

Chapter 6

Faith: Responding to God

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the participants recognize the gift of faith as a belief in God that invites a response to God's call with trust in God alone. They see faith as believing and accepting that God made himself known to us through words and actions, most fully in the person of Jesus. Faith is something that guides our entire lives and requires us to live in response to that belief.

Background for the Catechist

Have you ever received a good-faith estimate on a car or on an insurance quote or heard someone say they were acting in good faith? Both a good-faith estimate and acting in good faith demand trust in the truth of what is being quoted or a belief in the actions of others. In both cases, we get a glimpse of what we mean by "faith in God."

In both cases, there is also a suggestion of "right relationship" that allows for trust or belief in the action taken and the people involved. Similarly, our belief and trust in the promises of God revealed through his Church are dependent on the strength of the relationship we have with God. And like any relationship, the stronger it is, the easier it is to trust and believe. Faith in God, however, does not and cannot stop simply with belief and trust. It must also mature into action. For faith to be genuine, or authentic, it must be actualized! If a husband or wife assures their spouse and children of their love for them but does not act on their behalf, then the husband or wife's sincerity would certainly be called into question. Action is intimately connected with faith. An old song sums this up nicely in its title "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love."

Catechist's Prayer

Lord Jesus, increase my faith! Help me desire a deeper, richer, more meaningful relationship with you that I might grow in love and service to you and the young people in my care. Open my heart to hearing your voice throughout my day, and grant me the courage to respond in faith. Amen.

Teaching Tip

For middle schoolers, faith in God is an abstract topic and can be difficult to grasp. Make it more real by sharing what it means in your life and the lives of others you know. This is a great opportunity for a guest to come and share what it means in their life. Consider inviting a priest or religious person in for this. Be sure to emphasize that faith needs to be nurtured through reading the Bible, praying, participating in the Church, and participating in the sacraments in order to grow and flourish.

Getting Ready

Connect! Bringing Faith to Life, pages 54–63

Core Understanding

Faith is believing and doing—believing what God has revealed to us and living our lives in response to that belief.

Materials Needed

- items for creating an obstacle course
- a long rope or cord
- blindfolds, one for every two participants
- index cards, one for each participant

Key Words

- creed
- faith
- monotheistic

Catechism Pillar

- The Creed

Catechism Connection

- Paragraphs 84–100, especially 94–95 (The Interpretation of the Heritage of Faith)
- Paragraphs 142–184, especially 153–158 (Man’s Response to God)

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:
 - Lord Jesus, increase our faith! Help us desire a deeper, more meaningful relationship with you. Help us grow in love and service to you. Open our hearts to hearing your voice, and grant us the courage to respond in faith. 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. **Read**, or tell in your own words, the story in the *Connect!* book on pages 56–57 about the little girl who leaps from a height, knowing that her mother will catch her. Highlight that the girl’s leap was an act of faith in another person.
2. **Arrange** the young people into pairs or small groups of three. Invite them to identify a real or fictional scenario about someone their age who does something that demonstrates an act of faith in another person.

3. **Invite** someone from each group to share its scenario with the whole group.
4. **Ask** the participants to share their thoughts in response to the following questions:
 - How is a person with faith in God like the little girl who leaps, knowing that her mother will catch her?
 - How is a person with faith in God like the young people in the scenarios shared with the group?
 - How is having faith in God unlike having faith in another person?

Core Content (15 minutes)

1. **Engage** the young people in a review of pages 55–62 in the *Connect!* book by dividing the material into sections, such as the following:
 - “What Is Faith?,” first two paragraphs on pages 55–56
 - “Faith Is a Gift Freely Chosen,” page 57
 - “Faith Is Believing,” page 58
 - “Faith Is Trusting,” pages 58–59
 - “Faith Is Doing,” pages 60–61
 - “Faith in God Alone,” pages 61–62
2. **Assign** each young person one of the sections of material. They can read silently to themselves or gather in small groups with others who 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 60 of this guide.

Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

Walking in Faith

Objective: To reflect on the roles of trust and distractions on the journey of faith.

1. **Explain** in these or similar words:

- Faith can be a difficult thing at times. We journey through this life trying to be guided by the Holy Spirit, but often we are blind to many of the difficulties in life. Sometimes events in our life end in pain or suffering. We and others suffer hardships and loss.
- We're going to do an activity that requires a great deal of faith. You're going to have to trust and believe as you continue your journey to Jesus.

Teaching Tip

See "What Do You Think?" on page 56 in the *Connect!* book. You might want to note that throughout their journey, the participants may have many questions they might want to ask—and they should feel free to do so!

2. **Create** an obstacle course in the room or outside. Run a rope or long cord through the course to indicate the pathway the young people are to follow.
3. **Arrange** the participants into three groups. Call one group "The Spirits," another group "The Believers," and the third group "The Distractors." Instruct The Believers to put their blindfolds on and not to peek! The blindfolds should go on before the participants ever see the obstacle course. The Spirits are to provide guidance to The Believers as they try to make their way through the obstacle course. The Distractors are to make it difficult to hear The Spirits, providing misinformation on what action should be taken and providing stumbling blocks to The Believers. The Believers can make their way through the course individually or in small groups as time allows.
4. **Invite** volunteers from The Believers to briefly describe their experience.
5. **Conclude** by making connections between the activity and the journey of faith, such as this journey is not an easy one, and there are many distractions. Believers must listen carefully to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, trust in the truthfulness of the directions, and act on what they believe is true.

Session Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

1. **Invite** volunteers to share key things they learned during the session. Ensure that the following points are made:
 - Faith is believing and doing.
 - Faith is believing what God has revealed to us.
 - Faith means putting our beliefs into action.

2. **Distribute** the index cards. Instruct the participants to write the following question on their cards:
 - What questions do I have for God?
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 55 in their books. Invite them to pray the prayer aloud together.
2. **Close** by making the Sign of the Cross.

Teaching Tip

The closing prayer makes a reference to the Parable of the Mustard Seed. If the young people are likely to be unfamiliar with it, consider adding the reading of Matthew 13:31–32 to the prayer.

Optional Activities

What Faith Means in My Life (15 minutes)

Materials Needed

none

Objective: To learn from an invited guest's reflections on the meaning of faith.

1. **Invite** a high-school-aged parishioner or young adult, or a priest or religious person, to speak with the participants.
2. **Introduce** the invited guest, and give them about 10 minutes to address the young people.
3. **Facilitate** a few minutes of conversation by inviting the participants to ask questions, and raise questions of your own as well, directed at either the young people or the guest.
4. **Direct** the participants to join you in thanking the guest.

Teaching Tip

If opting for this activity, invite a guest in advance of the session. Ask the guest to prepare to speak for about 10 minutes about what faith means in their life, how they nurture it, and how they put it into action. Encourage the speaker to incorporate a story.

Shield of Faith (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Bibles, one for each participant
- crayons or colored pencils, several for each participant
- art paper, one sheet for each participant

Objective: To illustrate the importance of faith for getting through life's difficult times.

1. **Introduce** the activity with these or similar words:
 - Faith is believing in, trusting in, and acting on our relationship with God. Jesus teaches us that faith can be the size of a mustard seed.
 - In his Letter to the Ephesians, Paul tells us to put on the armor of God to protect ourselves as we await the day of salvation. Ephesians lists the armor that we might need, including the shield of faith! The shield of faith will protect us and keep our faith strong.
2. **Distribute** the Bibles, and instruct the participants to find Ephesians 6:10–17. Ask a volunteer to read it aloud.
3. **Distribute** the paper and the crayons or colored pencils. Draw the outline of a shield where all can see, and ask the participants to draw the same outline on their papers.



4. **Instruct** the young people to personalize their shields with images or symbols that are meaningful to them and their family. They might draw symbols of the Trinity, the sacraments, Scripture, or family. Invite them to write the text of Ephesians 6:16 below the shield.
5. **Conclude** by inviting volunteers to describe images or symbols they added to their shields.

Meeting Mother Teresa (15 minutes)

Materials Needed

- the video “Who Is Mother Teresa? Find out here with our Top 10 Fun Facts” (3:19), by Educational Videos for Students, available on YouTube (*optional*)

Objective: To learn about Mother Teresa and to reflect on the importance of doing small things with great love.

1. **Introduce** Mother Teresa by showing the video “Who Is Mother Teresa? Find out here with our Top 10 Fun Facts” or by inviting the participants to take turns reading “People of Faith: Saint Mother Teresa” on page 63 in their books.
2. **Invite** the young people to identify and take turns sharing information about Mother Teresa that stood out for them in their reading or viewing.
3. **Highlight** that hearing about the lives of the Church’s saints can sometimes feel overwhelming. Ask if anyone feels that way when they think of Mother Teresa as a model for how to live as a Christian.
4. **Read** aloud “Living the Gospel” on page 62 in the *Connect!* book.
5. **Repeat** the final question: “What is a small thing you can do with great love?” Invite the participants to think of one thing they can do this coming week.

Chapter 6 Summary

Responding to God

1. Faith is believing in God, but it is also accepting that God made himself known through Jesus Christ, and living our lives based on that belief.
2. Faith is entrusting our lives to God.
3. Faith is a gift from God, yet it is also a choice we make.
4. We express our faith when we proclaim the Nicene Creed. Faith is an individual response to God, and also an act of the entire Church.
5. Faith is built on belief and leads to trust. In faith, we allow God to guide our lives, leading to joy and happiness in this life and in the next.
6. Faith means acting on what we believe and doing small things with great love.
7. Faith means believing in one God, and allowing nothing else to take the place of God in our lives.
8. We have come from God and, through Jesus Christ and his Church, we can return to God.
9. We can be like Christ by doing God's will—that is, choosing good and working for good in all circumstances.

