

The Promise of a Messiah

Core Activity

My Covenant Renewal with God

1. Explain to the students that today the class will take the opportunity to renew their baptismal covenant with God. This will be needed for the renewal: two readers, one for the Gospel and one for the response; a small bowl of holy water placed on a small table or desk, with a crucifix behind it; a lit candle (if fire laws permit); a convenient device for playing an appropriate baptismal song at the end; simple celebratory refreshments (juice, fruit slices, crackers, etc.).

2. Remind the students that the covenants they have learned about in this chapter were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who brought a New Covenant. Briefly explain this New Covenant in these or similar words:

- Through Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist, we are part of the New Covenant, which was brought about through the work of Jesus. At every Eucharist, we renew this covenant with God in Jesus Christ when we receive Communion. However, this covenant renewal of the Eucharist would not be possible had we not first been baptized into the New Covenant. The day of Baptism is the beginning of the New Covenant at work in our lives.



3. Distribute the handout “My Covenant Renewal with God” (Document #: TX003179). Follow the directions given there. (All baptized students, even those not baptized in the Catholic Church, are welcome to participate. If some students are not baptized, encourage them to pray along in their hearts as they see fit, and to participate or not, as they choose.)

4. For future renewals, you may want to ask the students to find out the actual date of their own Baptism. Make a list, and on a designated day each month, invite the students who were baptized in that month to renew their baptismal commitments. (You may want to vary the readings each month so that each celebration is not exactly the same.) In the last month of the school year, invite those who were baptized in the summer months to renew their commitments.

Core Activity Extension

Praying for Forgiveness

1. Prepare for a classroom prayer service about forgiveness by gathering the following items: a Bible open on a table or desk, with a crucifix behind it; a small bowl of holy water; a convenient device to play an appropriate song at the end of the service. Ask two readers to prepare the two readings for the prayer service.

2. Explain to the students that keeping faith with God and his covenant is only possible because of God's forgiveness. You may want to read the first sentence of the second paragraph on page 73 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)*, "Given human's long history of breaking the covenant . . ." Continue in these or similar words:

- Jesus, our Messiah, assured the people, over and over again, that they would be forgiven if they were sorry. To assure us, individually and in our own time, that we are forgiven, Jesus, through his Church, gives us the Sacrament of Reconciliation. At Baptism all our sins are forgiven, and Original Sin is wiped away. But what happens if we sin after Baptism? Then the Sacrament of Reconciliation comes to our rescue. We are given the opportunity to begin again. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is another kind of "covenant renewal."



3. Distribute the handout "A Prayer for Forgiveness" (Document #: TX003180) to the students. Comment in these or similar words:

- Because the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is so individual and so private, we cannot do it as a group unless there is a priest available for individual confessions. However, we can pray for the grace of being open to the attitudes of penance and reconciliation as a renewal of our covenant with God.

4. Follow the directions given on the handout for the prayer service on forgiveness. At the end of the service, remind the students that this service, while prayerful and helpful, is not the same as actually encountering Jesus Christ, in his love and forgiveness, in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Encourage the students to find out when the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is offered in their parishes, and then to go and celebrate this Sacrament. Also remind them that priests are happy to hear a confession by appointment. Remind the students that parishes often have special communal celebrations of this Sacrament, with priests available for individual confession, during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

Additional Activities

Charting the Prophecies of Hope

1. Prepare for this activity by making copies of the “Prophecies of Hope” chart on pages 82–83 of the *CFH*, enough for several small groups of three students each. Cut apart each chart and scramble the pieces. (Keep the title for each chart, “Location–Description–Connection to Christ” in one piece.) Put each scrambled chart in a separate box or other container. Allow the students to use Bibles for help.
2. Form the students into groups of three. Ask the students to turn to pages 82–83 and to study the chart for 5 to 10 minutes. Then direct them to close their books.
3. Give each group a scrambled chart. Explain that, at your signal, they will reconstruct the chart as best they can. As soon as a group is finished, they can call out, “Finished!” and ask that their work be checked. (All other groups should stop working until this group’s chart is verified.) If there are errors, instruct all the groups to go on working until the next group calls “Finished!” If all is correct, send the group members who constructed the chart correctly to other groups to help reconstruct their charts. Continue in this way until all charts are correct.

False Gods in the Neighborhood

1. Remind the students that Israel was in constant danger of breaking the covenant because they were influenced by their neighbors’ worship of false gods. Israel was a very small country, and it was surrounded by other nations who worshipped false gods. Israel was often tempted to abandon the true God and to worship the false gods in the neighborhood.
2. Explain that we are in a similar situation. It is not easy to keep the Ten Commandments and to live by the attitudes of the Beatitudes when others around us are influencing us in the opposite direction. We cannot always control the presence of negative influences around us, but we can take care to choose our friends carefully and to choose a positive path.
3. Ask the students to take a clean piece of paper and fold it in half horizontally. At the top of the left-hand side of the paper, ask them to write the title “Following False Gods.” On the opposite side, ask them to write “Following the One True God.” Ask them to fill in the columns for the left side, thinking of all the influences around them that would lead them in a negative direction, into “a land of darkness.” After all have finished, ask them to fill in the opposite side, listing all the influences that help them follow the path of light, love, and life—the path of the one true God.
4. When all have finished, ask them to tear the lists apart at the center. Then collect both lists separately. Ask a volunteer to read aloud the lists, first the False Gods list, and then the True God list. Transfer these lists to the board, eliminating repetitions.

5. Ask the students to think quietly about their own lives. What influences from these lists are at work in their lives—both the negative and the positive? How can they focus on the positive and eliminate the negative? (These questions can then be used for discussion.)

6. To close the discussion, read aloud Deuteronomy 30:19–20: “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

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