

My Catholic Faith! Study Group

Session 1 - Coming to Faith

Pre-meeting Prep

Participants should be asked to read the Introduction and Chapter One of the *My Catholic Faith!* book prior to this meeting. The leader should have some light refreshments available for the first meeting.

5 minutes - Gather

This initial gathering time is simply an opportunity for everyone to arrive and meet each other. The leader should make sure, during this initial gathering, that he/she has all contact information of the participants. Name tags might be of benefit.

5 minutes - Introductions

As the host, gather everyone together and welcome them. Share a little about yourself, and then go around, asking each person to briefly introduce himself/herself.

5 minutes - Opening prayer and Scripture

Everyone sits quietly as the leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and then invites a period of silence in the following way:

Let us quiet ourselves as we begin this study of our glorious Catholic faith together. "Lord, as we sit here for a minute in silence, help each one of us to bring our own questions, concerns, fears, and joys to You. Help us, in this moment of silence, to be attentive to Your gentle voice speaking to us, directing us, and calling us to a deeper faith."

Take a minute in silence with eyes closed so that each person can speak to our Lord about their own particular cares and concerns.

The leader reads the following invitation:

Let us ponder the Word of God. Let us reflect upon our own faith journey with the following questions: Do I believe? How deep is my faith? Am I open to letting God speak to me? Am I open to the Word of God and willing to let God's truth sink in more deeply? Am I willing to let this new faith change my life?

The leader of the session reads the following Scripture:

Romans 10:9-17: For, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. For the scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring (the) good news!" But not everyone has heeded the good news; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what was heard from us?" Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

The leader then says: ***Let us take a moment in silence to reflect upon these words.*** (a minute of silence). The prayer time concludes with everyone professing the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

45-50 minutes - Discussion questions

Each person should be invited to share something or ask a question, if he/she chooses, regarding the questions/discussion starters below. Go through one question at a time, and give each person an opportunity to say something if he/she chooses. Avoid having one or two persons dominate the discussion. Go around the circle and do not be afraid to share! Your insights might assist someone else in their understanding of the topics. Your question might very well be the same question someone else has. Some of the

questions below will invite personal sharing; other questions will invite you to share with others what you read in Chapter One. The goal is to share personally and to also make sure that the faith of our Church is clearly expressed and understood by all.

1. **"I Believe..."** What has your journey of belief looked like? Have you looked deeply at the question of your beliefs? Do you even know what you believe? Have you tackled the tough questions of God, the creation of the universe, the afterlife, the moral life, worship, and the like?
2. **Desire for Happiness:** Have you ever pondered this desire for happiness written on your very soul? Have you ever realized that this desire affects almost every decision you make? Do you realize that sometimes it leads you to seek a false and momentary sort of "happiness" that, in the end, only leaves you dry and empty?
3. **Fulfilling that Desire:** What makes you happy? What makes you truly happy? What is that one thing that fulfills you? Of course, the answer is God. This is obtained by faith in Him. Try to explain how you have discovered that God is the way to fulfill your desire for happiness. Perhaps there was a specific moment when you began your conversion. Or perhaps there were many little moments you can point to when you began to make this discovery. Share what you are comfortable sharing. Your story might be what another needs to hear!
4. **Knowing God:** As explained in Chapter One, we come to know God in two ways: human reason & revelation (faith).
 1. Human reason: Discuss what we can arrive at by our human reason alone. How much can we arrive at regarding God? What can we prove about God? If you were to enter into an argument with an atheist about God, what would you use as argumentation to prove that there is a God?
 2. Revelation (faith): What is revelation and how has it come to us throughout the ages? Go around the group and articulate what God spoke to us through the ages. What did He say to Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, the Prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Church? Additionally, try to share any personal experiences you have had when you experienced one of those "lightbulb moments." Can you think of some aspect of our faith that, at one particular time, suddenly made sense to you? This is a moment of personal revelation where the public teaching of God enters your heart.
5. **Magisterium:** Do you understand the Magisterium? If one person in the group understands the role and authority of the Magisterium as explained in Chapter One, let him/her share that understanding with the group. Others may jump in to offer additional points to clarify or correct as needed. Refer to the section in Chapter One if needed.

6. **Scripture:** What does it mean to say that Scripture is 100% from God and 100% from man? Again, someone is invited to offer insights on this as outlined in Chapter One, and others might offer additional understanding and input for clarity.
7. **Faith:** The goal of revelation is faith. Faith in God is the most important aspect to understand from this discussion. Go around and have a short discussion on the following aspects of faith:
 1. What does it mean to say that "faith is certain?"
 2. What does it mean to say that "faith seeks understanding?"
 3. Are faith and science opposed? Why or why not?
 4. What do we mean when we say one must be "free" to enter into faith?
What are some examples of things that might hurt our personal freedom when coming to an authentic gift of faith?

20 minutes - Final Reflections and sharing

Go around and give each person an opportunity to share what might have stood out the most to them from the evening's (day's) discussion or what left them the most confused, so as to gain further clarity or insight from others.

5 minutes - Closing prayer

Leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and invites a minute of silence with all eyes closed. Each person should reflect upon what was discussed, especially what stood out to him/her the most.

Leader then prays the following prayer:

God our Father, we thank You for the gift of our faith. We thank You for revealing all to us throughout the ages. We thank You for Moses and the prophets of old. We thank You especially for Jesus Your Son who came to live among us to reveal You and Your perfect love. Help each one of us on our faith journey. Help us not only to understand, but also to believe. Help us to grow in the supernatural gift of faith, and enable us to allow that gift of faith to change our lives.

Lord, if there are questions that have been left unanswered tonight (today), please speak to us in Your own way and in Your own time. If there are answers that were given to us tonight (today) that You

desire we share with others, give us the courage, wisdom and love we need to share this faith in accord with Your will.

Jesus, we do believe in You; help us when our faith wavers and is weak. Strengthen us to know and love You in a more perfect way each and every day. Jesus, I trust in You.

The leader then invites everyone present to offer their own prayer in the following way (Note: This can be done out loud, but it might be preferable if it's done in silence at the discretion of the leader): ***Let us now each bring our own personal concerns before our Lord, trusting that He hears us and knows all we need. Let us entrust these prayers to Him with full confidence, knowing that He desires to take control.*** (Take a minute of silence for each person to speak to God about their own personal needs for the night or day).

Leader then invites everyone to close with the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.