

# Lesson Plan Format

Topic \_\_\_\_\_

Intercessor(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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## Preparation

Sacred Space: Bible, Crucifix and/or Sacred Art, candle. How will you provide a “calculated disengagement”? How will you prepare the soil of their hearts and minds to receive God’s Word? Examples: a hymn, a saint story, and/or a reading from Scripture and opening prayer?

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## Proclamation

What is the statement of truth (major point) for the teaching that should stay with them? It is one short sentence of proclamation. It answers the question: “What did you learn today?”

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## Explanation-Exploration of this Truth

What are the 3 or 4 essential points that will give a clear and complete grasp of the teaching? What are the ways you are going to help students to draw out the meaning of these essential points? For example: chalk talk, guided discovery through Bible verses, art project, Scripture meditation, looking at sacred art, etc. How will your teaching lead them closer to Christ? What is to be memorized?

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## **Application to Life/Appropriation into our Life**

How can you help the students to make this teaching their own? How will you witness this truth to the students with a brief, personal testimony, a saint or Scripture story or meditation?

Discussion questions can be used to draw out such questions as: How does this teaching affect you? What does this Truth call forth from us? How will we respond to Christ by cooperating with His grace?

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## **Celebration**

How can we thank God and acclaim His wonderful truth together by ending in prayer? The prayer of celebration is to develop further our attitude of thankfulness toward God: a hymn, a song or Psalm, the Liturgy of the Hours, silent reflection, litany, spontaneous/rote prayer, etc.

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## **Remember to:**

Evaluate to determine if students comprehended the lesson. Did they show interest and excitement? Did they ask questions and was there fruitful discussion? What will you use to know that they have heard and understood the essentials: a quiz, writing a summary paragraph, a question and answer exercise that summarizes it?

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Include aids to encounter Christ in the home: homework and parent page.

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## Forming Committed Disciples of Jesus Christ

We have to be **intentional** about our lesson planning. There is a five-step method that is geared toward leading students deeper in their relationship with the Lord and being His committed followers. This method allows time for students to personally respond to Jesus Christ and what He has done for us as expressed in the teaching.

This method can be used in any teaching situation and the five steps are: **Preparation, Proclamation, Explanation, Application to Life, and Celebration.**<sup>1</sup>

The first step, the **Preparation**, is to capture the attention of the children by disengaging them from their busy lives and concerns and to help them to be receptive to Jesus and his Word. Being ready for them when they arrive by knowing their names, and asking about their week is essential. A simple "sacred space" as a focal point in the room with a Crucifix or a work of sacred art related to the teaching is also necessary. The sacred space allows the students to know what the focus will be. The opening prayer is essential to the "Preparation" step and needs to be related to what will be taught. Reading from an appropriate Bible passage that is foundational to the teaching is particularly effective because grace is given when God's Word is read.<sup>2</sup>

The second step is the **Proclamation**, which is the announcement of the truth to be examined, learned and assimilated. One brief statement, stated boldly and clearly gives the overall thesis statement for the session. The truth of the Faith is rolled out right in front for everyone to hear. The purpose of this step is to clearly proclaim the truth to be taught. It's like saying, "This is what we are learning today." When children, young people, or adults leave your classroom, they know the key point of what they learned – this "gem" of truth that they will remember! If the catechist does not know the main point, the students won't know it either. Therefore, the announcement must not be ambiguous, such as "Today, we will learn about Baptism." The Proclamation needs to announce the key point of the session, in a way that is well-stated and simple, with language that is compelling. This is the central step of the method. All of the other steps relate to this one.

A proclamation about Baptism for the lower grades might sound like this: "In Baptism, you became a child of God." For the upper grades, a proclamation about Baptism could be "In Baptism, we become re-united with God by receiving sanctifying grace."

The third step is the **Explanation**, which fleshes out what was said in the Proclamation. This stage of the teaching provides the opportunity to examine closely this "good news" in greater depth. The explanation is to present the students with three or four essential points, the keys that will help the student to receive a clear grasp of the teaching.

This further explanation is to honestly address students' questions and doubts. The important thing is to explain the truth well but in simple points they can remember, so that it is clear, reasonable and attractive. These essential points need to connect students with the Person of Jesus. Everything that we teach is about deepening our relationship of love with Him. The proclamation and essential

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<sup>1</sup> The five step teaching process is based upon The "Ecclesial Method" from the book, *The Mystery We Proclaim* by Msgr. Francis Kelly (Available from the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization)

<sup>2</sup> Pertinent Scripture passages can be found in the Diocesan Religion Curriculum for each grade level and referenced according to a doctrine, for a specific textbook and chapter by the Sequence Charts

points can be “brought alive” through an art project, filling in a handout, having a priest walk through a Baptism etc.

The fourth step is the **Application and Appropriation into Life**. Even if the proclamation was just right and the teaching was well done, if the young people do not have the chance to specifically apply this truth to their life by making a response of faith, the session has little value. Appropriating this truth into their life is necessary because conversion is the point of the process. Conversion involves understanding a truth better in order to change and follow Christ more closely. Therefore, students must be allowed to make a personal response. Note: Msgr. Kelly, the author of the book which elucidates this method of teaching says that we should not teach the lesson if we do not include an application to life for the participants.<sup>3</sup>

Having a classroom discussion, praying with a Scripture passage, hearing a saint story or personal testimony that is related to the teaching, or breaking up in small groups with well-crafted questions are good ways to help students respond to God’s grace, integrating the teaching into their lives. We need to allow time for such a response to the teaching. Applying this truth to their lives makes Christ and His teaching “come alive” for students.

The other benefit of the application step is to help the catechist keep a pulse on the spiritual life of this particular group. It is necessary to know if each person has accepted or is not yet ready to embrace this teaching. This can also be a gauge to determine if the teachings are being presented in a simple enough way to be understood.

The final step is the closing **Celebration**. The point of the closing prayer is to thank God for what He has done for us. In other words, it gives us an opportunity to express our gratitude for God’s love, expressed so clearly in this particular teaching. This celebration of thanksgiving and praise invites each person to respond to the grace that God was giving them while they explored His truth. For example, a lesson on Mary could end with the Memorare, or a decade of the Rosary.

The five-step process of **Preparation, Proclamation, Explanation, Application and Celebration** provides a method that is intentional about leading students to encounter and commit to Jesus Christ as they experience Him personally. Please note that the simple lesson plan format including the five-step process that is included with this article can be duplicated for use in weekly planning.

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<sup>3</sup> The Mystery We Proclaim, Second Edition: Catechesis for the Third Millennium, Francis D. Kelly