



Family + Faith Session

Leader's Guide

THE HUMAN PERSON CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

Overview of the Topic

A cornerstone of Catholic teaching is that the human person is made in the image and likeness of God. (Genesis 1:27) We are created as beings with bodies. Through the Holy Spirit our body, mind and spirit work together so each of us can live as a whole person. We are created by love and for love.

According to Scripture and the Tradition of the Church, our bodies are Temples of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of our lives is to know and accept God's love and to use our lives to share that love with others. Our bodies are gifts God has given us that enable us to show love to others. Through our bodies we express our Christian beliefs, strive for a life of holiness, and serve others.

The human body has many parts: hands, feet, eyes, heart, etc. While our many parts make us a whole person, each individual part is unique and important. It is the same with groups like our family, a team, a community and God's community, the Church. Each group is an entity made of many people. Like the parts of our body each person is important and contributes something valuable. The Church is the community of the people in Heaven and earth united with Christ.

God came to us as the divine human person, Jesus, who helped others by teaching, healing, loving. He also suffered and died on the cross for us. By bearing our sin and dying for us he freed us to use our bodies for good, as he did. He rose from the dead to reveal to us that, though our earthly body dies, through life in Christ we, too, will be transformed in death to live with God. Eucharist is the gift of God, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. In the Eucharist we receive the Body of Christ as Holy Communion. Eucharist strengthens us to love and serve others.

Our bodies deserve respect and care. As part of our human development, our bodies teach us important things about ourselves. When we use our bodies to express our beliefs and to act for good, we become a sign and image of God. By giving of ourselves, our bodies allow us to build relationships with others. Our physical self makes visible the invisible mysteries of God and the sacramentality of creation (Theology of the Body, Feb. 20, 1980). The Commandments and the Beatitudes help to form our conscience to strive for holiness so that we know how to use our body, mind and soul to love God and others.

Overview of the Session

This plan offers options for you to do with families depending on your time, resources and purpose of your family session(s).

The session begins with a reading from Genesis.

Following a welcome by the leader families will enjoy a brief icebreaker activity about how we as humans express ourselves through the language of our body.

Families will have an opportunity to participate in an activity that reflects on 1 Corinthians 12:12-21 about the gifts and talents of each member of the family.

The Beatitudes are ways God has given us to learn to be happy and use the gift of our lives for good. Families will participate in activities to learn the Beatitudes, grow in understanding of what they mean and think about how to apply them to their lives.

Finally, families will have an activity to review how we use our bodies to worship God.

The session will close with the prayer, *Canticle of the Sun* (St. Francis).

Hospitality / Fellowship

Invite families to take seats at tables and enjoy simple refreshments. This is a good time to invite families to share a table with another family and enjoy getting to know one another during this fellowship time.

INVITE: The Human Person/Christian Anthropology

Welcome

Say: *[Personalize your “Welcome” using these or similar words]* Welcome to this session! We are going to work together on some activities and discussions to remind us of what a gift God has given us by creating us to have a body, mind and soul. Through these gifts we come to know God, God’s love for us and learn how we can use these gifts to love and care for others.

God came to us in human form as Jesus Christ. Jesus was born, as you were, from a mother who loved him. He grew up in a family that continued to love and care for him, as you do. From his family he learned about life and faith. Jesus grew into a man who taught people about God and what God values- love, forgiveness, mercy and the importance of serving others. Jesus’ life was fully revealed as the Messiah, the Savior of the world, who lived, suffered, died and rose for us. God continues to be with us in the Real Presence of the Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

Each of us is made in the image and likeness of God. With the help of the Holy Spirit our body, mind and spirit can work together to create good in the world. We are called by God to use the gifts of our body to show our love for God by caring and serving others.

In this session, together, let's learn more about these amazing gifts God has given us in life, creating us with a body, mind and spirit! May the Holy Spirit inspire us to appreciate anew the gift of our body to love and serve the Lord!

Opening Prayer

[Invite a parent to read this Scripture to the group as your opening prayer.]

A reading from the book of Genesis

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

(Genesis 1: 26-31a [New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition])

Icebreaker

Say: *[using these or similar words]* Let's start out with a little fun. In the envelope are several scenario cards. Invite each person in the family to take a turn taking one card from the envelope, reading it silently and in secret, and then acting it out using only facial expressions and body gestures. See if your family can guess what you are expressing. How about if the tallest person in your family starts this game out? We'll take a few minutes to play a few of these. **(4-6 minutes)**

Wasn't that fun? We can use our bodies to tell many things, even without words.

DISCOVER

Encountering God in His Word

Say: *[using these or similar words]* Let's open our Bibles to 1 Corinthians 12: 14- 21. Take a minute to read this aloud with your family. **(3-4 minutes)**

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

Say: *[using these or similar words]* Isn't it amazing how God made us in his own likeness, yet each with our own special talents, abilities, and character traits? This passage from the Bible reminds us that we each have certain gifts and talents and they all are valuable and important. Here is a little activity to help your family reflect on the gifts you each have and how they contribute to your family.

Each person, take the paper with the body outline. Write your name at the top. Outside of the body, list your talents and abilities. What are you good at?

And inside the outline, write your character traits. What are the good things about your personality? What values you hold that are part of who you are? What virtues do you live? Take a few minutes of quiet thought as you write them. **(5-6 minutes)**

Next, let's take a few minutes to take turns sharing what you wrote. After listening to each person, see if you can add one more thing about that person, either outside or inside their outline that you know and appreciate about them. I'll bet you know lots of great things about each other! Go ahead and do that now. **(6-8 minutes)**

Isn't it wonderful all the gifts God has given each of us? I hope you will take some time this week to do two things: First, show appreciation to others for sharing their gifts with you. Thank them for whatever they bring to your family life. Second, pay attention to using your gifts, and look for chances to use them to help others.

LIVING OUR FAITH

Beatitudes Activity: Cube

Say: [using these or similar words] Jesus taught us ways to use our bodies to help others and bring us happiness. We can read about them in the Sermon on the Mount.

Open your Bible to Matthew 5: 1-12a. That “a” means we only read the first sentence of verse 12. One of the adults, please read the *Sermon on the Mount* to your family.

(3 minutes)

God has some very special ideas about how we should think and act in order to be happy. These are called the *Beatitudes*. There are some words and phrases in the Beatitudes that might not be familiar to you.

Each family has a Beatitude cube template like this (*hold up an example*).

Each side of the cube lists a Beatitude, followed by the word **Be**. For your activity today, you will read each Beatitude and then talk as a family about what or how it is telling you to **Be**.

- Is Jesus telling you how to be fair?
- To be forgiving?
- To be peaceful?

There are no single correct answers. Responses may vary. Parents, the word bank on your cube paper can help you out to give you some ideas but you may also think of your own ideas. There are 8 Beatitudes but there are only 6 sides on a cube so there will be 2 Beatitudes that are not on your cube. (We chose to use the beatitudes on the cube that would be most relevant to families with young children.) **(4-6 minutes)**

When you've completed all 6, cut out the shape on the **solid lines**- this can be a parent job, and fold on the **dotted lines** to make a cube. Tape the edges together.

(3-4 minutes)

Toss the cube. Read the Beatitude on the side facing up. Can you give an example for how you might live this Beatitude in your life? Toss it a few times until you've thought of ideas for all several of the Beatitudes. **(4-6 minutes)**

Beatitudes Activity: Sorting

Say: [using these or similar words] Let's take a minute to see how familiar we're becoming with the Beatitudes.

On your table are a set of blue cards, each with half a Beatitude. Work together as a table to see if you can sort these into their matching pairs.

Refer to the Bible if you need help. **(3-4 minutes)**

Quiz time! What do we call the eight things Jesus told us we need to be happy?

Beatitudes! We hope we've all started thinking about ways to live the Beatitudes this week. When we live the Beatitudes, we bring light and joy to the world.

Faith in Action

Say: *[using these or similar words]* We learned that we could bring joy to others, and to ourselves, when we live out the Beatitudes. We use our bodies when we serve others.

At the Last Supper we know that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. Using the actions of his body he told them he was giving an example of how they should live by serving others. What are some ways you serve others using your body? What are some ways you could serve using your body? Take some time to talk about that with your family. **(4-6 minutes)**

Wrap-up

Say: *[these or similar words]* We also use our bodies in worship. Take a few minutes to act out, without speaking, some ways you can think of that show you're worshipping God. Guess and name what you see people acting out. **(2-3 minutes)**

Check out this list (slide or printout – genuflect, Sign of the Cross, praying hands, hands ready to receive Communion, closed eyes, kneeling) Did you do all these? Any others?

Extend the reflection

Say: Well, we sure have looked at a number of things we can do with these amazing bodies God gave us! We hope you spend the weeks ahead using your bodies to serve others, to worship God, and to grow your talents and build your character.

Closing Prayer

Canticle of the Sun

O most High, almighty, good Lord God,
to you belong praise, glory, honor, and all blessing!

Praised be my Lord God with all creatures;
and especially our brother the sun,
which brings us the day, and the light;
fair is he, and shining with a very great splendor:
O Lord, he signifies you to us!

Praised be my Lord for our sister the moon,
and for the stars,

which God has set clear and lovely in heaven.

Praised be my Lord for our brother the wind,
and for air and cloud, calms and all weather,
by which you uphold in life all creatures.

Praised be my Lord for our sister water,
which is very serviceable to us,
and humble, and precious, and clean.

Praised be my Lord for brother fire,
through which you give us light in the darkness:
and he is bright, and pleasant, and very mighty,
and strong.

Praised be my Lord for our mother the Earth,
which sustains us and keeps us,
and yields divers fruits, and flowers of
many colors, and grass.

Praised be my Lord for all those who pardon
one another for God's love's sake,
and who endure weakness and tribulation;
blessed are they who peaceably shall endure,
for you, O most High, shall give them a crown!...

Praise you, and bless you the Lord,
and give thanks to God, and serve God
with great humility.

(St. Francis, 1182-1226)

Sending Forth

Say: *[using these or similar words]* We hope your family has had an opportunity to think and talk about the great gift it is to simply be human, to have been made in the image and likeness of God. God created us with a mind body and spirit. There are so many ways our bodies can love and serve others. We want to always remember to treat our body and those of every other person with respect and care. We praise and thank God for creating us *from* love, and creating us *to* love!