



VOCA TIONS
ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI

Junior High Lesson Plan
"You are a Priest Forever" Psalm 110

Purpose:

1. Introduce students to the rich theology underlying the Catholic Priesthood through saintly examples, Bible quotes, Vatican II documents, papal encyclicals and our Archdiocesan website materials.
2. To understand the role of priests as icons of Christ.
3. To illustrate the essential nature of the priesthood to the Catholic faith.
4. To acquaint the students with (a) great examples of saintly priests in history, (b) recently ordained priests and current seminarians and (c) their parish priest.

Supplies:

- **List of Web Resources**
- **Priest Saints Quiz**
- ***Catechism of the Catholic Church* Handout**
- **Bible Quotes** Handout
- ***Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* Handout**

Activity 1: Catholic Priesthood – Origin in Scripture and Icon of Christ

St. John Vianney

- Background: The "Year for Priests" was instituted by Pope Benedict XVI for June 19, 2009 to June 19, 2010 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the death of St. John Vianney, the patron saint of priests. St. John Vianney (also known as the Cure of Ars) was a simple parish priest in France who became known across the world due to his holiness and sanctity. He understood the importance of the priesthood and was not afraid of stating it bluntly.
- To set the tone of the importance of understanding and celebrating Catholic Priesthood in this "Year for Priests" begin the class with the quote from St. John Vianney on the critical nature of the priesthood found at <http://www.fisheaters.com/holyorders2.html>. Break it up among several students who can each read a paragraph. It is a very long quote, but it powerfully states the case of the absolute necessity of the Catholic priesthood.

A. Roots of the Catholic Priesthood: To properly understand the importance of the Priest to the Catholic Church, we must begin with the role the Jewish priest played for the chosen people. This will show how the Catholic priesthood is prefigured in the Jewish priesthood.

1. Pass out the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*** and **Bible Quotes** handouts.
 - a. Have students read aloud the CCC paragraphs 1539 to 1542 regarding Jewish priesthood.
 - b. Read CCC 1544 which talks about connections of the ancient priesthood to Christ. It uses the term "prefigures." Begin this exercise with an explanation of "prefiguring."
 - 1) In his first letter, Peter identifies Noah in the Ark as a "prefiguring" for the sacrament of Baptism (read 1 Peter 3:18-22 aloud). Noah's Ark in the Old Testament *relates to* Baptism in the New Testament.

- 2) What we learn from Christ and the Apostles in the New Testament is frequently "prefigured" in the Old: the meaning of what is contained in the Old, is unveiled in the New.
 - 3) Prefiguring is easily seen with the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist (Manna from heaven prefigures Christ's Body in the Holy Eucharist, the true bread from heaven as said in John 6:48-58).
- c. From the CCC paragraphs, ask the class to identify/list the elements of ancient Jewish Priesthood that relate to the Catholic Priesthood:
- 1) Israel is a kingdom of priests (see Exodus 19:6) and we all partake in the common priesthood as Catholics (read CCC 1546).
 - 2) Within this kingdom, some are set aside for special priesthood (Num 1:48-53 - only the Levites perform the duties of the tabernacle). Only men ordained by the Catholic Church as priests can perform all 7 Sacraments (read CCC 1547).
 - 3) The priest offers gifts and sacrifices for sins (Hebrews 5:1, Leviticus 5:1, 5-6). Today, a Catholic priest offers the Holy Eucharist during the sacrifice of the Mass.
 - 4) People go to the priest with their offering, and the priest offers it to God (Leviticus 5:1, 5-6). We go to the priest today for Confession.
- d. Conclusion: Wrap exercise for students by again noting that many of the features of the Catholic priesthood are contained in the earlier Jewish priesthood. Similar, but not identical. The Catholic priesthood fulfills the Jewish priesthood.

B. Christ as High Priest: Christ comes as Son of God, Messiah, Prophet, King and also Priest. At the last supper, He acts as High Priest and, instead of an imperfect animal, He offers up His own sacred body and precious blood as the perfect sacrifice for sins, once and for all (1 Peter 3: 18-22).

1. Melchizedek:

- a. Read aloud CCC 1544-1545 (recalling idea of "prefiguring").
- b. Read aloud the biblical citations to Melchizedek, who was King and Priest and who offered bread and wine (introduced in Genesis 14:18-20, written by Moses, praised in Psalm 110 by David, invoked by Paul in Hebrews 6:17 - 7:22).
 - 1) It is not a Levitical heritage that makes Christ a high priest (he's from the Royal lineage of Judah-David, but He's a priest just as Melchizedek, the King of Salem, was a priest. The place called "Salem" will later be the city of Jerusalem).
 - 2) Hebrews author identifies that the imperfect nature of earlier priests before Christ rendered their sacrifices ineffective.

C. Priest acts "in persona Christi" (Latin for "in the person of Christ")

1. Read aloud CCC 1548-1549.
2. Priest acts "in the person of Christ."
 - a. Christ forgives sins (Mark 2:5-7) and gives priests power to forgive sins (John 20:21-23).
 - b. Christ heals the sick (throughout the Gospels) and He sends the Apostles out to do the same (Mark 6: 7, 12-13).
 - c. Christ offers himself at the Last Supper and tells His first priests to do this in memory of Him (Luke 22:8-20 and 1 Corinthians 1: 23-29).
3. Must see this special state in its balance. Have CCC 1550-1551 read aloud. Each priest is still an imperfect sinful human, but when Christ acts through him during Sacraments, the actions are perfect. The priest is a servant, wholly dependent upon Christ. But, from the sacrament of Holy Orders, the priest receives a "sacred power" that comes from Christ Himself.

D. Priest represents Christ AND represents the Church.

1. Read aloud CCC 1552-1553.
 - a. Priest represents Christ to his Church, AND Priest represents the whole Church to God when offering Holy Eucharist.

E. Other important sections on priesthood:

1. Holy Eucharist importance - Read CCC 1566.
 - a. The Priest makes “present again” the unique sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. He is NOT “re-sacrificing” but making present again the exact same sacrifice. The bread and wine become LITERALLY the same body and blood of Christ that hung on the cross nearly 2000 years ago.
 - 1) Emphasize the power of the last sentence: “From this unique sacrifice their whole priestly ministry draws its strength.”
 - b. Have 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 read aloud now (see Bible Quotes section). Note the following:
 - 1) By the sacrifice of the Mass, we proclaim Christ’s death until He comes (present again).
 - 2) Receiving Holy Communion when guilty of un-confessed mortal sin is profaning the body and blood of the Lord God. This is why many Bishops now refuse to give the Holy Eucharist to elected Catholic politicians who support the grave moral sin of abortion. By their public support of the sin of the taking of the life of an innocent human being, these Catholic politicians are deemed by many of their Bishops as being unworthy to receive the Holy Eucharist.
 - 3) To eat and drink the Holy Eucharist and Precious Blood without discerning that it is Christ’s body and blood is to eat and drink judgment upon oneself.
 - 4) These are the reasons why, when we have committed a mortal sin, we must go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) before receiving the Holy Eucharist from the priest.
2. Role of Bishop in ordination:
 - a. Read CCC 1572- 1573 which explains that it is the imposition of hands by a Bishop that confers priesthood.
 - 1) Have someone read 2 Timothy 1: 5-14 in which St. Paul talks with Timothy, whom Paul had ordained to the priesthood.
 - b. Each Bishop is an ordained priest, so if we had complete records, we could trace every priest’s ordination link back to one of the 12 Apostles.
 - c. Have 1576 of CCC read aloud – Only a bishop can ordain priests.
 - d. Have 1587 of CCC read aloud – Prayer of consecration for the priest given.
3. Celibacy:
 - a. Read CCC 1579. Only celibate men are normally ordained to priesthood in the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church (the Rite to which we belong).
 - b. Read the scripture passages in the Bible quotes section on celibacy (Matthew 19:11-12, 1 Corinthians 7:32-35, Revelation 14:1-5).
 - c. For more on the topic of Celibacy, see **Activity 5: Website Activities** (below)
4. Indelible character
 - a. Read aloud 1581 of CCC. The priest acts as a representative of Christ in his offices of priest, prophet and king.
 - b. Read CCC 1582-1583. Like baptism, once ordained a priest, one receives an indelible character to their spirit that can never be removed.
 - c. Read aloud for the students CCC 1589. The quotes from St. Gregory of Nanzianus and St. John Vianney are very powerful.
5. Have someone read 1591-1592 of CCC and reflect on the difference between the common and ministerial priesthoods.

F. Special in-depth project - section 1577, only men can be ordained priests...why?

1. The controversial nature of "only men can be priests" should not be shied away from, but rather approached directly, with the Church's teachings on the topic being presented. To begin, the first paragraph of section 25 from the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* should be read aloud. Focus especially on this section:
 - a. "...In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent. This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking."
2. The teachings:
 - a. Read aloud CCC 1577. This may be the most concise explanation of the Church's position. Christ chose only men for priesthood, as did the Apostles. The Church is bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. The ordination of women is not possible.
 - b. Many felt this teaching was changeable, a matter of discipline, like all priests being celibate. So, in 1976 Pope Paul VI issued the document *Inter Insigniores* to clarify that the all male hierarchical priesthood is straight from the will of Christ and a matter of doctrine, and therefore is not changeable.
 - c. Controversy continued so, Pope John Paul II, in 1994, issued a brief but absolutely final statement on the subject, called ***Ordinatio Sacerdotalis***, in which he concluded with:
 - 1) "Although the teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal Tradition of the Church and firmly taught by the Magisterium in its more recent documents, at the present time in some places it is nonetheless considered still open to debate, or the Church's judgment that women are not to be admitted to ordination is considered to have a merely disciplinary force." (OS, 4)
 - 2) "Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, **a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.**" (OS, 4)

Activity 2: Priest Saints Quiz

Activity 3: Q and A on Priesthood with the Pastor

1. Prior to the Q and A session:
 - Invite the parish pastor to come to the school for an hour to do a Q and A session with the students in grades 6-8. **NOTE: Priests are exceptionally busy people...contact them to get on their schedule as soon as possible. Stress that this is a Vocation Week activity in celebration of the "Year for Priests."** Also, call to remind the priest the day before. Consider having the students present something to the pastor at the end of the session to show their gratitude for all the pastor does for them.

- Show students the video "**Fishers of Men.**" Copies were sent to all schools 3 years ago. If a copy is needed, contact the Vocation Office at (513) 421-3131 to get an additional copy sent as soon as possible. It is also on YouTube™ at:
 - Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqtOvt7d490>
 - Part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnwodBiLq1g&feature=related>
 - Next, if you wish, have classes write some questions for the priest and submit them to you before the session. Get together with the other 6th to 8th grade teachers and select a good subset. You could also just have the students bring their questions to the session.
2. The day of the Q and A:
- Join the 6th, 7th and 8th grades together with Father and go through some of the written questions. Though questions were produced beforehand, try to keep it informal. If no one else asks, get Father to talk about his hobbies, interests, talents, favorite foods, sports teams – all those things that are just regular normal activities and feelings. He's a normal man with an extraordinary vocation, and that's what the students need to see.

Activity 4: Modern Hero Saints: *In persona Christi*

- Have students choose one of these saints and write a biography of how their lives were a reflection of Christ's life:
 - St. Pio of Pietrelcina (a.k.a. Padre Pio)
 - St. Maximilian Kolbe
 - St. John Vianney

Activity 5: Website Activities

1. Web Homework Assignment - Celibacy:
 - Have students choose 3 resources from the web on Celibacy and choose what they consider the two strongest arguments they found for keeping the discipline (require they read the Archbishop's article and pick 2 of the other three).
 - Archbishop Pilarczyk's article on Celibacy on the Archdiocesan website (http://www.cincinnati vocations.org/women_celibacy.shtml)
 - <http://www.cuf.org/FileDownloads/godsgiftcelibacy.pdf>
 - http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_24061967_sacerdotalis_en.html
 - <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/2001/0102fea5.asp>
2. Pope John Paul II's Holy Thursday Letters:
 - At www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_index-letter-to-priests_en.html you will find a listing of each letter the Holy Father wrote to his priests on Holy Thursday during his 26 year pontificate. Have students choose a letter and write a report on what was the focus of the letter. What was the Pope encouraging them to think about or do and why? What Bible passages and/or documents did he quote? Etc.
3. www.CincinnatiVocations.org Website activities
 - Read biographies and Q & A's of 4 of our recent priests and seminarians:
 - Questions:
 - What differences did they have when realizing God was calling them to be a priest?
 - How did their backgrounds differ?
 - What is your favorite interesting fact about one of them?