



ALPHA OMEGA

THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

CATECHISM

1212

1214 - 1216

1223 - 1284

1285 - 1321

1322 - 1419

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 3:13 -17

John 6:0

Luke 24:13 -35

Acts 2:1-4

KEY CONCEPTS

The Sacraments of Initiation are made up of the Sacrament of Baptism, the Sacrament of Confirmation, and the Sacrament of the Eucharist

The Sacraments of Initiation give us the grace to fully know Christ and live out our faith.

The Eucharist is the “sacrament of sacraments.” Every other sacrament points to and flows from the Eucharist.

GOAL OF THIS NIGHT

The goal of this Life Night is to teach about the three Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Communion and Confirmation. The Life Night will also emphasize the importance of initiation and being fully part of the Catholic family.

ABOUT THIS NIGHT

Using an “initiation” theme, this Life Night will explore the Sacraments of Initiation. The night will begin with a few small group activities that resemble adapted fraternity games. After a teaching on the three Sacrament of Initiation—Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation—the teens will have an opportunity to reflect on their baptismal vows and discuss how the vows challenge them to live their faith differently. The night will end with a time of prayer before the Tabernacle, asking God to be our source and summit.

PARENTAL NOTICE

This week we are beginning our study of the seven sacraments. Tonight we are discussing the Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. Take a few minutes this week to discuss these sacraments with your teen(s) and why you as their parent wanted them to be baptized, why you chose their godparents and the importance of faith in their lives. Here are a few discussion questions to help:

1. (If confirmed) What does it mean to you to be a full member of the Church
2. (If not confirmed) Are you looking forward to your Confirmation? Why or Why not? How can your family help you prepare?
3. What are some ways we as a family can be more active members of our faith community?

ENVIRONMENT

The environment for night should be set up like a fraternity house. Include couches, comfy chairs and Greek letters on the wall. Have the name of the fraternity “Alpha Omega” on the entrance doors of the meeting space. Take formal pictures of each Core Member and have them all around the space. Also include pictures of popes, saints, the local bishop and priests on the wall. The Core Members should all be dressed in formal attire. They should greet all the teens as they are walking in by welcoming them to the Alpha Omega fraternity.

GATHER

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

(5 min)

The youth minister should gather all the teens together, welcome them to Life Night, and lead an opening prayer. He or she should introduce any teens at Life Night for the first time.

INITIATION GAMES

(15 min)

Before being inducted into a fraternity, everyone must go through a rush week: This Life Night is no different. The teens will get into small groups and have to complete different tasks before being fully initiated into the fraternity. The following are a list of suggested games.

Follow the brother/sister. Split the teens into groups of eight to ten, blindfold them and have them hold a long rope. The leader (Core Member) of the rope will walk around (not blindfolded) over and under obstacles like under a broom or through a hula hoop, and give the rest of the group instructions on how to get through the obstacle. The first group to get through the obstacles wins the competition.

Jump Rope Challenge. With the same groups as the previous game, and using the same rope, have two group members hold one end of the rope and twirl it like a jump rope. Have the rest of the group members attempt to run through the rope as it is being twirled. Everyone must get through the jump-rope without stopping it. If a member stops the rope, he or she must try until he or she gets through. The first group to get all the members through wins the completion. For an extra challenge, try to get all the group members jumping together with the rope. (Adapted from Best-Ever Games, Les Christie, Group Publishing)

Fill the cup. Set up a bucket full of water at one end of a room, and a large cup at the other. The group member will use the spoon to scoop water out of the bucket, race to the other end of the room, dump the water in the cup and hand the spoon to the next person in line. The first group to fill their cup, wins the competition.

PROCLAIM

"ALPHA OMEGA" TEACHING

(10 min)

The teaching for this night will explain each of the three Sacraments of Initiation. The teaching outline contains more information than the time allotted. Be sure to plan accordingly and adapt as necessary to fit the needs of the group. It may be a good idea to have more than one person present the teaching.

THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

The Sacraments of Initiation make us able to receive the fullness of our Lord. These sacraments help us by preparing us as best as we can to fully know and live the Good News of Christ. They put us on track to receive our Lord in a complete and supernatural way. There are three sacraments that bring us into this communion with our Lord. They are the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist.

CCC 1212

BAPTISM

It all starts with Baptism. Baptism is the sacrament that removes our Original Sin and forgives us of all personal sins (if we have any). In Baptism, we are reborn into a new life in Christ Jesus. In Jesus, we are God's adopted children. In Baptism, we allow the Holy Spirit to dwell in our soul. Through this sacrament, we become a member of Christ's Mystical Body, the Church. The mark or effect of Baptism is permanent. We never have to worry about it wearing off or us losing it. It also never has to be repeated. Through Baptism, we are called to discipleship and are anointed by the Holy Spirit, incorporating us into a new life in Christ who is priest, prophet and king.

CCC 1227

CCC 1241

CCC 1262 - 1274

CCC 1279 - 1280

NEW TESTAMENT: INSTITUTING THE SACRAMENT

Jesus approached John the Baptist to be baptized. John recognized that Jesus is the Messiah, the one who will save the people and didn't know why he would have to be baptized. So why did Jesus need to get baptized? We may have wondered this before. Jesus never sinned and always maintained his purity. We get baptized to remove our Original Sin and incorporate us into a new life with Christ. Jesus didn't have Original Sin, and He couldn't be more incorporated with the life of Christ. Jesus' Baptism was a way in which He entered into the human condition more fully. Jesus did not presume some lofty status among men— He did not seek to be known as the creator of the universe. Rather, He submitted Himself to the same Baptism as all men in order “to fulfill all righteousness.”

Matthew 3:1 -17

Matthew 3:2

Matthew 28:19

Mark 1:9 -11

Luke 3:21 -22

John 1:22 -34

John 3:1 -16

John 19:34

Romans 6:4

In other words, His Baptism emphasizes His humanity. In this way, His Baptism foreshadows the cross, when He will once again be

counted among the wicked and save all men from their sins. Christ's Baptism readies Him for this mission. Our Baptism, in turn, unites us in this event. This is what gives St. Paul the ability to teach that, "We were therefore buried with him through Baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we, too, may live a new life." Baptism begins Christ's earthly ministry. The cross is what ends it. Christ's death culminates with a reminder of the water of salvation in Baptism, when the Roman soldier thrusts his lance into the side of our Lord on the cross. "The blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus are types of Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments of new life. From then on, it is possible 'to be born of water and the Spirit' in order to enter the Kingdom of God." So, it is in the crucifixion that the Sacrament of Baptism finds its true meaning and full potential.

CCC 1223 - 1225

CCC 1257

HOW DO YOU GET BAPTIZED?

Baptism has always been considered necessary for someone to enter into sacramental life in the Church. Baptism is the "gateway" sacrament that makes you able to receive the other six sacraments, because it makes you a child of God and begins your initiation into the Mystical Body of Christ. Anyone can be baptized if they are not already baptized and if they have prepared for it sufficiently. Adults usually undergo formal preparation in their parish known as the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, usually abbreviated as RCIA. Adults would then become new members of the Church at the Easter Vigil Liturgy.

CCC 403

CCC 1229 - 1249

CCC 1250 - 1252

CCC 1255

CCC 1282

CCC 1290

Infant Baptism has been a common practice in the Church for centuries. Infants ought to be baptized to remove their Original Sin and ensure the full potential of grace available for their future life. In this situation, infants obviously do not prepare to receive the sacrament. This is why baptized infants are supposed to follow their Baptism with appropriate catechesis. This is why many Catholic parents send their children to Catholic schools or have them attend parish religious education programs.

It is the duty of the parents to present their children for Baptism. In the Church's history, we find the common practice of infant Baptism stretching all the way back to the second century, and it's believed that when households were baptized, this included children and infants.

To help in this mission, parents have the responsibility to raise and form the children as they grow. Parents are the primary educator in

the life of a child. No amount of religious education classes or Catholic schooling can substitute for the responsibility of a parent. Godparents also share in this role. The role of a godparent is not merely ceremonial: It is a real responsibility to be a Christian example for the baptized Christian.

THE RITE OF BAPTISM

For a Baptism to happen, you need a minister to baptize, someone to be baptized and ordinary water. The minister of Baptism could be anyone, including a non-Christian, so long as they intend to do what the Church does when they baptize. Usually, we don't see this happening. We're more familiar with the ordinary ministers of Baptism, which is anyone who is ordained (deacons, priests or bishops). Next, following the ritual of Baptism, they either immerse the Baptismal candidate in water completely, or pour water over the forehead of the candidate and say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." There are also other elements of the rite of Baptism. The white garment worn by the Baptismal candidate symbolizes the baptized, "putting on Christ" in their new life. The Baptismal candle represents the light of Christ and the call to be the "light of the world."

In danger of death, it is possible to forgo the formalities of the rite of Baptism. This is a situation we probably won't ever find ourselves in, but we should know that in an extreme emergency, you could baptize someone who is in danger of dying. For example, a nurse in a delivery room could baptize an infant that is likely to die soon after birth. Baptism's importance is so paramount in the life of a Christian that there are very few obstacles to receiving it.

CONFIRMATION

Confirmation is probably the most misunderstood sacrament in the Church. We often think of it as "graduation" from learning about our faith or of becoming "adults in the Church," whatever that means. The Church teaches us: "Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For 'by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit...as true witnesses of Christ.'" Becoming a witness of Christ is the goal of Confirmation, completing our Baptism.

A lot happens at Confirmation. When we are confirmed, our

Galatians 3:27

Matthew 5:14

CCC 694

CCC 1214

CCC 1217

CCC 1237 - 1245

CCC 1256

CCC 1285

CCC 1303 - 1305

CCC 1830 - 1832

baptismal graces are increased. We are given the grace to recognize God as our Father in a deeper way and further united in Christ, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are increased in us, we are bonded with the Church community in a more perfect way. We are also made soldiers of Christ, able to defend the Gospel and never ashamed of the cross.

Confirmation perfects our Baptismal grace. Not that Baptism is somehow an incomplete sacrament, but it is intended to be coupled with the sacrament of Confirmation. In Confirmation, the Holy Spirit comes to us in a new anointing and we receive the fullness of the Spirit's gifts and fruits and it leaves a permanent—indelible—mark on the soul just like in Baptism, so it never needs to be repeated, nor can it be lost.

The Sacrament of Confirmation also helps us to be able to discern and know one's call in life. It gives us the lasting grace necessary to become fully initiated Christians in the Church.

FOUNDATIONS OF CONFIRMATION

In the Old Testament tradition, found in the book of Isaiah, the Holy Spirit would come to rest upon the one who would be the Messiah, confirming Him in wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord. This is fulfilled shortly after the Lord's Baptism in the Jordan when the Spirit of the Lord comes to rest upon Christ, and the voice of the Father is heard confirming that Jesus is His beloved Son. In our Baptism, we are entitled to share in these gifts as well.

In the early Church, it was customary to receive Baptism and Confirmation together. As churches began to be established in rural areas, it became harder for bishops to be present at every infant baptism, so the practice emerged to have Baptism and Confirmation celebrated separately. Later, when it was possible for the bishop to be present, they would celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. "From that time on the apostles, in fulfillment of Christ's will, imparted to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands the gift of the Spirit that completes the grace of Baptism. For this reason in the Letter to the Hebrews the doctrine concerning Baptism and the laying on of hands is listed among the first elements of Christian instruction." In the Eastern Churches, priests are permitted to administer Confirmation to infants after Baptism with the permission of their bishops and using the holy oil blessed by the bishop.

Isaiah 11:2 -3

Hebrews 6:2

Acts 8:14 -17

Matthew 3:1 -17

Mark 1:9 -11

Luke 3:21 -22

John 1:22 -34

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CCC 1288 - 1290

HOW DO YOU BECOME CONFIRMED?

Confirmation takes place during the Mass in between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. After the baptized candidate renews their baptismal vows, the bishop—the ordinary minister the Confirmation—invokes the Holy Spirit upon the candidates. Following this, he anoints the forehead of the candidate with holy chrism by imposing his hand upon him and says the words, “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit,” according to the Roman rite. The bishop then concludes with the sign of peace, representing the new life of peace in the Church for the newly confirmed.

CCC 1232 - 1233

CCC 1298 - 1300

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CCC 1309

CCC 1311 - 1313

In certain circumstances when the bishop cannot be present, a parish priest is given the bishop’s authority to confirm. This is common at the Easter Vigil. The Easter Vigil is when adults become full members of the Church. As children are incorporated gradually, adults can be received into the Church all at once at the Easter Vigil Mass.

There are other necessary things in order for someone to be confirmed. Aside from being baptized, in the Roman Catholic Church, it’s generally held that a person must be of an “age of discretion”—or an age appropriate for a person to understand the fullness of the sacrament. A person must prepare for the sacrament through education and Christian formation. To help with this, the candidate usually selects a sponsor to help in their spiritual journey—similar to the role of a godparent.

Lastly, it’s important for one receiving Confirmation to be in the state of grace—that is, not guilty of any mortal sin. Therefore it is fitting for those being confirmed to receive the Sacrament of Confession prior to Confirmation.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

The Eucharist is awesome. No, seriously—the Eucharist’s place in the Church is second to none. All sacraments are built around the Eucharist, and from the Eucharist, all other sacraments receive their grace. The Church calls the Eucharist both, “the source and the summit of the Christian life... For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself.”

John 6:54

John 6:56

Matthew 7:6

1 Corinthians 11:28

CCC 1322 - 1324

CCC 1373 - 1377

The Eucharist “completes Christian initiation.” As Christ becomes present in the bread and wine, we eat His body and drink His blood

and literally make Him a part of us. At the Last Supper, the Lord instituted the sacrifice of his Body and Blood the night before the crucifixion. By instituting this Eucharistic sacrifice, He allows the sacrifice of the cross to be offered throughout the centuries and entrusts this sacrifice to His spouse, the Church. The sacrament makes it possible to re-present the sacrifice and Resurrection of our Lord, and allows us to eat His Body and drink His Blood.

The effect of this sacrament is first and foremost communion with Jesus Christ and His Church. Jesus tells us, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” The Eucharist is not a Catholic invention—Jesus tells us in Scripture that it is really His Body and Blood! Those who partake in this sacrament are further incorporated into His Mystical Body as they share in the sacrifice of His True Body.

As you may expect, there are prerequisites in order to receive the Eucharist. The most necessary thing is the belief in the real presence of our Lord in the Eucharist through transubstantiation. If you have a proper understanding of this, it makes sense that you naturally will recognize the importance of all other requirements. It means that you believe that the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of God, the creator of the entire universe and redeemer of humanity, makes Himself present to us until He returns to us in glory. If you believe this is true, then it makes sense that only baptized Catholics be admitted to the Sacrament. Communion isn’t a handout for going to Mass. To receive Communion is to enter into the Divine Mystery—the sacrifice of the cross, made present under the appearance of bread and wine.

So, if we were approaching to receive the Eucharist, we should be prepared for such an encounter. St. Paul tells us that, “everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.” If you and a friend have some obstacle in your friendship, some disagreement or problem, that obstacle must be addressed if you and your friend want to come together peacefully and for there to be charity. The same applies when we consider our relationship with our Lord. If there is some obstacle in our relationship with the Lord, we are not able to receive Him in this sacrament before this obstacle is resolved. These obstacles are what we call mortal sin, and it is resolved in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

In order to further prepare for the sacrament, it has been the long tradition of the Church to fast before receiving the sacrifice of the altar. Fasting literally prepares a place for our Lord in our own

CCC 1385

CCC 1387 - 1389

CCC 1391

CCC 1394

CCC 1396 - 1397

CCC 1524 - 1525

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bodies. In the past, the fast began at midnight and would end when you receive the Eucharist at Mass. Later, this was changed to a three hour fast, which made Saturday evening Masses possible. Today's practice is that the faithful are to abstain from food and drink (other than water and medicine) for at least one hour prior to receiving the Eucharist.

HISTORY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

The Eucharist finds its first origins in the Old Testament. Beginning with the priest-king Melchizedek who offers bread and wine in praise of the Lord. Later the Israelites would celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread with the Passover, the event Jesus used to institute the Eucharist centuries later. Our Lord would later bestow bread from heaven to sustain the Israelites on their journey out of bondage in Egypt, further laying the foundations for the Eucharist.

In Scripture, Jesus foreshadows the Eucharist in several ways. He multiplies the few loaves of bread and feeds 5,000 families. He changed water into wine at a friend's wedding in Cana. Later He would change bread and wine into His own Body and Blood to feed the whole Church.

Finally, at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, Jesus celebrates the Jewish Passover feast with His apostles and fulfills what all these events have been preparing for. "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

"The Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith." Because the Eucharist is Christ's Body and Blood given to us in the form of bread and wine, because we internalize Him by consuming Him, it is the greatest gift to our faith. This tradition has extended back to the earliest days of the Church. Historical letters (as opposed to biblical letters) have confirmed the message of Scripture and explained the importance of the Eucharist and the real presence of our Lord to Christians throughout history.

Though there are many signs in the Eucharistic ritual, we cannot mistake the Eucharist itself as only a sign of the Lord's presence. The

Genesis 14:18 -20

Exodus 12:0

Exodus 16:0

Matthew 14:13 -21

Mark 6:30

Luke 9:10 -17

John 2:1 -12

John 6:1 -15

1 Corinthians 11:23 -
26

Matthew 26:26 -29

Mark 14:22 -25

Luke 22:14 -20

CCC 1324 - 1337

CCC 1339 - 1345

CCC 1359 - 1372

Eucharist is His very real and true presence hidden in the sacrament of the altar. This is a non-negotiable Catholic truth. If it is not His body and blood—if it is just bread and wine—then it either means that Jesus was lying when He said “this is my body...do this in memory of me,” or it means that we are worshipping bread. Either way, it no longer can be the “source and summit” of our Christian faith. The Lord knows this would be a “stumbling block” for the world. It’s not an easy thing to understand—it is a supernatural mystery.

HOW THE SACRAMENT IS CELEBRATED

The celebration of the Holy Eucharist is the central function of the Catholic Church because it is the sacrament in which the Lord is made present to us in the most personal way as we relive the sacrifice of the cross. The Eucharist is found primarily within the Mass, which is made up of several components, all designed to enrich the lives of the faithful. The Liturgy of the Word, the Offertory and Liturgy of the Eucharist all lead the Eucharistic community towards the hill of Calvary, to the Holy Body and Blood of our Lord.

The celebration of Mass is lead by the priest or bishop, serving at the altar in the place of Christ, and offers the bread and wine on behalf of the community. Deacons assist in this celebration by proclaiming the Gospel, preaching and serving along side the main celebrant of the liturgy. Priests and deacons are also the ordinary minister of the sacrament to the people. When the congregation is of such a size that it would take an unreasonable amount of time to distribute Communion, the laity may perform this ministry as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. These people help out when needed, but shouldn’t be used just because they’re there.

Like all sacraments, there are necessary components for the celebration of the Eucharist. For there to be a valid Eucharistic celebration, all that is needed is a validly ordained priest, bread made from wheat flour, wine made from grapes and the necessary prayers. Things like music and the homily can vary, but the essential elements remain. The necessary prayers are found in the special book used for Mass called the sacramentary. The priest follows this guide to say the necessary words for the celebration. He does not just say whatever he thinks is a good thing to say. One of the characteristics of the Church is the unity of worship. Every sacrament, including the Mass, throughout the entire world remains the same in its elements so there is no worry that Mass in one place is in any way “more holy” than in another place. The Church has prescribed that priests and deacons use the texts of the Mass to

CCC 1140

CCC 1348 - 1355

CCC 1369

CCC 1378 - 1379

CCC 1385 - 1386

CCC 1392

CCC 1411 - 1412

CCC 1418

CCC 1566

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ensure its sacredness and reverence.

The Eucharist is Jesus Christ. To have a relationship with anybody, you have to spend time with him or her in some way. We can pray to our Lord, we can read the Scriptures and grow in closeness with our Lord, but Jesus makes Himself present to us in the ultimate way in the sacraments, especially within the Eucharist. Spending time with Him in this form can bring graces to your life unlike any other. All the saints had a devotion to the Eucharist. This Eucharist is the same Jesus Christ who has been present in the tabernacle for the past 2,000 years. "When you approach the Tabernacle, think that He has been waiting for you there for twenty centuries!" In the spirit of the lives of the saints and the history of our Church, it's easy to see how "Holy Communion is the shortest and safest way to Heaven."

BREAK

SMALL GROUP REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

(30 min)

Using the same groups as the games, open the small group with a short prayer. The Core Member should give the teens a copy of their baptismal promises, which are renewed at Baptism and Confirmation. Ask them to prayerfully read and reflect on them for a few minutes. After, have a brief discussion about some of the thoughts and reflections the teens had. Below are a few questions to get the discussion started:

- Do you remember making these promises at your Baptism or Confirmation?
- What does it mean to you to live in the freedom of God's children?
- What do you think the glamour of evil is? Have you seen it in your own life? If so, how?
- What role has God the Father played in your life?
- How have you seen the Holy Spirit working in your life?
- If you were to make these promises again right now, which part of them would you have the hardest time agreeing to? Why?
- How can you better live out your baptismal promises?

SEND

RECAP OF LIFE NIGHT

(3 min)

The youth minister should gather all the teens back together (in the church or chapel if possible) and ask a few of them to share any thoughts or reflections they had on the baptismal vows. After, he or she should remind the teens that the Sacraments of Initiation lay the foundation for our faith journey and help us live as active members of the Church. As members of the Church it is essential that we are committed to live as holy, faithful representatives of Christ. We must also live with confidence that Christ will provide for our needs through the graces of the Sacrament of Baptism, the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Confirmation.

"OUR SPIRITUAL FOOD" VIDEO

(2 min)

Transition into a time of prayer with this short video. This video uses a homily from Archbishop Fulton Sheen and highlights the absolute importance of the Eucharist in our faith.

"Our Spiritual Food" can be found on Life Teen Video Support 13.

OUR SOURCE AND SUMMIT

(10 min)

Finish the night with a short time of prayer before the tabernacle in your parish sanctuary or chapel. This is slightly different than exposing the Blessed Sacrament in Adoration, but should help the teens recognize Christ's presence in the Tabernacle. Invite them into a time of prayer. The youth minister should lead this prayer and encourage the teens to bring before the Real Presence anything they wish to present to God. Close the night by praying together the Hail Mary and Ave Maria.

CONCLUSION

ADAPTING THIS NIGHT

GOING DEEPER