

RCIA/Teen Resource Guide: Part I

Catechists can supplement from the resource guides for Grades 9–12/adults.

Objectives:

- To gain an understanding of the human side of St. Peter, our first Pope
- To discover and compare our own weaknesses and similarities to St. Peter
- To understand Peter's conversion after Pentecost

Materials

Bible, open to Matthew 26:69-75

Candle

Bibles, notepads, pens

Any relevant handouts

Opening Prayer

After the attendees are seated, light the candle and read Matthew 26:69-75, about Peter's denial of knowing Jesus Christ. Invite discussion on this passage, highlighting his personal anguish, pain and regret.

Introduction

Ask the group to reflect on whether they have taken actions or made decisions that they regret in their lives or that may have caused them to experience embarrassment, shame, or bad consequences. Ask if anyone would like to share what happens when such decisions are made. If not, share a story of your own.

Talk about the importance we each individually play as part of the universal Church.

- Who are you?
“But you are ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises’ of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9)
- Describe a time in your life when you began something new? Did you know where that first step was going to lead you? Invite the class to share their answers. Ask them to share at time when a decision they made turned out well.
“As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, ‘Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” (Matthew 4:18-20)

Use this discussion to lead into these lesson topics:

- Peter's and our humanity and Jesus' forgiveness of us.
- Our capacity for conversion through this forgiveness, using St. Peter as our role model.
- The blessing that the papal visit will give each one of us.

What was St. Peter like as a man?

Peter was an ordinary man, a simple fisherman, until his encounter with Jesus Christ. He has been portrayed as impulsive, uninhibited, outgoing and generous.

He walks on water in faith and then sinks in doubt. He at first refuses to allow Jesus to wash his feet, then wants his whole body cleansed. At the Last Supper, he swears he will never deny Jesus and then does exactly that by denying that he ever knew Jesus.

Examples of Peter's humanity:

- One night, Peter, in response to Jesus' call, stepped out of the boat into the sea and began to walk towards Jesus. He was suddenly struck with fear as he lost faith, and he immediately began to sink. (Matthew 14:28-31)
- The event of Jesus' transfiguration dazzled Peter so much that he wanted to remain there. (Mark 9:2-8)
- Not understanding Jesus' lesson of servitude, Peter resisted allowing Christ to wash his feet. (John 13:1-9)
- Peter thought he knew better than the Lord. He disagreed with what Jesus stated was the Father's will that he must suffer and be persecuted before being raised. (Matthew 16:21-23)

How are we similar to St. Peter?

Use the following questions to stimulate discussion. They all pertain to the Scriptures above. If the participants are unable to give examples from their own lives for the questions below, the facilitator should be prepared to do so.

- Have you ever been frozen with fear? Give examples. (We are like Peter, often losing faith. An event can cripple us.)
- Have you ever resisted following authority? Give examples.
- Have you ever questioned authority? Give examples.
- Have you ever disobeyed or argued with those who are in charge, as Peter did with Jesus? Give examples.

How was Peter able to overcome his human frailties?

Discuss, using the following examples as necessary:

- Peter was chosen by Jesus to have a special relationship with him. Together with James and John, he was privileged to witness the Transfiguration, the raising of the dead child to life, and the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane. His mother-in-law was cured by Jesus. He was sent with John to prepare the room for the Last Supper. Peter's name is first on every list of apostles. He was the "rock" upon which Jesus built his whole Church. (*Matthew 16:17-19*)
- Peter witnessed the life of Christ and, after publicly denying any connection with Jesus three times, Peter came to know the depth of the love of Jesus first hand by experiencing the forgiveness and mercy of Jesus. Through each of these events, we can see the changes the Spirit effected in Peter.
- Peter's life is an excellent example of how the Spirit of Jesus converts us to a new life. (Acts 2:1-4)
- He became known for his courage while announcing the Good News after he received the Spirit. Peter found his voice. No longer did he sway from brash overconfidence to crippling fear. He was more focused. Peter was instrumental in opening the heart of the Church to the Gentiles. He began to perform healings as Christ had done. (Acts 3:7-8 and Acts 9:32-35) He raised Tabitha from the dead. (Acts 9: 36-42)

How can you open your heart to the Spirit in Baptism and/or Confirmation?

Don't treat the sacrament of Baptism or Confirmation as another ritual through which to pass; instead, let it be the beginning of a change of life, of becoming more like Jesus. How do we achieve this? (Discuss.)

How can you grow more like Peter?

Peter had an encounter with Jesus Christ. Would you like to do the same? (Discuss.) We can encounter Christ through prayer. We may also encounter Christ through the Pope's visit.

What happened when Peter died?

His authority was passed down to a man named Linus. When Linus died in 78 A.D., Cletus took over until 90 A.D., and then Clement until 100 A.D., and after that another, and so on over the past 2,000 years. St. Peter was martyred in Rome, and since then the Bishop of Rome has been the Pope. There have been 265 popes in the history of the Church, including our present Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI.

"Where Peter is, there is the Church" - St. Ambrose, 4th century

Reference: www.catholic-hierarchy.org

Closing Reflection

Lead the group in a reflection of what it must be like to have the responsibilities of the Pope. Pray for Pope Benedict who walks in the path of Peter, who walked in the path of Jesus.

Closing Prayer

Pray for the Pope's intentions this month (<http://www.apostleshipofprayer.org/2008.html>). Conclude by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

RCIA/Teen Resource Guide: Part II

Catechists can also supplement from the resource guides for 9–12 adults.

Objectives:

- To understand the papacy
- To learn about Benedict XVI
- To learn about the work and mission of the Pope
- To learn why the Pope's visit is relevant to each one of us

Preparation

Read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* paragraphs 871-913 and summary paragraphs 934-945 to prepare you for this lesson. Read the Core Theology on the Papacy document.

Materials

Bible, opened to Matthew 16:13-20
Candle
Bibles, notepads, pens
Any relevant handouts

Opening Prayer

After the attendees are seated, light the candle and read aloud Matthew 16:13-20 about Jesus commissioning the apostles. Invite discussion on this passage.

Introduction

- Talk about the importance of having structure and leadership within organizations in this modern world, especially in the family, in the workplace and in other groups to which the participants may belong. What are the roles of leadership within these groups?
- Relate the needs of the Church to those of other organizations, particularly the need for leadership, rules, volunteers, active participation, etc.

Who is the Pope?

The Pope is the Bishop of Rome and the successor of St. Peter. He is the head of the college of bishops. As such, he is the visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful. He speaks with the authority of Christ (see Matthew 16:18-20 and John 21:15-17).

Discuss these titles of the Pope:

- Bishop of Rome
- Vicar of Christ (A vicar is one who acts for or represents another.)
- Successor of the Prince of the Apostles
- Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church
- Sovereign of the State of the City of the Vatican
- Servant of the Servants of God

Who was the first Pope?

St. Peter was the first Pope.

How are popes chosen?

Upon the death of a Pope, the Cardinals elect his successor. All the Cardinals are summoned to Rome for the conclave that will elect the new Pope. They are locked into the Sistine Chapel. Secret votes are taken twice daily until a two-thirds majority plus one, is reached. No electioneering takes place between the Cardinals. They simply pray and let the Holy Spirit guide them in their choice. After each vote the ballots are burnt. Special chemicals are added to make the smoke black or white. White smoke announces that a new Pope has been elected.

Who is the current Pope? (Please refer to Core Theology on the Papacy: Catechesis II)

Summarize a biography of Pope Benedict for your group in your own words to draw a vivid picture of our Holy Father.

Reference: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/biography/documents/hf_ben-xvi_bio_20050419_short-biography_en.html

What are some of the important events in Pope Benedict's early life that prepared him to exercise his ministry as Pope? (Please refer to Core Theology on the Papacy: Catechesis II.)

Use these events in his life to discuss how the events of our lives help us grow spiritually. Ask them if they can relate any events in their own lives that have brought about a conversion or a change of behavior or attitude.

Where does the Pope reside?

The Pope lives in Rome because he is the Bishop of Rome. More specifically, the Pope lives in Vatican City, the smallest sovereign state in the world. Situated within the city of Rome, it covers an area of 108.7 acres. It consists of the following: the Vatican Palace, museums, art galleries, libraries, a radio station, post office, bank, astronomical observatory, offices, apartments, service facilities, St. Peter's Basilica, and neighboring buildings between the Basilica and the *Viale Vaticano*.

Reference: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3819.htm>

What is the mission of the Pope?

The Office given uniquely by the Lord to St. Peter continues in the Bishop of Rome. He carries out his office of teaching, sanctifying and governing the Universal Church. The other bishops of the Church are united with the Pope and assist him by carrying out the tasks of teaching, sanctifying and governing in local dioceses all the while in union with the Pope.

- **Office of Teaching**

The Pope preaches the Gospel to all people and ensures that the faith is authentically taught throughout the world. This is done through his encyclicals, apostolic letters, exhortations, addresses and homilies. He is the chief shepherd and all are entrusted to his care. (Mt. 28:19-20)

- **Office of Governing**

Governance of the universal Church is entrusted solely to the Pope as the successor of St. Peter. By virtue of his office as the Vicar of Christ and as pastor of the entire Church, the Pope possesses full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church (Mt. 16:16-19). The Pope is the supreme legislator of the Church.

- **Office of Sanctifying**

By virtue of his office and through a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Pope is entrusted with forming the People of God as a holy nation. Christ imparts his own holiness to the Church through the life of prayer, worship and the Sacraments. The Church's unity under the Holy Father is a sign of unity with Christ from whom holiness flows.

Why is the Pope's visit important to us? What will the Pope do while he is here?

- This is a both a pastoral visit to the people of the United States and an official state visit.
- He will celebrate Mass in Washington, DC and in New York.
- The Holy Father will meet with the President of the U.S. at the White House.
- The Holy Father will meet with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- He will meet with other Christian leaders.
- He will make a presentation to world leaders at the United Nations.
- He will visit the site of the World Trade Center bombing on September 11, 2001.

Why are his meetings with the President, the United Nations and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops important?

Invite the participants to reflect on his influence in world affairs and in particular his influence in the United States.

Why is the visit important to Catholics?

Our Holy Father signifies the visible unity of the Church, of the spiritual communion of all the faithful who are the Body of Christ. The Pope's visit in all its particular details is, then, an event of great joy that will remind the faithful of their unity.

How can we see the papal visit as an opportunity to have an encounter with Jesus Christ?

Discuss.

Conclusion

For adults: Discuss the group's hopes and expectations for the upcoming papal visit.

For teens: Discuss what events in your lives are drawing you closer to God at this time.

Closing Prayer

Pray for the Pope's intentions this month (<http://www.apostleshipofprayer.org/2008.html>).

Conclude praying the Lord's Prayer together.