
Lesson Plans for Church History

Correlated with Curriculum Guidelines for Adolescent Catechesis and Confirmation, Diocese of Buffalo, 2004.

Lesson Plan #1: VATICAN II (Church History p.35)

Begin class with a reading from 1 Corinthians 12: 12-20. Let us pray that we might each bring our personal gifts to the Church, the Body of Christ.

- 1.) Divide the class into 2 fairly equal sides for a game of ten questions. Have the “teams” sit on separate sides of the room.

Say: Close your eyes for a moment and pretend that, though you are in the same place, it is one hundred years ago. What was in this place then? Do you know when this parish was established? When the church was built on these grounds? When your family first became a member of this parish?

Before we get the the questions about church, let’s get some more perspective on other changes that have taken place in the last century. We are going to play a game of ten questions, with one side competing against the other. I will hold up a card with the name of an item that was invented in the past one hundred years, for example, a motorcycle, so that one side can see what it is. The other side will work together to ask questions and make guesses until they guess exactly what is written on the card. The questions should be able to be answered by “yes” or “no”. After each question, the team can make one guess. If the item is guessed correctly after asking only one question the team gets ten points. After two questions, the team gets nine points. Etc.

- 2.) Play the game for a predetermined number of rounds or to a certain score. Call on only one representative for each round to say the team’s guess. Use items like: radio, lunar module, atomic bomb, blow dryer, VCR, compact disc, refrigerator, DC-10, electric guitar, satellite, windshield wiper.
- 3.) Continue in the same space. Explain: For people born in the early part of the twentieth century, life may really seem to be one big case of future shock. Things that were only dreamed of in science fiction became a part of their daily lives. Church life in the twentieth century did not escape the dramatic change of this period in history. People born in the 1950s and before have witnessed many changes in church life, especially in the area of liturgy. These changes were initiated at an ecumenical council, the Second Vatican Council, that met from 1962 to 1965.

The council was held in Rome, meeting in four separate sessions from 1962-1965. Pope John XXIII led the first session. After his death in 1963, Pope Paul VI led the final three sessions. Over 2,800 church leaders attended. Observers from other non-Catholic religions were also present. The council issued sixteen documents before closing on Dec. 8, 1965. Each document represented a major shift in the church’s understanding of itself and of its role in the world.

Major Achievements of Vatican II:

1. The document *Church in the Modern World* named the church's commitment as a servant church. Prior to the council, the church seemed to ignore or even fear the modernization of the world. Today the church sees itself as learning from modern culture and scientific advances and being a leader in these areas.
2. The council encouraged Catholics to read the Bible and meditate and pray on its words. During other periods, especially in the Middle Ages and the Reformation, the church stressed church law and sacraments over the scriptures.
3. The document *The Church* emphasized the church as the People of God, with a stress on *collegiality*, that is, all bishops working in union with the pope. Lay people were also charged in a special way to work for the church's mission. Since Vatican II, lay people have increased roles as teachers, as social workers, as parish administrators, and in liturgical ministries.
4. Vatican II clearly charged the church to work for ecumenism, or unity among Christian religions.
5. In the area of liturgy, the council encouraged fuller participation in the eucharist and introduced the vernacular languages into the liturgy, replacing the universal language, Latin.

Possible Videos: (#142) 3rd Millennium - Vatican II – Vatican II in History. 29 minutes.
 (#680) The Faithful Revolution, Vatican II. 60 minutes.

Option: Invite a panel of parishioners to present “Our Parish Before and After Vatican II.” Have parishioners introduce themselves. Some interesting topics for the panel could include:

- a. How was the parish informed about the changes in the liturgy after Vatican II?

How did the parish react on the whole?

- b. Provide a physical description of the the church interior prior to Vatican II.
- c. How was the role of the priest different prior to Vatican II.
- d. How are some of the following ministries different now from before: school teacher, CCD teacher, Eucharistic minister, lector, parish council member, music minister.
- e. Describe the music at the pre-Vatican II liturgies.
- f. How did people dress when they came to Mass?
- g. Compare your feelings for the Latin Mass with the Mass in the vernacular

(English).

Allow students to ask questions.

Or: Have students do some research on Pope John XXIII or the Second Vatican Council.

As a closing prayer have students who wish to share a favorite childhood prayer with the class.

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Lesson Plan #2: *American Catholicism* (Church History pp.35-37)

SUPPLIES: post it notes
newsprint
pens/pencils/markers
History Cards – prepare as per activity directions below

TIPS FOR FACILITATING DISCUSSION

Let them answer the questions – waiting for answers is important

Reflective listening – repeat back what they say so that everyone hears it

As discussion goes on invite responses from the introverts (more quiet students)

*Please note that the possible discussion responses in italics are only suggestions. Feel free to come up with other discussion questions. The young people’s responses may take the discussion in a different direction than given in the lesson plan. If that direction corresponds to the theme facilitate it through that.

ACTIVITY: Give the students post it notes and a pen. Hang up two sections of newsprint – one that says “cafeteria” and the other says “Catholic.” Give them two minutes to brainstorm the words that come to mind for both of those. The students should write one word/idea per post it note, and the post it notes are to be placed on the newsprints as they come up with ideas.

15 min.

When the two minutes is up, go over what is they put on the post it notes. Group similar ideas together. After reviewing all of the responses ask the students what they think the term “cafeteria Catholics” means. Note their responses on a third newsprint/blackboard.

Some of their responses may include the idea of picking and choosing like you do in a cafeteria line. This term is used in reference to American Catholics choosing what parts of the faith they want to believe in/participate in and which parishes they belong to. When we look at the history of American Catholicism we will see that “cafeteria Catholics” is not accurate terminology.

HISTORY OF AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

Ask for 11 volunteers and give each volunteer a History Card. In order to include all of the students in the class, you may give one card to 2 students. The students have to read their cards and place themselves in a line that reflects the actual timeline of American Catholicism.

30 min.

Once they have created their line, you can make any changes to put them in the correct order. Then you will go down the line and have each student report on what their card states. They should not just read the information on the back of the card. They have to provide a summary of what is on the card.

HISTORY CARDS

Each card has a front and a back. The back has information about this part of the history. Below are the items that go on the front of the cards. At the end of the lesson plan is a table that lists what is to be put on the card fronts and backs.

1. Spanish, French conquerors bring Catholic missionaries
2. Puritans and Quakers in America
3. Maryland: English influence
4. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
5. American Revolution
6. Immigration
7. St. John Neumann
8. 1908 – America no longer a “foreign mission”

- 9. President John F. Kennedy
- 10. Influence of Vatican II
- 11. Modern American Catholicism

BRAINSTORM AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

Post another newsprint and use the same brainstorming process with the post it notes from the first activity. This time the topic on the newsprint is “American Catholicism.” Tell the students that based on what they have just done on the history of American Catholicism, they are to write the word/words that come to mind that describe American Catholicism. Give them a two minute time limit.

20 min.

When they are done, review their responses and discuss the following questions:
 Does “cafeteria Catholics” truly describe American Catholicism?
 What exactly is American Catholicism?
 How are you contributing to it?
 What are you doing for the mission of the Church that no one else can do?

CLOSURE:

Get 3/5 responses to the following depending on time:

- I now know . . .
- I still wonder about . . .
- I understand . . .

5 min.

CLOSING PRAYER: Pray together the Our Father.

HISTORY CARDS

FRONT	BACK
Spanish, French conquerors bring Catholic missionaries	As soon as Europeans began coming to America, Catholic missionaries were sent. They catechized both Europeans and Native Americans.
Puritans and Quakers in America	The Puritans wanted to be the only religion in the New World. The Quakers promoted religious tolerance. The Puritans executed Quakers. It was the Quakers belief of religious tolerance that prevailed in American.
Maryland – English influence	1634 – Maryland was founded as a haven of religious freedom by the Calvert family. The Calverts were Catholic. 1789 – Bishop John Carroll from Maryland was named the first Catholic Bishop in the U.S.
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton	Mother Seton started Catholic Schools in America as an alternative to Protestant based public school education. The first school was in Emmitsburg, Maryland.
American Revolution	1776 – A prominent Catholic from Maryland, Charles Carroll, signed the Declaration of Independence. Other

	Catholics signed the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution. Catholics were an integral part of the United States from its very foundation.
Immigration	In the 1800's the number of Catholic immigrants increased the Roman Catholic population in the U.S. They came from Ireland, Italy, Poland, Germany and other countries.
St. John Neumann	St. John Neumann came from Germany to Western New York. His first assignment was Ss. Peter and Paul in Williamsville. He traveled on foot with the pack on his back containing the sacred vessels for Mass and his vestments. His travels included Tonawanda, Swormville, Niagara Falls, Lancaster, Jave, Sheldon, Batavia and North Bush.

1908	Pope Pius X terminated the mission status of the American Catholic Church. We were officially a bonafide part of the Catholic Church.
President John F. Kennedy	JFK was the first Catholic President of the United States. His election made Catholicism acceptable in American society.
Influence of Vatican II	The Mass was significantly changed. The priest no longer had his back to the people and the Mass was not said in Latin. Catholics were encouraged to read the Bible. Lay ecclesial ministry emerged as an important part of the church.
Modern American Catholicism	Catholics are encouraged to dialogue with people of other religions in a spirit of ecumenism. Lay ecclesial ministers have significant roles in the church that were formerly filled by clergy/religious.

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