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LIFE TEEN/CONFIRMATION PREP LESSON 2

GOAL The goal of this session is to help you understand the different literary genres in the Bible and how these styles influence the way we interpret the true meaning of a Scripture story.

KEY CONCEPTS:

Sacred Scripture is more like a library of several books from various genres than a single book.

There are four different “senses” or methods of reading: literal, moral, allegorical, and anagogical.

God created us to know Him. The gift of reason, or intellect, is geared toward that knowledge

As the author of all truth, God would not reveal Himself in a way that is contrary to the gift of right reason, for that would be contradictory to His plan.

The Church has always encouraged reason and science and has sought to unify what we can know through science with what God has revealed to us.

KEY TERMS

Faith: Both a gift of God and a human act by which the believer gives personal adherence to God who invites his response, and freely assents to the whole truth that God has revealed.

Literal Sense: The meaning of Scripture as communicated by the words of the inspired text.

Reason: The power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgments by a process of logic.

Please locate following scripture verses in Bible and write them out:

John 14:6,

John 16:13,

Psalm 19:1

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PROCLAIM

“Reasons” True or False? Catholics are often accused of being opposed to science and reason. People may read the Bible and ask how we can believe that some of these strange stories are true. Take for example the story of Balaam and the talking donkey.

Reasons

Read the story of Balaam and the talking donkey (Numbers 22:22-35).

What stands out to them in this passage?

This certainly is a strange story. Perhaps the strangest part about it is that Balaam does not appear to find it odd that his donkey is talking. When he asks him a question he simply answers it, as if he regularly has conversations with his farm animals.

How We Interpret Stories How should we understand this story? As Catholics, are we supposed to believe that donkeys can talk, just like we can? Of course not! We know through our experience, and through science, that donkeys are not capable of speech like we are. So, is the Bible lying to us? Of course not! The Bible is not lying about the existence of talking donkeys because the author is not trying to tell us that talking donkeys exist.

What was the last book you read?

Give a brief plot summary and the genre of the book (history, biography, fiction, etc.).

How different WOULD that book have been if you had read it as a different genre?

Specifically, how different would fictional books be if they were read as historical books?

When we read anything, we have to discover what the author intended to say if we want to understand it properly. Many authors use different genres to make their point, depending on what their strengths are. The books of the Bible are very much the same.

Genres of the Bible Remember that the Bible is not a single book, but a small library. There are 73 books of the Bible, each written under different circumstances, by different authors, and for different reasons.

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When the Holy Spirit inspired the authors to write these books, they made use of their specific gifts and talents.

King David made use of his talent for music and poetry when he wrote the psalms.

Saint Paul made use of his gift for instruction when he wrote his letters.

Other authors made use of symbolism and short stories to convey the truth.

But just because the truth is conveyed in a non-literal or non-historical way does not make it untrue.

It just means we have to look a little harder to understand the truth.

CCC = CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CCC 106: The Senses of Scripture If we want to understand what the Bible really means, we first need to understand the literal sense of Scripture, or what the author intended to say. From there, we can look at the other senses of Scripture: the moral sense, the allegorical sense, and the anagogical sense.

CCC 116-117: The moral sense teaches us how to live our lives, so reading a passage in the moral sense might mean seeing an example of right versus wrong. During the Exodus, when the Israelites wandered the desert for 40 years after disobeying God, we might learn that we ought to obey God's commands, even when they are difficult or the tasks He asks us to do are daunting.

CCC 117; Numbers 14:34 The allegorical sense views the passage as foreshadowing something else in salvation history. While the Israelites were wandering in the desert, they found themselves attacked by poisonous snakes. God commanded Moses to create a bronze snake and mount it on a pole, and command those who had been bitten to look upon that snake to recover their health. This story can be seen as an allegory for the redemptive death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus was raised on the cross, just as the serpent was raised on the pole, and He saves us from eternal death, just as those who were bitten by the poisonous snakes did not die.

CCC 117; Numbers 21:4-9 The anagogical sense teaches us about and directs us toward eternity. We can compare the Israelites finally following Joshua into the Promised Land to our own entry into heaven after a difficult journey on Earth.

CCC 117; Joshua 1-3 Perhaps the most helpful thing to remember when reading Scripture is that the Bible is never trying to teach us scientific truths in the same way a textbook in school would teach us scientific truths. While there are certainly places in Sacred Scripture where we can find scientifically verifiable truth, but in other places the intent is much deeper. Looking in the Bible strictly for science is like looking in your chemistry book for evidence of World War II. The Bible is meant to help us know and love God and direct our lives to Him. This is why God inspired the authors to write their messages. To read it looking for anything else besides a revelation of God's identity and what He desires for us is to set ourselves up for failure.

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CCC 107 Faith and Reason The way we, as Catholics, read and understand Scripture is a perfect example of how we ought to use both faith and reason to come to know the truth. God created us to know Him. He slowly revealed Himself to us over time and gave us the gift of faith to be able to accept that divine revelation so that we could know Him. But God also gave us the gift of reason. He revealed Himself in a way that makes sense to our reason so that there might not be a conflict between faith and reason.

CCC 1, 156 God is the author of all truth. We can discover this truth in different ways like faith, science, or philosophy. As the author of truth, God cannot lie, so there can never be any real conflict between faith and science, faith and reason, or science and reason. When we feel that there is, we either misunderstand the science, misunderstand the faith, or misuse our reason. And let us not forget that “science” has been wrong. Just as any human endeavor, science has evolved and grown. There was a time when the best scientists in the world believed that flies spontaneously grew out of rotten meat. It was called Spontaneous Generation.

CCC 157, 159; John 14:6

Scientific Discoveries and Advances It is not just recently that the Catholic Church has invested in maintaining the unity of human intellect and faith. This has been true since the very first days of the Church. In fact, many of the great intellectual activities and scientific advancements that have been made throughout history are due to the Catholic Church, especially Catholic monks.

Monks during the Middle Ages were instrumental in developing new farming and agricultural technologies and practices. In fact, they were the first to intentionally breed cattle for specific characteristics, rather than allowing the process to happen naturally and randomly.

The Church has so greatly advocated for a sharpening of the intellect that the modern university system owes its existence to the Catholic Church. The earliest universities sprang up near the end of the 12th century. They developed out of the so-called “cathedral school” system, which had been operated by the Church at a time when virtually no one else was interested in education.

But perhaps more the point, there have been many Catholic scientists and philosophers who have carried on the intellectual tradition of the Church. Consider the following examples:

Fr. Gregor Mendel: An Augustinian friar whose work serves as the basis of modern genetics. You have probably learned about him in your biology class when you used Punnett Squares to determine the likelihood of certain traits being inherited by offspring. Working with pea plants, Fr. Mendel determined that genes are inherited in pairs and that there are dominant and recessive genes.

Roger Bacon: A Franciscan friar who criticized the blind acceptance of ideas and emphasized the need to test and examine things. Although his work certainly was not perfect, his ideas serve as the foundation for the modern scientific method.

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Fr. George LeMaitre: A Belgian priest and contemporary of Einstein, LeMaitre is known as the father of the Big Bang Theory. When LeMaitre first proposed his theory, Einstein told him he was a fool and his physics were nonsense. But LeMaitre persisted and after only a few years, Einstein was convinced and called the Big Bang Theory “the most satisfactory explanation” of the origins of the universe.

These are just a few of the many members of the Catholic Church who have furthered our understanding of science. They do not even begin to cover all of the Catholics who have revolutionized the world of philosophy like William of Ockham, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas.

Today, we constantly hear that faith and reason are on opposite spectrums and cannot be reconciled. We are told that to be a person of faith is to be opposed to science and philosophy. But God did not create this world with competing truths. Rather, He gave us both science and reason so that we could grow in our knowledge and love of Him.

Whenever we investigate the natural world around us, which is created by God, we learn more about Him.

As Psalm 19:1 tells us, “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork.”

Using your Bible please complete the Scripture Scavenger Hunt Handout.

Prayer

Word of God Speaks to each one of uniquely

Using the Word of God Speak handout.

We show the Bible reverence because when we revere the Bible, we revere Christ.

This sense of Scripture not only helps communicate its meaning, but it also allows Christ to personally communicate with us through His Word.

Take a take a few moments to pray through a few Scripture passages with the intention of hearing God speak to us.

Complete the handout.

Close with an Our Father.



HANDOUT

FOUR CORNERS

Which of the following genres do you enjoy reading the most?

- a. Fiction
- b. Non-fiction
- c. Poetry
- d. History

Which of the following genres do you enjoy reading the least?

- a. Fiction
- b. Non-fiction
- c. Poetry
- d. History

Which of the following fictional novels is your favorite? (Consider adapting the book titles to current fictional books you have heard the teens discuss.)

- a. "The Divergent Series"
- b. "A Wrinkle in Time"
- c. "The Hunger Games Series"
- d. "The Chronicles of Narnia"

If "The Hunger Games" was non-fiction and read like a historical textbook, what would you do to prepare for the annual reaping?

- a. Train for combat.
- b. Plan an escape of the districts and live in the wild.
- c. Learn how to break into the capitol's computer system and remove your name from the reaping.
- d. Volunteer as tribute.

What is the moral of the story, "The Tortoise and the Hare"?

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- a. When betting on tortoise and hare racing, you have better chances of winning if you choose the tortoise.
- b. Slow and steady wins the race.
- c. Distractions are fun and exciting, pursue all of them, squirrel!
- d. Gambling is risky.

Session 3: Reasons / Four Corners



HANDOUT

SCRIPTURE SCAVENGER HUNT

Literal Sense: Understanding what the author intended to say, teach, or pass down.

Moral Sense: Pertains to how to live our lives.

Allegorical Sense: Foreshadows something else in salvation history.

Anagogical Sense: Pertains to and directs us toward eternity.

What is the first book of the Old Testament?

Find and read the first chapter of Genesis. What was the author trying to communicate (literal sense)?

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Find and read Genesis 22:1-19. What sense (moral, allegorical, anagogical) was it written in? What is the overall message of this passage?

The Book of Judges records a warrior refusing to go fight without Deborah coming along. Which warrior needed to have his hand held? What book and chapter did you read this in?

In the Old Testament, a prophet challenged the priests of Baal to a showdown. When Baal did not deliver, the prophet in 1 Kings 18 suggested that Baal was “relieving” himself? What is the prophet’s name?

What does the first verse of the third chapter of the last book of the Old Testament say?

Session 3: Reasons / Scripture Scavenger Hunt

What is the first book of the New Testament?

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Name the book, chapter, and verse of Jesus saying, "Do not be afraid."

Find and read Luke 15:11-31. What sense (moral, allegorical, anagogical) was it written in? What is the overall message of this passage?

What chapter and verse in the Gospel of Mark speaks of a man escaping naked?

What chapter and verse in the Gospel of Matthew speaks of tombs breaking and bodies rising out of them?

Which two New Testament books were written to Theophilus?

In the New Testament, Eutychus is overcome by sleep and falls out of a window to his death. Whose talking put him to sleep? What book, chapter, and verse did you read this in? What happens next?

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Find and read Revelation 12:1-12. What sense (moral, allegorical, anagogical) was it written in?
What is the overall message of this passage?

Session 3: Reasons / Scripture Scavenger Hunt

Session 3: Reasons / Scripture Scavenger Hunt Answer Key



HANDOUT

WORD OF GOD SPEAK

Read the following Scripture passages and prayerfully ask God what He wants to say to you through His Word. Then, write down what the Scripture means to you.

John 6:35

1 Timothy 4:12

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Matthew 14:31

Exodus 14:14
