

Lesson Plan for Lesson 17

Introduction to the Sacraments

Preparation and Supplies

- Study chapter 17, “Introduction to the Sacraments,” in the handbook.
- Make a copy of the handout “Ritual Postures and Gestures” (Document #: TX003393), and cut it apart along the dotted lines.
- Gather a prayer cloth; a bowl of water; a cross or crucifix; and candles, one for all but three participants.

Pray It! (5 minutes)

Tell the young people that class will begin with a reflection on the life of Saint Patrick. **Ask** a volunteer to read the Saintry Profile “Saint Patrick (389–461),” on page 191 in the handbook (but not the prayer at the end). **Tell** the participants to take note of how Patrick used symbols in nature to describe God to others. Following the reading, **invite** the young people to pray together the prayer at the end of the sidebar.

Study It! (35 to 45 minutes, depending on your class length)

A. Symbols and Rituals

1. **Invite** the participants to give an example of a sign, a symbol, and a ritual. **Record** their examples on a sheet of newsprint or on the board.
2. **Direct** the young people to read the chapter introduction and the section “Symbols and Rituals,” on pages 182–185 in the handbook. The content covers points 1 through 5 on the handout “Lesson 17 Summary” (Document #: TX003392).
3. **Ask** the participants to describe the difference between a sign, a symbol, and a ritual. Would they change any of the examples of each one they gave earlier? You could also invite discussion on the Reflect question on page 185.

B. Sacraments: More Than Just Symbols

1. **Conduct** a brainstorming session to identify Christian symbols used in the Sacraments (e.g., water, oil, fire, bread, wine, light, a cross). **List** them on the board. Then **ask** the young people to name the Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church, and record their answers in another column on the board.
2. **Direct** the participants to read the sections “Sacraments: More Than Just Symbols” and “The Seven Sacraments,” on pages 185–189 in the handbook. The content covers points 6 through 8 on the handout “Lesson 17 Summary.”



3. **(Optional) Direct** the young people to the Reflect directions on page 187. **Conduct** a discussion on the question presented there.

C. Sacramentals

Direct the participants to read the section “Sacramentals,” on pages 189–190 in the handbook. The content covers point 9 on the handout “Lesson 17 Summary.”

Note: If you are running short on time, you may wish to just briefly summarize this section of the handbook.

Live It! (15 to 20 minutes)

1. **Direct** the students to form eight groups. **Provide** each group with one of the strips from the handout “Ritual Postures and Gestures” (Document #: TX003393). **Ask** each group to appoint a scribe, who will record the group’s work. **Invite** the groups to brainstorm responses to complete both of the sentence starters on the strip of paper you have given them.
2. After 3 to 5 minutes, **collect** the written responses. Then **distribute** to each participant an object (a candle, a bowl of water, a cross, or a candle) to be brought up to the table. Most of the participants will carry candles.

Explain the task as follows:

- First we will prepare our prayer table in the order I will describe.
 - Then I will lead you in a variety of ritual actions. As I read each action, we will all do it together.
 - As we do the ritual action, the group assigned that action will read its written responses to the action and then pause to invite quiet reflection. Everyone should remain in the ritual posture until I instruct you to move on to the next one.
3. **Begin** the processional ritual by inviting the participants to come forward and decorate the table. The dressing of the prayer table should happen in the following order: prayer cloth, bowl with water, cross, and finally candles. Use the following order to carry out the remaining rituals:
 - We process . . . *(Read the responses on procession.)*
 - We make the Sign of the Cross . . . *(Invite the participants to go to the bowl of water and make the Sign of the Cross. Then read the responses on making the Sign of the Cross.)*
 - We stand . . . *(Read the responses on standing.)*
 - We fold our hands . . . *(Read the responses on folded hands.)*
 - We kneel . . . *(Read the responses on kneeling.)*
 - We raise our hands and our eyes . . . *(Read the responses on raised hands and eyes.)*
 - We lay on hands . . . *(Invite the participants to turn to the person next to them and lay both hands on that person’s head or shoulders. Read the responses on the laying on of hands.)*
 - We shake hands . . . *(Read the responses on shaking hands.)*

Conclude by conducting a discussion with the whole class on the following questions:

- How did each of the gestures or postures make you feel?
- What do these gestures and actions say about a person or a group of people?



Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Following any announcements, close by **leading** the participants in the following blessing:

Leader:

Blessed be your name, O Lord,
You are the fount and source of every blessing,
and you look with delight
upon the devout practices of the faithful.
Draw near, we pray, to these your servants
and, as they use [the] symbol[s] of their faith and devotion,
grant that they may also strive to be transformed
into the likeness of Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever.

(Book of Blessings, 1455)

All: Amen.

(The closing prayer is reprinted from the English translation of *Book of Blessings* © 1988, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation (ICEL), number 1455 [Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989]. All rights reserved. Used with permission of the ICEL.)

