



Union with Christ – Step 2 Prayerful Discernment

Aim

To experience the Dismissal Rite.
To develop skills in discernment
scripture reflection.

Resources needed

Leaders

- PPT laptop and projector or TV & video clip if using
- Bible or scripture passages
- Prayer focus items
- Copies of the Scrutiny Prayer

Young People

- Journal

Prayer Focus

Keep simple and set up ahead of Mass

Cloth - Suited to the Liturgical Season

Bible - Open at Mtt 4:1-11

Candle - Jesus the Light of the World;

Image - of wilderness, or bowl of sand

Prayer cards – Scrutiny Prayer

Liturgical Link

- Penitential words and actions that are used during the different sections of the Mass.
- Baptismal promises are renewed each Easter

Overview

- Responses to readings
- Prayerful discernment
- Reflection on the temptation of Jesus
- Making choices
- The Scrutiny

Preparation by Catechists

- *Familiarity with content and resources*
- *Be ready to share re discernment and living our Baptismal Promise*
- *Pray for the young people and leaders*

Scripture Passages

- Matthew 3: 13-17 Baptism of Jesus
- Matthew 4:1-11 Jesus in the desert

Tenets of Faith (Faith Formation)

- Discernment - recognition of God's will for me
- Temptation - growing closer to God strengthens our ability to fend off temptations
- Living out our Baptismal promise to reject Satan and all his works

Gathering

The Rite of Dismissal

- Meet and welcome group in the foyer before Mass and remind them of the process.
- Sit together, with families close by, so the group can move easily to stand in front of the altar for the dismissal, then process out together. *(Based on the first Sun of Lent Year A – the Gospel being Jesus tempted in the wilderness - if happening at a different time this will not be the Gospel reading for the Mass.)*
- Following the Dismissal invite a member of the group to light the candle as they gather in the reflective space.

*** If the Rite of Dismissal is not taking place welcome the group as usual and choose an appropriate activity to introduce the notion of temptation and lead into the Gospel reflection.*

Initial response to the Readings and Homily: *Jesus in the wilderness [Matthew 4:1-11]*

- Invite the young people to share their responses to the readings and the homily.

There is no need to go into too much detail on the Gospel since further reflection will take place.

If necessary offer a few prompts such as:

- is this passage familiar?
- recall any words or images that stood out for you?
- did anything you heard surprise you?
- how did the homily help to make sense of the events?
- is there a word or phrase Father used that lingers with you?

Activity - *What is Discernment?*

- In pairs, invite group members to spend 30 seconds considering the question
- Take feedback from the pairs and clarify as necessary using the points below.

Explain to the young people that Discernment is a reflective process which draws us closer to God. This happens from careful listening: listening with an open heart, to oneself, to others and to God. By opening our hearts, we allow the Spirit to enter in and so ignite us!

Discernment is quite different to decision making, which comes after and is informed by discernment. The purpose of discernment is to find God's will for us. In any particular situation discernment enables us to discover what God might want of me / us within that context.

Throughout the bible when individuals respond to God's call, they do so having opened their hearts to him and discerned his will for them. In these final weeks of preparing to receive the Sacraments we are called to do the same.

Praying with scripture brings us into God's presence. God will speak to our open hearts through our reflection, gradually helping us to uncover the path he has chosen for us.

'How can we know if something comes from the Holy Spirit or if it stems from the spirit of the world or the spirit of the devil? The only way is through discernment, which calls for something more than intelligence or common sense. It is a gift which we must implore. If we ask with confidence that the Holy Spirit grant us this gift, and then seek to develop it through prayer, reflection, reading and good counsel, then surely we will grow in this spiritual endowment.'

Pope Francis 166, Discernment, Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete et Exsultate, 2018

Going Deeper with Scripture

Review

- Ask who remembers the scripture passage focused on at the last gathering, and any important message it contained?
- Prompt as necessary and take responses.

Activity - *Find the link:*

- In pairs, invite the young people to identify any links between the Gospels heard in the previous gathering and the one heard today.
- Allow a minute or so, as needed, then invite brief sharing amongst the group.

Hopefully the young people will have recognised sin featuring in both readings. The focus last week was on the extent and power of God's forgiveness of the sinner. This week the focus is temptation. When we give in to temptation we give in to sin.

At the start of every Mass, in the Penitential Rite, we acknowledge our failings, and so our need of God's loving mercy. Some of the prayers used acknowledge the extent of God's mercy. In the Gloria we acknowledge Jesus as the one who *'takes away the sin of the world'* and in the Creed profess our belief in the *'one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.'*

Within the Eucharistic Prayers there are a number of references to our unworthiness and of the sacrifice made by Jesus for the forgiveness of sins: Eucharistic Prayer II *'Take this all of you and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.'*

During the Communion Rite we call on the Lamb of God to take away our sins, the priest then prays: *"This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are they who are called to his supper."* Our response again acknowledges our unworthiness, but trust in God's loving mercy: *"Lord, I am not worthy to enter under your roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."*

In humility we are then able to receive the Lord, in communion through this act of faith and trust our venial sins are forgiven.

The strength of Jesus' relationship with his Father enabled him to face temptation head on and dismiss it. The closer we grow to Christ the better able we will also be to resist temptation.

Frequent use of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion, with the graces received through these, deepen our relationship with Christ and increase our ability to fight temptation.

Reflection – Jesus is tempted in the desert

- Provide the Context for the passage: The text follows on from the baptism of Jesus. The final words of that passage come from the voice from heaven: *'This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'*
- Introduce the four-step process to aid discernment which will be used to reflect once more on the Gospel Reading.

Four Discernment Steps

- **Listening to understand the context:** who are the key characters, what is the setting, what words, phrases or images remain with me, how are they of relevance to my life?
- **Prayerful response** Sit before God allowing the reading to speak to your heart; does it bring comfort, challenge, or something else? Offer these feelings back to God.
- **Meditation** How can I transform my life? What is God saying to me? How do I respond?
- **Contemplation / Discernment** Be open to God's will without expectation, rest in God's presence, trust in God.

Gospel Matthew 4:1-11

- It might help to have the 4 steps on a ppt / whiteboard or large sheet of paper for reference.
- Encourage the group to sit comfortably, preferably with eyes closed, in a position they will be able to maintain throughout the reflection, which will last around 10 minutes or so.
- Provide the context, then read the passage. (or view – Bible Series <https://youtu.be/ixfYkAHjAgM> 3.16min)
- Guide the group through each of the steps. Judge how much time is needed for each by the way the group seem to be coping.

Explain how, Satan rephrases the words spoken by God at the baptism of to introduce two of his temptations: Jesus *'If you are the Son of God...'* He is clearly disputing the claim from heaven and trying to force Jesus to prove his sonship.

In response to the first temptation, Jesus affirms his trust in God.

Satan seizes on this as the basis for his second temptation, but again Jesus rejects any attempt to force God's hand.

The final temptation reveals the true nature of the contest: it is a struggle between God and Satan, but Jesus makes clear the choice he has made, and rejects Satan.

Deepening our understanding

- One of the questions asked of individuals prior to receiving the Sacrament of Baptism is: Do you reject Satan and all his works, and empty promises?
- For those baptised as an infant, God Parents makes the affirmation on their behalf.
- Annually the Church gives everyone the opportunity to recall and renew their baptismal promises as part of the Easter Liturgy.

Activity – Making choices

- in groups of 3 invite the young people to spend 5-10 minutes, depending on the time available, discussing the questions below:
 - As followers of Jesus how are we called to reject self-interest, power and physical comfort?
 - What are some of the choices between 'good and evil' that we face in our own everyday existence?
 - In our world there are plenty of examples of evil at work. How are Christians called to respond to particular modern phenomena like consumerism or individualism.
 - How testing is this for us personally?
 - How much balance is in your life? How much energy is focus on physical and material wellbeing as opposed to mental and spiritual wellbeing?
- Invite each group to share what they consider the most important points from their conversation.
- Conclude by drawing together comments that sum up the views of the group.

Explain to the young people that just as Jesus spent time in prayer and fasting in the desert, Lent is a particular time when Christians are invited to deepen their relationship with God through self-sacrifice, fasting; giving money and where able our time to support those in need, and also to commit to the relationship by spending more time in prayer.

Satan will do everything in his power to squash our resolve by enticing us to do wrong, so weakening our relationship with God. Sadly, we often give in far too easily!!

The comments heard so often in adverts telling us we deserve whatever might be on offer, or even just a bit beyond our reach, ring only too loudly in our ears!! This can delude us from recognising the sinful state that we are being drawn into.

Pride is one of our greatest sins it often leads us to make poor decisions.

Remind the group of the conditions for sin:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Intention | a sin is something we say or do intentionally - not by accident or mistake |
| Freely chosen | of our own free will, not under pressure or force from anyone else |
| Knowledge | with full awareness that what we are doing is against God's will |

The Scrutiny – Penitential Rite

As previously mentioned, at each Mass we are given opportunities to both acknowledge our sins and ask for pardon. In our last gathering we also looked at the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which individuals can access individually, any time a priest is available. In particular seasons and celebrations communal Penitential Services may also take place.

For people like yourselves, on the journey to full communion, the Church offers special Penitential Rites, known as the Scrutinies.

These are designed to help individuals examine their life, see where changes might be necessary, and through prayer to receive grace and healing.

The Scrutiny prayers are offered as part of the Dismissal Rite. The priest will ask the congregation to pray for and support each Catechumen.

The prayer used is a Prayer of Exorcism: exorcism simply means sending away.

The prayer is asking for our faults to be removed and replaced with God's grace.

- Hand out the prayer cards and ask the young people to listen attentively as the prayer is read aloud.
- Invite any questions or comment.
- If the Rite will not be happening during the Mass explain that the Scrutiny will be incorporated into the next gathering.

Closing Prayer

Prayer From Psalm 50

A pure heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your Holy Spirit.

*Morning prayer of the Church, Week 1 Friday, The Divine Office,
Wm Collins & Sons Co Ltd. 1990 Edition*

Closing Remarks and Next Step

- Invite response to the Step 2 gathering
- Prayer and Discernment Step 3 incorporates the Scrutiny or Penitential Rite.
If happening in Church at Sunday Mass the Rite of Dismissal also takes place.
If taking place with the priest outside of Mass, maybe incorporate into the closing prayer at the end of the gathering and invite parents to attend, if feasible.
- Encourage the young people to read and reflect on the Prayer of Exorcism during the week.
- Encourage personal and prayer support of one another and attendance at Sunday Mass.