

Religious Education Secretariat
Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary



**Catechetical Resources for
Catholic Schools and Parishes in the
Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary,
in the event of the death of the
Holy Father Pope John Paul II**

Selecting a Pope

Faith Theme: Catholic Life & Belief

Grades: 9 and up

Catechist Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 100, 882, 890-891, 2032, 2034-2035

The Pope's teaching authority pertains to both matters of faith and morals and promoting the Christian virtues to the Christian people in temporal matters of justice and charity. As the Vicar [representative] of Christ on earth, he can teach the faithful in several ways but always with the purpose of leading the faith of Christian people to the Truth. As part of the **Magisterium** [the official teaching office of the Church], he can speak infallibly in matters of faith and morals. This authority is exercised when he speaks from the "*Chair of St. Peter*" called "ex cathedra". Here he speaks under the authority of the Word of God in Jesus Christ. This has only been exercised twice in the dogmatic revelations of the Immaculate Conception and Mary's assumption into heaven. The **extraordinary magisterium** can also be exercised in communion with the bishops throughout the world. This teaching authority proposes truths to be believed by all the faithful in matters of faith and morals and when their intention binding the whole Church is sufficiently evident. The Ecumenical Councils are one example of this teaching practice. This does not necessarily make such teachings infallible - without error. It does make a presumption of truth.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 892

The Pope, like the bishops, may exercise the **ordinary teaching magisterium**. The Pope may teach the faithful through encyclicals, sermons, pastoral letters, explanations, and liturgical documents. Popes have taught in addressing the colonization of peoples, the right to own property, on international violence, the indissolubility of marriage, on just wages and conditions of the working person. The ordinary magisterium may propose teachings on matters of faith and morals when it is unanimous [universal agreement] in their teaching. One example of such a truth of faith is "The Church is the Body of Christ".

The conclave represents the electoral process for selecting a new pope. All cardinals under 80 years old will remain, under locked doors, until they choose a new pope. The voting proceeds without speech or debate. Each cardinal receives a ballot and inscribes a name. A two-thirds majority is needed for election. Each completed ballot is placed on an open paten, then dropped into a chalice. If the two-thirds majority is not reached, the ballots are burned in a stove with a chemical to emit black smoke. White smoke signals the election of a new pope. Balloting occurs twice a day until a pope is elected. The presiding cardinal approaches the elected for his consent. If he accepts, he chooses a papal name. He then dresses in white [cassock and zucchetto] and is announced to the world from the balcony above St. Peter's Square.

Pope John Paul II had been called a truly “universal pope” as he traveled far and abroad to bridge the universality of the Church in its diversity. Early in his papacy he made it a practice to kiss the ground upon entering a country out of reverence and respect to the people of that region. He was elected in 1978, the first non-Italian Pope elected since 1522.

Learner Objectives

1. To describe the role of the Pope and his teaching authority in the life and mission of the Church.
2. To understand the process of a conclave for electing a pope.
3. To examine and discuss critical issues facing the church today.
4. To re-enact a papal conclave by “electing a pope” responsive to the needs of the life and mission of the Church today.

Materials Needed

1. Catechetical resources for examining critical issues facing the Church today.
2. Four index cards/person. One pen/person. These will be used as ballots and for voting in a simulated papal election.
3. A white and black piece of construction paper. This will be used to indicate papal election results.
4. A plate [e.g. patten] used for collecting papal ballots and a bowl [e.g. chalice] for placing the ballots from the plate.

Catechetical Lesson Plan

I. Simulated Papal Election [20 minutes]

The catechist should explain to the students that they will be involved in a simulated papal election. Each person will serve as a cardinal in the College of Cardinals for the election. The catechist should explain that the following preparation will be necessary before the election can take place.

Instruct learners to pay special attention to the Section III: The exhibit: “Ensuring the Succession”. This will help the learners better understand the process for electing a pope.

The catechist should use the “Catechist background information” to explain the meaning of the terms conclave, papal authority [Mt. 16:17-19], and the process for a papal election.

The catechist should emphasize that although no actual debate is allowed during an actual election in a Papal conclave, the cardinals need to be prepared by knowing the

“candidates”. Explain that any of the cardinals can be elected but that there are usually a handful of cardinals who seem to be gifted to lead the Church as Pope.

Explain that for the purpose of the simulated class papal election, the class will need to choose five candidates who demonstrate some leadership capability. Inform the class that these 5 candidates will be asked to discuss one or two critical issues [see list below] facing the Church today. Explain that every person will be given material to review reflecting these issues but the candidates themselves will be given 3-5 minutes to give their informed views on the issues. Indicate that there will be an additional 10-minute period for anyone else to respond to the selected issues.

After this, all debates will terminate and the papal election will begin. In addition, two persons will serve to count and tally the votes. They will serve to hold up the respective white card when one candidate has received a 2/3 + 1 majority [votes required to elect a pope] or black card [insufficient 2/3 + 1 majority].

The catechist will designate a cardinal dean. [Upon receiving the necessary number of ballots, the cardinals counting the ballots will give the name of the selection to the cardinal dean]. The cardinal dean’s role will be to ask the selected candidate if he will accept the nomination for pope and if so, ask what name the person chooses to have as Pope. If the candidate accepts the results of the election, the cardinal dean will then announce this person to the class. The catechist will complete the election process by leading the class with a simple prayer of support to serve Christ through their collaborative fidelity with the new Pope and the people of God.

Special Issues

Pope John XXIII called us to dialogue on issues facing the Church [Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World’]. The class should select ONE of the following suggested issues facing the Church today and use a catechetical resource to prepare their response on the issue. Other issues, not listed, can be selected.

- 1. How should the Church be involved in creating a more just world [e.g. alleviating poverty, assisting the oppressed, respecting the dignity of human life** [see *Your Life in Christ, Foundations in Christian Morality*, Michael Pennock, Ave Maria Press, 2001, pp. 212-216 and website: <http://www.catholic.org/pfl/> or *Church History, A Course on the People of God*, Sadlier’s Faith & Witness series, 1998, pp.168-171.
- 2. How can the Christian community bring [evangelize] Jesus’ message of love more alive for the world?** [see *Creed, A Course on Catholic Belief*, Sadlier’s Faith & Witness series, 1998, pp.175-181
- 3. What can the role of women be for today’s Church?** [see selected sections from *People of God, The History of Catholic Christianity*, Anthony Gilles, St. Anthony’s Press, 2000, pp. 183-185; 189-195].

4. **How should papal authority be exercised today?** [see selected sections from *People of God, The History of Catholic Christianity*, Anthony Gilles, St. Anthony's Press, 2000, pp. 183-185; 189-195].
 5. **How should Catholics be in relationship with non-Catholics today?**
[see selected sections from *People of God, The History of Catholic Christianity*, Anthony Gilles, St. Anthony's Press, 2000, pp. 183-185; 189-195].
 6. **What does the Church say about war and terrorism?** [see *Your Life in Christ, Foundations in Christian Morality*, Michael Pennock, Ave Maria Press, 2001, pp. 208-210 and websites:
JusticeNet at: <http://www.justicenet.org/>
The Human Rights Web at: <http://www.hreweb.org/>
Amnesty International: <http://www.amnesty.org/>
- **For any of these or additional issues** go to the website:
<http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/YU.asp/>

Note: After selecting the issue, distribute or direct students to appropriate study resources. Then let the class select the papal candidates. It can be fewer than 5 if the class is fewer than about 25.

II. The Papal Election

[90 minutes or two 45-minute sessions to accommodate scheduling]

Note to catechist: The catechist should select three persons to assist with the role of collecting and counting ballots and someone to serve as the cardinal dean whose role is explained below.

Explain that in preparation for the papal election, the class will discuss one or two critical issues facing the Church today.

[35 minutes] Instruct the learners that the class will now begin the discussion on the critical issue they had chosen prior to the conclave for electing a new pope. Setup the forum of papal "candidates". Review the guidelines for the discussion [e.g. 3-5 minute presentation from each candidate followed by an open forum of discussion]. Remind students that after the discussion, the papal election [conclave] will take place without further discussion or debate. Serve as a timekeeper directing the 3-5 minute candidate presentations followed by the 10 minute open forum.

[35 minutes] Begin the conclave by reading Mt. 16:17-19 and invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance in the election of the pope. Ask if there are any special intentions involving prayers for the universal church.

Finally, inform them that voting is about to begin and must continue in absolute silence. Explain that everyone will receive a ballot. On one side of the ballot each student should

write one's name, next to "YOUR NAME". On the other side of the ballot each person should write one's choice for pope next to "PAPAL ELECTION".

Inform them that anyone voting is eligible. They cannot vote for themselves. Remind them that a 2/3 majority + 1 must occur for a new Pope to be elected. Instruct them that each person should place his completed ballot on the plate [e.g. patten]. The two cardinals [who will count the votes] will drop the ballots from the plate into the bowl. Once all the ballots are in the bowl, the ballots will be counted. If no 2/3 +1 majority is found, the cardinal dean will hold up a black card to indicate a pope has not been elected. The cardinal dean will announce each candidate's vote count. [This is necessary to move the election towards a successful conclusion].

When the necessary 2/3 +1 majority has been reached for a papal candidate, the cardinals counting the votes will inform the cardinal dean who, in turn, will go to the elected cardinal to ask if the person will accept the selection. If the elected cardinal responds YES, the cardinal dean will ask what name the person wants to be called as the new Pope. The cardinal dean then announces the person and new pope to the class.

Note: Inform the group that they will be given 5 minutes in between balloting [if a pope is not selected].

Assessment [10 minutes]

1. After the session, review what the students learned about the process of electing a pope.
2. Review what guided the class's decision on the person that they elected as Pope.
3. Review the class's understanding of the meaning of papal authority or teaching authority of the pope.

Definitions

Conclave: The closed room or hall specially set aside and prepared for the College of Cardinals electing a pope; also the assembly of the cardinals for the canonical execution of this purpose.

A Cardinal is a bishop who is appointed by the pope for advice and transaction of business. The number of cardinals eligible to vote in papal elections is limited to 120.

Papal election: The election of the pope is done by the College of Cardinals in a secret conclave not less than 15 nor more than 18 days after the death of the previous pontiff. The election is held by secret ballot. Pope Pius XII fixed the electoral majority at two thirds plus one vote. After each session, ballots are burned; chemical cylinders are added to the burning ballots [black smoke signifying no new pope; white smoke signifying a new pope has been elected].

Papal authority: [Mt. 16:17-19]. The authority Jesus Christ gave Peter and his successors to guide the Church in remaining faithful to God and His laws for love and life. See the “catechist background” section for a more thorough explanation.

For more information, refer to “The Vatican” website (www.vatican.va). See link on “Catholic Encyclopaedia: Papal election”.

Prayer Reflection for students before the Catechetical Sessions in the event of the death of the Pope

Preparation

Light a candle in the class room, if possible have a picture of Pope John Paul II and a Bible on a small desk or table. Chose a student who has excellent reading skills to proclaim the Gospel passage: **Matthew 5: 1 – 12** “*The Beatitudes*” to the class. Then read or have someone else read the following homily given by Pope John Paul II to the young people of Israel on the Mount of the Beatitudes.

Excerpts from the HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

*Given in Israel at Korazim, Mount of the Beatitudes
Friday, 24 March 2000--Mass with the Youth*

How many generations before us have been deeply moved by the Sermon on the Mount! How many young people down the centuries have gathered around Jesus to learn the words of eternal life, as you are gathered here today! How many young hearts have been inspired by the power of his personality and the compelling truth of his message! It is wonderful that you are here!

“Blessed are you!”, he says, “all you who are poor in spirit, gentle and merciful, you who mourn, who care for what is right, who are pure in heart, who make peace, you who are persecuted! Blessed are you!” But the words of Jesus may seem strange. It is strange that Jesus exalts those whom the world generally regards as weak. He says to them, “Blessed are you who seem to be losers, because you are the true winners: the kingdom of heaven is yours!” Spoken by him who is “gentle and humble in heart” (Mt 11:29), these words present a challenge which demands a ... great change of heart.

You young people will understand why this change of heart is necessary! Because you are aware of another voice within you and all around you, a contradictory voice. It is a voice which says, “Blessed are the proud and violent, those who prosper at any cost, who are unscrupulous, pitiless, devious, who make war not peace, and persecute those who stand in their way”. And this voice seems to make sense in a world where the violent often triumph and the devious seem to succeed. “Yes”, says the voice of evil, “they are the ones who win. Happy are they!”

Jesus offers a very different message... His call has always demanded a choice between the two voices competing for your hearts even now ..., the choice between good and evil, between life and death. Which voice will the young people of the twenty-first century choose to follow? To put your faith in Jesus means choosing to

believe what he says, no matter how strange it may seem, and choosing to reject the claims of evil, no matter how sensible or attractive they may seem.

In the end, Jesus does not merely speak the Beatitudes. He lives the Beatitudes. He is the Beatitudes. Looking at him you will see what it means to be poor in spirit, gentle and merciful, to mourn, to care for what is right, to be pure in heart, to make peace, to be persecuted. This is why he has the right to say, "Come, follow me!" He does not say simply, "Do what I say". He says, "Come, follow me!"

The disciples spent time with the Lord. They came to know and love him deeply. They discovered the meaning of what the Apostle Peter once said to Jesus: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). They discovered that the words of eternal life are the words of Sinai and the words of the Beatitudes. And this is the message which they spread everywhere.

Young people of the world: answer the Lord with a heart that is willing and open! Willing and open, like the heart of the greatest daughter of Galilee, Mary, the Mother of Jesus. How did she respond? She said: "I am the servant of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

O Lord Jesus Christ, in this place that you knew and loved so well, listen to these generous young hearts! Continue to teach these young people the truth of the Commandments and the Beatitudes! Make them joyful witnesses to your truth and convinced apostles of your Kingdom! Be with them always, especially when following you and the Gospel becomes difficult and demanding! You will be their strength; you will be their victory!

O Lord Jesus, you have made these young people your friends: keep them for ever close to you! Amen.

Closing

Conclude the Prayer Reflection with a brief prayer such as:

"Heavenly Father, we thank you for the long life and vocation of our Pope John Paul II who has been called home to his eternal reward. May we follow his example and live a life worthy of our calling, we ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen."

These lessons have been modified for use within our diocese by the Religious Education Secretariat of the R.C. Diocese of Calgary. The lessons were originally produced under the title:

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R.C. Diocese of Galveston-Houston

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Please feel free to adapt these lessons for your parish, district, school or classroom as best meets your individual needs. These lesson plans were developed as suggestions for your consideration.