

PARENTS' GUIDE

Session Three: The Church

Unit One

The central point in this unit is that Jesus left nothing behind in the world, except the Church. The Catholic Church today is that same community that Jesus Himself founded 2,000 years ago. Yes, the Church has grown-up, expanded and developed in that time, but She is essentially (in Her essence) the same. Therefore, She is the heir to the promises made to Her by Christ at that time.

Read through the text with your child and help him or her to work through the fairly straightforward comprehension questions. There are also some Scriptures to look up.

This part of the course necessarily deals with the appointment of Apostles to lead the Church, which may raise the question of why women cannot become Catholic priests. This is, of course, a controversial question, but one which deserves a proper answer. If you would like some guidance of what you might say, I commend this [very thorough, yet succinct, video](#) (9 mins), which attempts a Catholic answer. As an interesting further thought on the topic there is this [comment from Bishop Robert Barron](#). All that said, if the question does not come up, it might be easier to leave it for another day!!

Unit Three

The final idea is that of Infallibility. If it were not for the Church, we would know nothing about Jesus Christ, since the Church is all He left behind. If the Church makes mistakes, then we can know nothing with any certainty, and it would be impossible for us to really follow Him. This was why Jesus promised the Apostles He would send the Holy Spirit to guide the Church into the fulness of truth.

If the Holy Spirit guides the Church to know the truth, then Church teaching cannot be expected to change. If something is revealed by the Holy Spirit (God) to be true, then it is true. You might think back to session one and the difference between objective and subjective truth. God does not change, and nor does the truth which flows from His nature.

Watch the video with your child. It is a beautifully made video, but I accept that it is pitted at a reasonably high level. Nevertheless, I think it is good to challenge our young people. It would be a perfectly sufficient outcome if s/he could understand simply that *the Pope is prevented from making mistakes about doctrines or moral precepts when he teaches authoritatively*. It would be a bonus if s/he can further understand that the Bible alone is a complicated document subject to many misinterpretations throughout history. Unless someone has the authority to say what is the correct interpretation then it is not much help to us.

Unit Two

This unit takes the form of a video. It is American, and it takes a very pro-American view for granted. As something of an 'Americanophile' I have never struggled with this, but I am aware that this is not everyone's attitude. If this is an issue, try not to allow it to cause your child to miss the central point. At the time of the founding of the U.S.A. the principles of liberty and democracy were not widespread in the world; and from a world perspective, they are far from universally upheld today. The idea that the Founding Fathers were establishing was radical, yet it survives.

The key point of the video is that, like the idea of a free United States of America, the idea and the message of Jesus Christ survives because of:

- (a) A written document (The U.S. Constitution / Sacred Scripture)
- (b) The handing down of an idea (The taught principles of American society / Sacred Church Tradition)
- (c) A Structured Government (The U.S. Institutions / the Hierarchy of the Church - Pope and Bishops)

The video then goes on to make the point that the Bible is the Word of God, but that the reason we have the Bible is because of the Church, which (inspired by the Holy Spirit, revealed that these are the inspired books.

Watch the video with your child and then make sure s/he has taken the main points. Jesus' message is communicated through Scripture AND Tradition. Tradition is all the things that are part of our Faith, which may not be explicitly written in the Bible, but have always been part of the life of the Church: Sacraments, Liturgy, Prayers & Devotions, Saints' spiritual wisdom etc.