us.

Just like the blood of the lamb on the doorposts saved the Israelites from the spirit of death, the blood of Jesus Christ saves us from death. Just like the staff of Moses parted the Red Sea and allowed the people to cross to freedom, the cross of Jesus Christ makes the way for us to true freedom from sin and to heaven.

God is fighting for you. God wants our attention. He does not want you to live a life of slavery or sin — He is not just waiting, the relentless Father is always at work to bring you to freedom.

CHOOSE FREEDOM

The Israelites had the choice to follow Moses out of Egypt to freedom, and you have the same choice to follow God out of the slavery of sin to true freedom.

The Israelites had to decide to follow Moses into the desert; they were not forced to leave. In the same way, you need to respond, God will not force His love or mercy upon you, it is your choice.

You have to decide to come out of the darkness into the light, out of sin into freedom.

This is a continuous call; it is a continuous relationship where you will fall, but you always can come back to God. Jesus shows us the way to live, He shows us the path to holiness, but we must decide to follow Him.



GOD'S HEART IS MERCY

JESUS AS SAVIOR AND THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

BACK TO GOOD

Share a brief story about a time you made a mistake and needed to seek forgiveness. It can be light and humorous.

We've all needed to say, "I'm sorry," at some point. We make mistakes, we sometimes hurt others when we don't intend to, and sometimes we know the right thing to do and instead we choose to do the wrong thing. We've all been there.

When we need to reconcile with someone and seek forgiveness, we know how to do that. We go to the person, admit we were wrong and ask forgiveness. Then that person can choose to forgive us and we may, if necessary, make some kind of restitution (e.g. we broke a window in our friend's car, so we offer to pay for a new window).

But how do we do that if we do something that offends God? How do we do that when we do the wrong thing and do harm to our relationship with God? How do we ask God for forgiveness and how do we "make things right" with God, who needs nothing?

The answer comes in Jesus Christ.

We were not able on our own to repair our relationship with God that had been ruined by sin. We need a Savior, and God sent us one.

Read John 3:16-17

Jesus Christ became one of us to show us God's great love, but His mission from the moment He was born was to be our savior. Jesus came to rescue us from sin by reconciling us to God. Jesus is the path to forgiveness. He came to bring us back into right relationship with God by saving us from our sins.

CCC 457

Jesus accomplishes this by dying on the cross for our sins. For the consequence of sin is death, but Jesus takes on this consequence for us to set us free from the slavery of sin and death. More than that, though, Jesus rises again from the dead. In this dying and rising, Jesus offers us a "divine exchange" - He dies, like we do, so we can rise, like He does.

Romans 6:23

Why bother, though? Why seek us out and save us? God needs nothing; including you and I. So why does God save us?

THE HEART OF A SAVIOR

The heart of God is mercy. Not only did He become man to show us how much God loves us but He goes even further and gives His very life to reconcile us with God and save us from sin. (CCC 457)

Jesus doesn't just come and say that God loves us, but He proves it with every ounce of His being and every moment of His life and ultimately by dying for us: "But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

Romans 5:8

His love and mercy are unconditional; He did not die for us because we deserved it but because He loves us. Jesus'

death reveals the incredible quality of the heart of God that He is merciful.

The definition of mercy is “compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one’s power to punish or harm.” We have all sinned and done bad things in our lives, and God could punish us for them, and He would be right to do so.

But instead, He shows incredible mercy by forgiving us and going one step further, by taking the consequence of our sin upon Himself and dying for us.

THE HEART OF A SACRAMENT

We experience the great mercy and forgiveness of God through this incredible sacrifice and through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

So what are we to do in light of such great mercy? We are called to accept it and be merciful in return.

God loves you regardless of what you have done, and He will forgive you no matter what you have done if only you are sorry and ask for His forgiveness.

The Church gives us the great Sacrament of Reconciliation where we can come to receive God’s forgiveness and the grace to overcome sin in our lives.

Jesus’ death also changes suffering for us. In the midst of our own suffering, we can unite it with Jesus’ suffering on the cross, we can pray for people and offer up our suffering for those in need.

Finally, we are called to be merciful to others. To forgive others for the wrong they have done and to ask others for forgiveness.

Share a story about a time in your life that you either forgave someone or were forgiven by someone and how that affected you.





SING A NEW SONG

PRAISE AS PRAYER

CATHOLIC PRAYER BOOK

Share a story about your favorite kind of prayer and how your understanding of prayer has changed since you were a kid (not a teenager – think young child around grade-school age).

When you pray, how do you pray? What kind of prayer do you go to? Do you still pray the way you did when you were a kid or have you grown in how you pray?

There are two types of prayer that most Catholics are very comfortable with: Silence and memorized prayers. These are absolutely essential to our prayer, but if you open the bible and turn to a passage where someone is praying, they are most often praying out loud and spontaneously from the heart. These are just a few examples:

When God saves Israel from Pharaoh's army, they sing of God's goodness for an entire chapter!

_____ *Exodus 15*

At the Visitation, when Mary and Elizabeth are filled with joy because of Jesus' presence, Mary shouts for joy and begins the prayer we call the Magnificat: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior..."

_____ *Luke 1:46-55*

Silence and memorized prayers are good, but if we want to pray like the men and women in the Bible, then we can't neglect the importance of vocal prayer as well.

There are five different types of vocal prayer listed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Blessing, praise, thanksgiving, petition, and intercession. We are going to talk about praise, and discuss what it means to praise God.

SING PRAISE

"Praise is the form of prayer which recognizes most immediately that God is God. It lauds God for his own sake and gives him glory, quite beyond what He does, but simply because HE IS..."

_____ *CCC 2639*

When we praise God, we are basically telling Him who He is. A simple form of praising God is saying, "God, you are [insert attribute or quality of God]." For example, "God, you are good," "God, you are strong," "God, you are merciful," etc.

Human beings love praising the people they love. This is why it is so easy for people to write love songs. We love telling our boyfriends and girlfriends that they are smart, kind, beautiful, and other great qualities. Praising God can be similar to this. We are basically just telling God what about Him is good, and saying it to Him as a form of prayer.

This praise focuses our hearts back to God rather than us, though our praise is deeply personal. Our praise flows from our personal story.

THE GOD OF MY STORY

What God has done in history reveals who He is, but God has also worked in each of our lives individually as well.

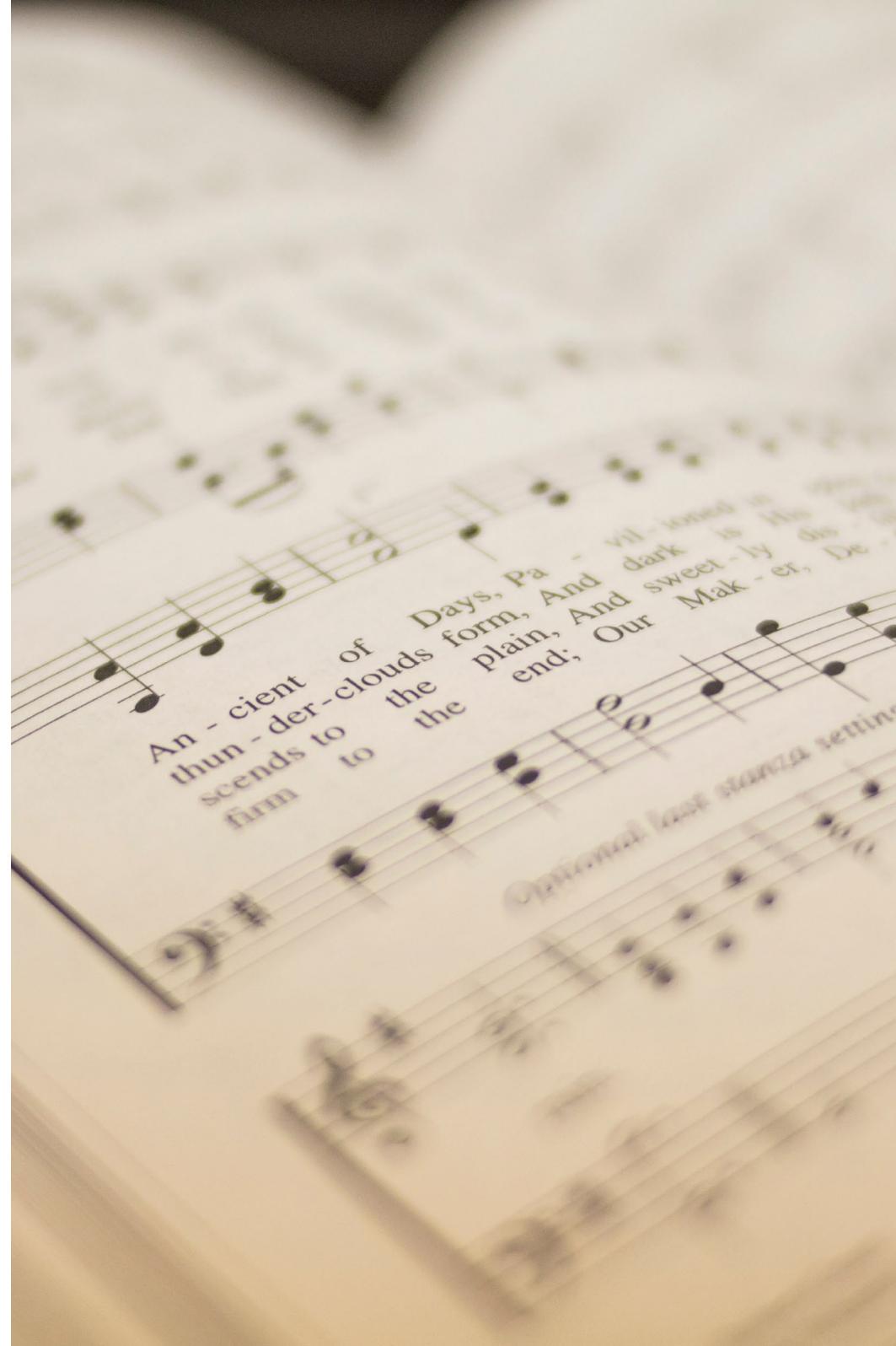
Scripture, especially the book of Psalms, gives many names to God, and is a good place to start for understanding who God is and giving Him praise. However, God gives us the freedom to speak from our hearts as well.

Because God works uniquely in each of our lives, we can each praise God in our own unique way. For some of us who have experienced times of suffering in our lives, we can say, “Lord, You are my refuge in the darkest of nights.” For anyone who has felt consoled and comforted after praying for the Holy Spirit to give them courage, we can say, “Holy Spirit, you are my comforter, my consoler, and my strength.”

We can't say things that are wrong about God (e.g. “God, you are a squirrel.” “God you are kind of ‘OK.’”), but the Father loves when His children notice His goodness in their own unique way.

It is important to note that our praise does not add anything to God, but it does open us up to what God desires to do in our story. By speaking out loud God's praise, we open our minds and hearts to receive God's grace.

It can feel uncomfortable to offer praise out loud to God, but there is freedom in doing so. Remember, it doesn't add to who God is - but it does allow God to add something incredible to us.





DIVINE MERCY

GOD'S DIVINE MERCY SAVES US

TO FORGIVE IS DIVINE

Begin by sharing a time you needed to forgive someone and the challenges you faced in doing so. This may be the story you come back to at the end of this section.

Forgiveness is a choice to pardon those who have wronged us. Sometimes, we are quick to brush our hurts aside, “he didn’t mean it” or “it’s not a big deal.” We may even ignore our hurt feelings. However, it is important to recognize that we are hurting, acknowledge where it is coming from, and offer forgiveness.

Forgiveness is a decision, not an emotion, so we can choose to forgive our offender even if we don’t feel like we have forgiven them. Feeling at peace or like you have forgiven someone often comes later. When we decide to forgive, we decide to stop reliving the situation or ignoring the hurt we are feeling, which allows us to heal and feel as though we have forgiven someone.

Other times, we are quick to revenge, to respond to evil with evil. Again, it is important to recognize that we are hurting, acknowledge where it is coming from, and offer forgiveness.

Forgiveness does not mean we forget; rather, it means we no longer hold a grudge. We can be in the same room as the person who has wronged us and be at peace. We are no longer plagued by painful memories. We don’t forget that they hurt us, but we also don’t let them continue to hurt us by harboring unforgiveness.

Regaining trust is another matter, though. We do not have to trust the person again. We do not have to confide in them or ask them to help us. Trust can be regained, but no one has a right to our trust. We can be respectful toward someone without confiding in them.

Consider sharing a personal story that elaborates on these aspects of forgiveness.

TO ERR IS HUMAN

Think of a time when you knew you did something wrong and felt guilty. Maybe you wished you could go back in time and un-do it. Maybe you felt trapped and alone, “No one can know what I did!” Maybe you were found out and were desperate for forgiveness and for the situation to be over. Did you apologize? Did you ask for forgiveness? Did you receive the forgiveness you needed?

When we wrong others, we have a responsibility to recognize our mistakes and ask for forgiveness saying, “I am sorry. I made a mistake. I wronged you. Do you forgive me?” These words can be hard to say, but they are so important.

It is also important for the person who was wronged to respond with their own powerful words, “I forgive you.” So often we respond with something like, “Oh, no, don’t worry about it. It’s not a big deal.” But again, the words “I forgive you” are so powerful.

We hear the instruction to forgive over and over again in Scripture:

Read Ephesians 4:31-32 and 2 Corinthians 2:5-8

When Peter asks Jesus how many times we must forgive, Jesus responds by saying “seventy-seven times.” In Scripture, seven is considered the number of completion.

For example, creation was finished and God rested on the seventh day. In this instance, Jesus is instructing us to forgive continually and completely.

Read Matthew 18:21-35

Jesus completely forgives us. By His death on the cross, all of our sins are forgiven.

CCC 601-613; 2 Corinthians 5:21

Project Rembrandt's "Christ on the Cross" and read John 19:16-18, 28-30 and Ephesians 1:7

GOD'S DIVINE MERCY

Each Second Sunday after Easter, the Catholic Church celebrates Divine Mercy Sunday. This devotion to Jesus as the divine mercy is based on the writings of St. Faustina Kowalska, a Polish nun who, in obedience to her spiritual director, wrote a diary recording the revelations she received about Jesus' mercy. The divine mercy message is easily remembered by the acronym, "ABC."

Ask for His mercy: God wants us to constantly approach Him in prayer, repenting for our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and the world.

Be merciful: God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others.

Completely trust in Jesus: God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent on our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive His mercy.

Project the Divine Mercy image

Saint Faustina first saw this image of Jesus as the divine mercy when she was alone in her room. In this image, Jesus is not beckoning us to return to Him, but coming to rescue us. He is shown walking toward the viewer, with His hand raised in blessing. As He once said to St. Faustina, "Be not afraid of your Savior, O sinful soul. I make the first move to come to you, for I know that by yourself you are unable to lift yourself to me."

Diary 1485

Jesus revealed that He is moving toward humanity during one of the darkest periods of human history — World War II and the Holocaust. Jesus is revealing that He has mercy for those who commit the most evil atrocities. If He has mercy for them, He also has mercy for us.

Mercy and forgiveness are ours; they have already been won for us by Jesus' death on the cross. The hard work has been done. We just need to recognize that we sinned, be sorry for our sin, and ask for forgiveness.



THE TRADE

GIVING OUR LIFE TO CHRIST

THE POWER OF YES

We say, “yes,” many times in a day; sometimes we say it out loud and in response to a question, but other times we say it by our actions. We say, “yes” to continuing our education when we go to school. We say, “yes” to helping our family when we choose to do chores around our house, even if we aren’t asked. We say, “yes” to growing in our faith when we choose to pray.

That response, “yes” can make things happen – sometimes it can change the course of a day or even our lives. Our “yes” often comes in response to something else, but God also speaks “yes” throughout history and when God speaks reality is created.

The Greek word that often is translated into “yes” is *fiat*. This word is probably better translated as “let it be” or “let it be done,” but the sentiment is close to the word “yes” – it is an affirmation and acceptance of a reality.

At the beginning of the bible, God speaks a *fiat* and the world came into being and He created everything with a specific purpose, plan, and with great love.

Even when man and woman sinned against God by doubting His goodness, He still had a perfect plan — that He would send His son to save us and restore our relationship with Him.

When Mary, the mother of Jesus, said *fiat* to the will of God she became the Mother of God and gave birth to Jesus

Christ our savior and God’s perfect plan came to be through her trust and openness to Him.

Jesus was born to save us from our sins, but He also came to show us that God is real — that He is a loving Father and that we do not have to be afraid to follow Him to new life.

Jesus became man to save us from our sins, but also through the witness of His life He reveals to us who God is and proves that He is God and God is real.

He healed people who were blind, ill, or physically broken. He forgave people of their sins and He drove out demons. He multiplied bread and fish, and He taught about the love of God and how we are to treat one another.

CCC 651-653

Jesus asked the people to follow Him and to imitate His holiness.

JESUS SHOWS US HOW TO LIVE

Because of the witness of Jesus’ life we learn that God is trustworthy and worth following — Jesus revealed in every aspect of His life the goodness of God and gave us the ultimate example of following the will of God by saying *fiat* to suffering and dying for our sins.

Jesus was a man of words and of action. He did not simply tell us to follow God, but He gave us the perfect example of being open to the will of God and to trust in God’s plan even if it is not easy.

He also showed us what God is capable of and how much He loves us through His own *fiat*.

CCC 615-618

Read Luke 22:39-42 and give the youth the context that this happens right before Jesus is captured and all the events that led to His crucifixion.

Jesus surrenders His life totally to God — much like His mother Mary did — but in a literal way.

He said *fiat* to the will of God, to His perfect plan of love, and faced what most people would agree is the worst case scenario — suffering and death. In doing this, Jesus accepts death and trades His life for our life.

CCC 609, 612

Through His death on the cross, Jesus took on all the consequences of all the sins of every single person who has and who ever would live but also initiates this trade that is completed in the Resurrection. Jesus takes on death, through our humanity, so that through Him, we could take on eternal life and His divinity.

God loved us so much that He gave everything so that we would be freed from our sins and able to enter into eternal happiness with Him forever in heaven.

NEW LIFE AND RESURRECTION

Jesus rose from the dead proving that He was truly God and showing us that while there may be suffering in our lives God is there in the midst of it and when we are open to following Him He can make all things new.

But we might still be afraid, we may be unwilling to be open to God because we are scared of what our lives will look like or we are scared of what will happen if we trust God.

You might still be struggling with the reality of a good and

loving God because we have experienced suffering, pain, or death in our lives.

But Jesus shows us that God makes all things new — we live in a fallen world where sin, suffering, violence, and evil are a reality, but they are no match for God.

Jesus' story does not end with suffering and death — but rather victory over sin and death.

Read Luke 24:1-9

Jesus rose from the dead. He conquers death and comes back to life, and in doing so He proves that He is who He said He was — He is the Son of God and He does have the power to save us.

Suffering does not prove that God is not real, suffering proves that sin is real and that we need a loving God. When we follow God we will still experience suffering or pain, but Jesus shows us that God is in the midst of that sorrow and when we allow Him into those parts of our lives He can make all things new.

Revelation 21:5

Our problems will not instantly go away — but Jesus can bring you peace, comfort, love, and help in your times of need.

Jesus' resurrection also shows us that no matter how bad it gets, God is greater than all darkness, death, and that we have hope through Jesus for happiness now and eternal happiness in heaven.

God wants us to be open to the plans that He has for us. He wants to bring His love, purpose, and power of creation into our lives to do something new, something great.

But He will not act without our permission. Rather, he will wait patiently for you to invite Him into your life and to say *fiat* to His plans. You need to make the trade.



SONG SUGGESTIONS

Consider using the following songs that are simple, singable, and scriptural. Use the title and artist to locate arrangements and lyrics; please follow all licensing and copyright regulations based upon your parish.

PRAISE AND WORSHIP SONGS

- 10,000 Reasons/Bless the Lord – Matt Redman
- Adoration – Matt Maher
- Adoro Te Devote, We Adore You
- Alive – Hillsong
- Another in the Fire – Hillsong
- Because He Lives – Matt Maher
- Behold the Lamb of God – Matt Maher
- Burning In My soul – Matt Maher
- Come As You Are – Crowder
- Fire Fall Down – Hillsong
- Freedom – Jesus Culture
- Great Things – Phil Wickman
- Good, Good Father – Chris Tomlin
- Graves Into Gardens – Brandon Lake
- Here As In Heaven – Elevation Worship
- Holy Spirit – Jesus Culture
- In the River – Jesus Culture
- It Is Well – Bethel
- King of My Heart – Bethel
- Lion and the Lamb – Leeland
- Lord, I Need You – Matt Maher
- Memorial – Ike Ndolo
- Nothing Else – Cody Caries
- O Come to the Altar – Elevation Worship
- Relentless – Hillsong
- Restless – Audrey Assad
- Run to the Father – Matt Maher
- Set a Fire – United Pursuit
- Shepherd – Bethel
- Sinking Deep – Hillsong Young and Free
- So Will I – Hillsong
- Soul on Fire – Matt Maher
- The Wick – Housefires
- This is Amazing Grace – Phil Wickham
- Tremble – Mosaic Music
- Ubi Caritas
- Way Maker – Leeland
- What a Beautiful Name – Hillsong
- Who You Say I Am – Housefires
- Yes and Amen – Housefires
- Yes I Will – Vertical Church
- Your Love Awakens Me – Phil Wickham



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