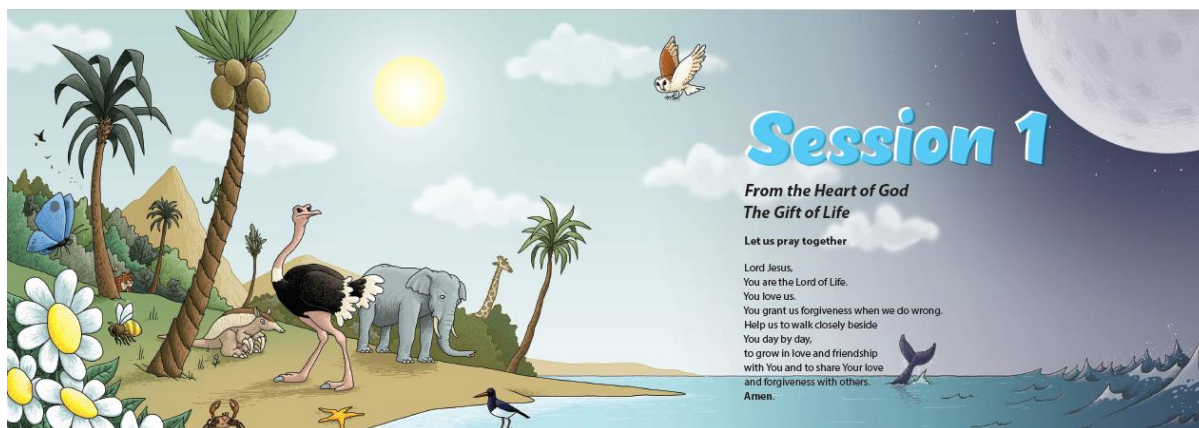


# HEART SPEAKS TO HEART: THE GIFT OF RECONCILIATION

## CATECHIST NOTES



### SESSION 1

#### THANKFULNESS: the Gift of Life (pp.10-23)

##### Before the session begins:

- Prepare a focal point (which may this week contain symbols of baptism, e.g. a jug of water, the Holy Oils of the Catechumens and of Chrism, a baptismal candle, etc.)
- Serve refreshments (when this is possible)
- Have some spare 'Reflection Books' (notebooks) available in case some children have not been given one
- If the Help and Guidance handouts are to be distributed during the session or in advance for Session 2, have the sheets ready for distribution at the appropriate point in the session
- It may be a good idea to have one or two photocopies of the relevant pages of *Heart Speaks to Heart* (pages 10-23) in case some participants have forgotten their books!

Catechists should be ready to help participants who may be struggling with the discussion. It may help to have pictures or images available or to point participants to this week's focal point.

Catechists should also be aware of families' stories, lives and struggles.

See suggested timings for each section of the session below: it is anticipated that pages 10-13 will take 10 minutes in total; pages 18-19 will take 10 minutes in total.

The Lead Catechist notes below are intended to be prompts for the sort of things Lead Catechists may say rather than scripts to be read out.

### **Welcome and Introduction: 3-5 minutes**

Lead Catechist:

- Welcomes everyone and introduces herself/himself
- Invites participants to introduce themselves to one another on the table (when this is possible)
- Asks participants to turn to **page 10** in their books
- Reads out the title of the session and says something like: "In this first session we will be looking at all the things we have to be thankful for – and especially about what we have to thank God for."
- Asks everyone to join in the **prayer on page 11** ("Lord Jesus, You are the Lord of Life ..."), leads everyone in making the Sign of the Cross and then leads the prayer

### **Pages 12-13 ("Let's get started") 5-7 minutes**

Lead Catechist:

- Asks participants to turn to **page 12**
- Says something like: "As we prepare for First Reconciliation, the twins Jess and Ryan are going to journey with us. They have lots of questions, but today it's Grandpa who has some questions for the twins – and for us too! I hope you've had chance to read these 2 pages (pages 12-13) and record your answers to the questions in your Reflection Book. Read the questions at the bottom of page 13 and then share your thoughts in answer to the questions with one another.

The questions are:

- 1. How do you feel? Are you worried about anything?**
- 2. What are you looking forward to?**
- 3. Are there any questions you want to ask?**

Take time now to share together your responses to these questions."

**Pages 14-15 (“Today’s virtue is THANKFULNESS”) 5 minutes**

Lead Catechist:

- Asks participants to turn to **page 14**
- Says something like:  
“Each week we will think about a key virtue to help us to grow in friendship with Jesus. If we practise these virtues, we become like Jesus and so the best person we can be. Today’s virtue is Thankfulness. Let’s read what it says about Thankfulness on page 14.”
- **EITHER** asks participants to read page 14 together **OR** reads the text aloud to the whole group **OR** invites two participants to read out a paragraph each to the whole group

**Pages 16-17 (“Thanking God for our wonderful world”)****10 minutes**

Lead Catechist:

- Asks participants to turn to **page 16**
- Says something like:  
“Each week we will listen to a story from the Bible. As you listen, underline words on page 17 which stand out for you and think about what they may mean. After you have listened to the story, share with each other the words and thoughts which meant something to you. Begin to write and draw your thoughts in the space beside the Bible passage. You can finish this off at home.”
- **EITHER** reads the Bible passage about Creation slowly and clearly **OR** invites participants to read the passage to one another **OR** plays the audio of the text (found under **Audios Bible Passages > Reconciliation Session 1 – Creation**)
- Asks participants to share and write down or draw their thoughts

**Page 18 (“Thanksgiving for the gift of Jesus”) 6-7 minutes**

Lead Catechist:

- Asks participants to turn to **page 18**
- Says something like:  
“Read the left-hand column and the top of the right-hand column on page 18 together, taking it in turns to read a paragraph each, and then read the questions at the bottom of the right-hand column and talk together, trying to answer one or two of these questions.”

**Page 19 ("Giving thanks")****3-4 minutes**

Lead Catechist:

- Asks participants to look at **page 19** and complete the word search together

**Pages 20-21 ("Baptism: giving thanks for new life")****Requires 5 minutes +**

Lead Catechist:

- Asks participants to turn to **page 20**
- Says something like:  
"Read page 20 together, taking it in turns to read a paragraph each, and try to answer the questions as you come across them."

**Note:** there may not be time to do this section during this session (there is a lot to explain this week in the 'things to do at home' section); catechists may advise participants to do it all or (if begun) to complete this section at home.

- Draws participants' attention to page 21, where the pictures illustrate the various stages of Baptism

**Page 22 ("At home")****May need 10 minutes for Session 1**

Lead Catechist:

- Goes through the home activities on **page 22**
- Explains what a Reflection Book is: a small notebook (which should have been given to the child by their parent or carer) for the children to write and/or draw their thoughts about anything that strikes them from the session they have just done. The Reflection Book should be a private and personal record for each child of their thoughts as they prepare for First Reconciliation
- Explains the importance of having a Prayer Place at home and makes suggestions of what to have there: a small table covered with a cloth on which there may be: a crucifix or cross; an LED candle; a children's Bible and/or *The Wednesday Word* leaflet; holy pictures and/or a statue; prayer cards, etc.
- Asks the children to read pages 26-27 and think about the questions there in preparation for the next session

**Evaluation****5 minutes**

Lead Catechist:

- Asks participants to consider two questions, talk together about them and write down their thoughts on post-its.
- The two questions are:
  - 1. What did you enjoy in the session? [2 minutes]**
  - 2. If we were to do the session again, what could make it even better? [2 minutes]**

**Page 23 ("Praying with thankfulness")****5 minutes**

Lead Catechist:

- Invites participants to sit quietly and close their eyes
- Says something like:
 

"I'm going to say a little phrase three or four times. Say these words silently to yourselves and continue to say them silently after I finish speaking. I will signal the end of this quiet prayer time" [perhaps by ringing a bell]
- Says aloud, "Jesus: my light and my life" three or four times and then allows for 2-3 minutes silence
- Gives the pre-arranged signal after 2-3 minutes silence
- Asks participants to look at the right-hand column on **page 23**
- Reads the words at the top of the column and invites everyone to pray the *Glory Be* aloud together as the concluding prayer for the session

**Thank everyone** for their participation in the session and let them know you are available after the session if anyone has any questions.

**Finish on time!**

Try and meet as a catechist & helpers team after the session to discuss how the session has gone and what could be done better in future sessions.

Please feel free to annotate these *Catechist Notes* and use them to help your reflection for future sessions.

**Below you will find some teaching on Baptism which you may like to share with parents and carers.**

## BAPTISM

*"You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."*

(1 Corinthians 6:11)

**Baptism** is the first of seven **sacraments** which we receive on our journey with Christ. A **SACRAMENT** is an encounter with Christ through the signs of words and actions as He shares His love with us. These words and actions have their origin in the teaching and actions of Christ Himself.

After His Resurrection, Jesus instructed His disciples:

*"Make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit".* (Matthew 28:19)

The word **Baptism** comes from the Greek word for **immersion**. When someone is baptised, they are immersed in **water** or have water poured over them three times while the person who is baptising them invokes the **name of the Trinity**. The minister performing the Baptism says,

***"I baptise you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"***.

As followers of Jesus, it is crucial that we receive Baptism to begin our journey with Christ. For those who have heard and are able to respond to Christ's message, receiving or desiring Baptism is necessary to receive **salvation**. Baptism is so important because of the profound ways in which it changes our lives: Baptism gives us a **share in God's life**, which He lives as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In Baptism, we are transformed by **grace**, beginning our friendship with God which we hope will be made perfect in heaven. We need water to survive, and so the water used in Baptism symbolises God's gift of **new life**. After someone has been baptised, he or she is anointed with **the Oil of Chrism**, which symbolises God's gift of the Holy Spirit:

*"Repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ ... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* (Acts 2:38)

Baptism unites us to Christ's **sacrificial death and resurrection**. Because Christ died for our sins, when we are joined to His death and resurrection by Baptism we are **rescued from sin**. Through Baptism, we are delivered from the state of separation with God shared by all humans (**Original Sin**) and God forgives all the choices by which we have freely rejected His friendship (**personal sins**). We use water to clean away physical dirt, so Baptism in water symbolises our **cleansing from sin**.

*"We have been buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life."*

(Romans 6:4)

Baptism also makes us **part of Christ's Body – the Church**. By sharing in God's life, and participating in Christ's death and resurrection, we are united in Christ. As members of the Church, we are called to grow in love and friendship for God throughout our lives. When children are baptised, they are given a **name**. This is a sign of their new identity as a person forever marked by relationship with Christ. At Baptism they should be given a Christian name (often the name of a **saint**, so that they can follow the Saint's example, and ask for the Saint's prayers as they grow to know and love God).

*"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the glorious acts of Him who called you out of darkness into His wondrous light."*

(1 Peter 2:9)

At Baptism God begins to give us the **virtues** and **gifts** which we need to follow Him faithfully. To show that a baptised person is free from sin and has begun a life of virtue:

- They are clothed in a **white garment**
- They or their parents/godparents are given a **lighted candle**, symbolising the flame of new faith

*"For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light".* (Ephesians 5:8)

Baptism is sometimes called the **Sacrament of Faith**. This is because to follow Christ and to be united to Him, we need to believe that God has revealed Himself to us in Christ, and to trust in Him as our Saviour.

- Before adults are baptised, they are asked to make a **Profession of Faith**: an affirmation that they believe in and they share the Church's faith in Christ
- When children are baptised, their parents and godparents make the Profession of Faith on their behalf

By having their children baptised, parents and Godparents promise to bring up their children in the Catholic faith. This should involve helping them to continue in their journey with God by:

- **Teaching** them about God's love for us
- **Praying** with them at home and in church
- Helping to **prepare** them to receive the **Sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Communion** and **Confirmation**.

The Church has an important role in helping parents and Godparents in their mission to pass on the gift of faith.

It may be useful to look at *YOUCAT (The Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church)* on Baptism.

*YOUCAT* also gives answers to questions such as:

- Why then do we need a special sacrament of Reconciliation? (See *YOUCAT*, Page 135. Para.226)
- Why did Christ give us the sacraments of Penance (Reconciliation) and Anointing of the Sick? (See *YOUCAT*, Page 132. Para.224)

You may like to share quotations from *YOUCAT* with parents and carers, encourage them to read *YOUCAT* itself and to read *YOUCAT for Kids* with their children.