

Chapter 6

Mary and the Saints

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the participants consider how Mary and the saints serve as models of love and faithfulness and lead us to a deeper love of Christ and his Church. The young people explore the Communion of Saints as all the faithful, both living and dead, that ultimately are the Body of Christ.

Background for the Catechist

Have you ever had to defend Catholic teaching regarding Mary, or been challenged about praying to the saints? If so, you are not alone. Questions regarding Mary and the saints seem to top the list of issues that cause tension with our Protestant sisters and brothers. Many videos and documents that challenge Catholic teaching, often in harsh terms, can be found online.

Much of our teaching is derived from the Bible, though not directly stated in its pages. Popes have only twice exercised papal infallibility, guided by the Holy Spirit to speak about faith and morality without error, and both instances involved Mary. Mary's Immaculate Conception was declared as doctrine in 1854, and the declaration of Mary's Assumption came in 1950. This sharpened the divide between Protestants and Catholics. In addition, some of our teaching about the saints is based on books found in the Catholic Bible that are not included in the text used by Protestants.

It is tempting, then, to teach doctrine and its development as a justification of Catholic teaching on Mary and the saints. What the young people need to understand, however, is how Mary and the saints can be part of their faith and lead them to God. For young people, the important question isn't so much, *Why do we believe this?* but rather, *How can this help me know, love, and serve God better?*

A Catechist's Prayer

God, you have given us many examples of discipleship throughout the centuries, from Mary, the Mother of your Son, to Saint John Baptist de La Salle, the patron saint of educators. Help me follow their example of faithfulness and service so that I may live as your disciple in my ministry and in the world. I ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Teaching Tip

For the participants who have parents or guardians that belong to Protestant denominations, this chapter might be challenging. For example, the Lutheran tradition strongly believes that there is no need to pray for the dead. Attempts at ecumenical prayer services often fall apart over the Prayers of the Faithful and a single intercession. Be attentive to the diversity in your classroom, and contact the young people's parents if necessary.

Getting Ready

Connect! Bringing Faith to Life, pages 482–491

Core Understanding

Mary and the saints serve as models of discipleship and examples of holiness that inspire us in our journey of faith.

Materials Needed

- printed material on saints, one for each pair or small group of three
- art paper, one sheet for each pair or small group of three
- markers
- index cards, one for each participant

Key Words

- Assumption
- Communion of Saints
- Theotokos

Catechism Pillar

- The Creed

Catechism Connection

- Paragraphs 956–962
(Communion with the Saints)
- Paragraph 1195
(Memorials of Mary and the saints)
- Paragraphs 963–972
(Mary and the Church)

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Make** the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.” (*Pause.*)
2. **Pray** the following:
 - God who loves us and walks with us, we thank you for Mary and all the saints. May we be inspired by their example of faithfulness, learn from their lives of holiness, and grow closer to you through their prayers. We ask this in faithfulness and love. Amen.
3. **Invite** the participants to offer any special intentions for which they would like to pray.
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

Engage Activity (10 minutes)

1. **Instruct** the participants to quickly write the names of five friends.
2. **Direct** the young people to write the first names of their friends’ parents. If they don’t know their names, tell them to write how they address those parents.

3. **Ask** for a quick show of hands as to how many knew all the parents' first names. Call for a show of how many knew over half.
4. **Continue** with these or similar words:
 - Parents often are identified through their children. Today, we'll learn more about Mary, who is known as the mother of her child, Jesus, as well as the spiritual mother of us all.
 - Through an event called the Annunciation, an angel appeared to Mary and told her that she would become the Mother of God.
5. **Explain** that Mary is a saint and a model of holiness. Then ask the following questions:
 - Who knows what makes a saint?
 - Can anyone name some saints?
 - Why do you think these people are holy and have been canonized as saints?
6. **Conclude** with the following or similar words:
 - Let's further examine how Mary inspires us, and how the lives of the saints are examples to us on our journey of faith.

Core Content (15 minutes)

1. **Engage** the young people in a review of pages 484–490 in the *Connect!* book by dividing the material into sections, such as the following:
 - "Mary's Yes," page 484
 - "Mary, Mother of God," pages 484–485
 - "Mary, Mother of the Church," pages 486–487
 - "The Communion of Saints," pages 487–488
 - "Our Friends in Heaven," page 488
 - "The Saints," pages 489–490
2. **Assign** each young person one of the sections of material. They can read silently to themselves or gather in small groups with others that share the same assigned material. If opting for small-group reading, ask one person from each group to read the material aloud.
3. **Invite** volunteers to report key ideas from each section of the material to the large group. Be prepared to expand on the reports as necessary to ensure key concepts are covered.

Teaching Tip

If collaborative reading and reporting is not the best choice for your group, consider using one of the following options or another of your choosing:

- **At-home reading option:** Invite the young people to read the chapter prior to the session.
- **In-session individual reading option:** Ask the participants to read the chapter during the session, or read it aloud to them.
- **Presentation option:** Give a short presentation that incorporates the key points listed on the handout "Chapter 6 Summary" on page 68 of this guide.

Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

Saint Slogans

Objective: To look at how Mary and the saints serve as examples of holiness and inspire us in our journey of faith.

1. **Write**, where all can see, the following list of saints and page numbers where they can be found in the *Connect!* book:
 - Mary (the Mother of Jesus), pages 483–487
 - Saint Francis of Assisi, page 43
 - Saint Josephine Bakhita, page 460
 - Saint Augustine, page 325
 - Saint Elizabeth, page 338
 - Saint John Baptist de La Salle, page 521
 - Saint Peter Claver, page 201
 - Saint Teresa Ávila, page 211
2. **Arrange** the participants into pairs or small groups of three. Ask each pair or group to choose a saint to explore and to announce that name to the large group, avoiding any repeats if possible. Make assignments if necessary.
3. **Direct** each group to read about their saint and identify three important facts or characteristics about that person.
4. **Instruct** each group to use their facts to develop a motto or slogan about their saint. It should be one sentence that explains how that person was faithful or serves as a model today.
5. **Distribute** the art paper and markers, and instruct the groups to create a visual representation of their person of faith, including a simple physical representation of the saint (drawing, icon, sketch, image, symbol, etc.) and the chosen motto or slogan.
6. **Invite** the small groups to share their saint with the large group, showing their image, identifying one thing that makes their saint great, and sharing their motto or slogan.
7. **Collect** the artwork and display it around the room.

Session Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

1. **Invite** volunteers to share key things they learned during the session. Ensure that the following point is made:
 - Mary and the saints serve as models of discipleship and examples of holiness that inspire us in our journey of faith.
2. **Distribute** the index cards. Instruct the participants to write the following question on their cards:
 - How can I live like a saint today?

3. **Direct** the young people to take the cards home and refer to them a few times during the week. Ask them to answer the question for themselves or to share their cards with friends or family members and discuss their answers with them.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Direct** the participants to find “Connect with God” on page 483 in their books. Invite everyone to pray this prayer aloud together, and provide an opportunity for each participant to lift up someone in need of strength, healing, or guidance for the intercession of Mary.
2. **Close** by making the Sign of the Cross.

Optional Activities

Prayer Teams (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

none

Objective: To offer a specific example of the Communion of Saints as it applies to a participant's life.

1. **Project** or display the phrases "Communion of Saints" and "Our Friends in Heaven" where all can see. Ask a volunteer to define the *Communion of Saints* in their own words. If necessary, direct the participants to page 487 in their books or to the glossary definition on page 579. Emphasize that the fullness of the Body of Christ includes both the living and the dead. Then ask a volunteer to explain why the saints are called our friends. If prompting is necessary, ask the young people to think about what our friends do for us.
2. **Direct** the participants to think about someone or something in need of prayer, whether it is a situation involving poverty or war or someone in need of help. List their responses where all can see.
3. **Arrange** the young people into small groups of three or four. Instruct the groups to each identify a person or issue in need of prayer, using the list compiled earlier. Then each group member is to develop their own prayer team to pray for that concern, following these steps: On a sheet of paper, the participants should indicate the prayer concern and then list their prayer team by naming themselves, a living friend, and a deceased friend or family member. After each name, the participants should write one or two sentences explaining their choice of that person for their team. When the young people have created their individual prayer teams, instruct them to share the names of the people on their prayer team with their group members.
4. **Direct** each group to brainstorm a list of saints they are familiar with, and together agree on one holy person that they all will add to their personal prayer teams. Instruct each participant to write the name of that saint on their paper and, on their own, write a sentence explaining why they chose that saint.
5. **Reconvene** the large group, and have one participant from each group come forward and write down their group's prayer concern and the name of the saint they have asked to join their prayer teams. Ask a second group member to explain the choice of that saint while the first person writes this explanation where all can see. Conclude by emphasizing that the Communion of Saints includes the living and the dead, the official saints, and the unofficial saints.

Chapter 6 Summary

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- 1.** An angel announced to Mary, a young woman of Nazareth, that she was to be the Mother of the Son of God.
- 2.** Mary consented with faith and trust. By saying yes to the Incarnation, Mary cooperated in all the work that her Son, Jesus, was to accomplish.
- 3.** Elizabeth, Mary's cousin, recognized Mary as the Mother of God, the Theotokos.
- 4.** On the cross, Jesus gave Mary to us as our mother. Thus, Mary is also called Mother of the Church.
- 5.** Because of her faithfulness to Jesus and her love, Mary is our model of holiness. She leads us to Jesus.
- 6.** Mary and the saints are our friends in Heaven. They hear our prayers and are one with God in Heaven.
- 7.** We can also ask our own loved ones who have died to bring our needs to God.
- 8.** The saints show us what it is to live a Christian life of holiness and love. Their examples can inspire us to do the same in our own lives.
- 9.** We celebrate the canonized saints on memorials and feasts throughout the year.
- 10.** All of us, both living and dead, make up the Church, the whole Communion of Saints.

