

The Four Pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

summarized by Kate Iadipaolo

The Catechism and Catechesis: Not sure how to approach catechesis with young people? As Catholics, we've been given numerous structures already which can guide our deepening appreciation of the faith: from daily Scripture readings laid out so carefully in your Roman missal to the liturgical year with all its seasons and feast days, from the theology inherent in the blueprints of a Catholic Church to the mysteries of the faith that are embedded in the way we partake in the sacraments and pray. All of this is detailed in an orderly fashion in that sometimes intimidating "reference" book we call the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Here's an outline of the Four Pillars of the Catechism and a few suggestions for activities.



Part One-Profession of Faith: Man and God † Our Desire for God † Revelation † Transmission of the Divine † Characteristics of Faith † Language of Faith † Sacred Scripture † Scripture and Tradition, the Church, Christ and the Holy Spirit † The Creeds & Significance of each † Declaration of Faith

1. Have a discussion on the ways that young people come to know God: Which of these ways are knowledge arising from the physical world and which arise inside a person? What things can be said about God on the basis of the world? What things did God reveal to us?
2. Discuss the Protestant notion of *Sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone) versus the Catholic idea that Revelation is guarded not only in the written word but in the living Church. Remind them that the Bible itself was compiled by the Church which pre-existed any written Gospel.
3. Practice the art of *Lectio Divina* (see Prayer & Worship section in this manual).
4. Split a group into 2 teams, and set up two chairs. One of the chairs represents the answer 'true' and the other one 'false.' Prepare ahead of time statements from the Catechism's explanation of the Creed, modifying about half of them to give the opposite meaning (thus giving the opportunity to correctly answer 'false'). Have the students race to sit in the chair which represents their answer. After each question, briefly discuss the question and answer.



Part Two-The Celebration of the Christian Mystery: Paschal Mystery and the Church † Churches Liturgy † Holy Trinity and Liturgy † Details of Liturgy † Liturgical Diversity and Unity † Sacraments † Mystery of the Sacraments † Celebrating the Sacraments † Other Celebrations, Sacramentals, and Funerals

1. Plan a guided tour of the Church. Dim the lights, play Gregorian chant music, and walk through the Church explaining the significance of various things in the Church (use the worksheets in the Prayer & Worship section of this manual to help you). Have a priest vest for the young people & explain the significance of each article of clothing he wears and the vessels he uses during Mass.
2. Celebrate a feast day of importance to another culture. Have the young people prepare by doing research (perhaps meeting with someone of that culture).
3. Compile a list of young people's Baptismal dates and celebrate them as spiritual birthdays.



Part Three-Life in Christ: Man's Vocation † Human Dignity † Free Will † Morality and Virtues † Sin † Human Community † Social Justice † The Church as Mother and Teacher † The Ten Commandments

1. Collect articles from the newspaper on events of current interest which bear on justice & morality. Have some young people play 'devil's advocate' by attacking the position of the Church on this issue and have others defending the Church's position.
2. Plan an evening prayer service with a priest beginning with a Q&A session about sin, followed by an examination of conscience. Have time available at the end for confession. Prepare a quiet reflective environment for this using candles and incense (no allergies preventing), etc.
3. Complete one of the programs in the Justice & Service section of this manual. Debrief the event using the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.



Part Four-Christian Prayer: Prayer and Christian Life † Revelation of Prayer † Universal call † The Old Testament † Age of the Church † The Tradition of Prayer † Guidelines of Prayer † Struggle of Prayer † The Lord's Prayer

1. Read about a few saints who have had notable conversion stories. Have each young person pick a saint who 'struggled with prayer' and write a prayer of thanksgiving for the conversion as if they were themselves the saint.
2. Do a petition Rosary. Have young persons offer intentions for each bead of the Rosary and then lead the prayer for that bead. End with a litany to the Blessed Virgin.
3. Say an "Our Father" out loud, pausing after each phrase to allow young people to offer a few words in relation to that phrase. For example, you'd begin 'Our Father' and then pause. Take turns offering whatever free association comes to mind for that phrase. Someone might say "I am your child" or "I know you through my earthly father". After allowing the opportunity for response, continue with the next phrase "who art in heaven," then pause. Continue thus through the entire prayer. Allow sufficient time for this meditation. You could prepare for this exercise by going through the Catechism's explanation of the Lord's Prayer.

Below are some excerpts from the Catechism which touch directly on the four pillars mentioned above. You could use them as introductory remarks to a program or as background.

1. The Profession of Faith

CCC 26 We begin our profession of faith by saying: "I believe" or "We believe". Before expounding the Church's faith, as confessed in the Creed, celebrated in the liturgy and lived in observance of God's commandments and in prayer, we must first ask what "to believe" means. Faith is man's response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of his life. Thus we shall consider first that search (*Chapter One*), then the divine Revelation by which God comes to meet man (*Chapter Two*), and finally the response of faith (*Chapter Three*).

2. The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

CCC 1066 In the Symbol of the faith the Church confesses the mystery of the Holy Trinity and of the plan of God's "good pleasure" for all creation: the Father accomplishes the "mystery of his will" by giving his beloved Son and his Holy Spirit for the salvation of the world and for the glory of his name.¹ For this reason, the Church celebrates in the liturgy above all the Paschal mystery by which Christ accomplished the work of our salvation.

CCC 1068 It is this mystery of Christ that the Church proclaims and celebrates in her liturgy so that the faithful may live from it and bear witness to it in the world:

3. Life in Christ

CCC 1691 "Christian, recognize your dignity and, now that you share in God's own nature, do not return to your former base condition by sinning. Remember who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Never forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of the Kingdom of God."

CCC 1692 The Symbol of the faith confesses the greatness of God's gifts to man in his work of creation, and even more in redemption and sanctification. What faith confesses, the sacraments communicate: by the sacraments of rebirth, Christians have become "children of God," "partakers of the divine nature." Coming to see in the faith their new dignity, Christians are called to lead henceforth a life "worthy of the gospel of Christ."

4. Christian Prayer

CCC 2558 "Great is the mystery of the faith!" The Church professes this mystery in the Apostles' Creed (*Part One*) and celebrates it in the sacramental liturgy (*Part Two*), so that the life of the faithful may be conformed to Christ in the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father (*Part Three*). This mystery, then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God.