

# *Catechist Manual*

## *Ecclesia Called by Name*



## *One: Called by Name to Witness*

**Aim:** To reflect on our calling to be witnesses of Christ to the world in order to help the young people recognize the need to make right choices based on the values of the Gospel.

**Focus:** Prepare a small table as a focus.  
On the table you could put:

- A Green Cloth (for Ordinary Time)
- A Large Candle as a “Christ-Light”
- A Bible
- A Plant with some Seeds and Pods around the base (Symbolizing our challenge to plant seeds of beauty in the world)

**Prayer:** Light the “Christ-Light” candle

- Read Mathew 5:3-12 slowly and prayerfully
- Say the Prayer for peace, attributed to St Francis:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand,  
To be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
It is in dying that we are born to eternal  
life.

**Story:** About a hundred years ago a man picked up the morning paper and, to his horror, read his own obituary! The newspaper had reported the death of the wrong man. Like most of us, he relished the idea of finding out what people would say about him after he died. He read past the bold caption which read “Dynamite King Dies”, to the text itself. He read along until he was taken aback by the description of him as a “merchant of death.”

He was the inventor of dynamite and had amassed a great fortune from the manufacture of weapons of destruction. But he was moved by this description. Did he really want to be known as a “merchant of death”? It was at that moment that a healing power greater than the destructive force of dynamite came over him. It was his hour of conversion, his call. From that point on, he devoted his energy and money to works of peace and human betterment. Today, of course, he is best remembered not as a “merchant of death”, but as the founder of the Nobel Peace Prize, Alfred Nobel.

**Questions:**

- What was Alfred Nobel’s moment of conversion?
- What phrase in Alfred Nobel’s mistaken obituary horrified him?
- In what way did his life change?

### **What does the Catechism say?**

**Q.** What are the Beattitudes? Why are they important? What Have they got to do with our happiness? (Youcat 283, 284, 285)

**Q.** What is peace? (Youcat 395)

**Q.** What is freedom? (Youcat 286, 287)

### **What does the Bible say?**

**Q.** What is the foundation of all Christian right-living? (John 15:4-5)

**Q.** What are the rewards for right-living? (Matthew 5:3-12)

**Q.** What is the source of our dignity? What is our destiny? (1John3:1-3)

**You Chat:** Mother Teresa once said:

*For he alone is the way that is worth following,  
The light that is worth lighting,  
The life that is worth living,  
And the love that is worth loving.*

What is she saying about our daily lives as Christians?

Do you agree with her?

### **Activity:**

**1.** Look at the Spiritual and the Corporal Works of Mercy (the traditional ways Christians have used to express love) listed below. After having thought about them, tick one from each list that you will try to act on in this coming week:

#### **SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY**

- Counsel the doubtful
- Instruct the ignorant
- Admonish sinners
- Comfort the afflicted
- Forgive offenses

- Bear wrongs patiently
- Pray for the living and the dead

**CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY**

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Visit the imprisoned
- Shelter the homeless
- Visit the sick
- Bury the dead

2. Make a list of all the “idols” (things that people count as more important than God), that a Christian must guard against in today’s world.

3. Spend some time thinking about people who perhaps need you to notice them and care about them in each of the categories below. Think about what needs they might have:

- **Family**

\_\_\_\_\_

- **Parish Community**

\_\_\_\_\_

- **Civic Community (Your neighbourhood)**\_\_\_\_\_

- **Country**\_\_\_\_\_

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- **The World**\_\_\_\_\_

(This could be done as a reflective exercise with background music)

## **Celebration:**

- Light the 'Christ-Light' candle on your focus table
- **Leader:** Let us pray a prayer for peace  
Loving God, teach us to be people of peace:
- **Side A:** Teach us to love one another, that there may be  
Peace in our families
- **Side B:** Teach us to strengthen one another, that there may be peace in our schools.
- **Side A:** Teach us to live and work justly,  
That there may be peace in our city
- **Side B:** Teach us to give equal respect and opportunity,  
That there may be peace in our nation.
- **Side A:** Teach us to see that people in all countries  
Have food, freedom and safety  
That there may be peace in our world.
- **Side B:** Teach us to be peacemakers in all that we do.
- **Leader:** Lord, teach us through the power of your Spirit,  
Now and forever. Amen.
- Sing: Make me a Channel of your Peace (478 –  
Celebration Hymnal for Everyone)

## *Two: Called by Name to Mission*

**Aim:** To reflect on the calling to the Priesthood and Religious Life in order to help the young people understand the nature of this calling and to see that this calling reflects everyone's calling to mission and service

**Focus:** Prepare a small table as a focus. On your table you could put:

- a Green Cloth (for Ordinary Time)
- A Large Candle as a "Christ-Light"
- A Bible
- A statue or icon of Christ the Good Shepherd

**Prayer:** Light the "Christ-Light" candle

- Read **1 Corinthians 13** slowly
- Pray the following prayer or any other suitable prayer:

Thank you, Lord, for our priests...

(Here mention the names of all the priests familiar to your group)...

For those who believe in us, urging us to be more.

For those who comfort us when we fail

For those who are always there for us through the trials and celebrations of life

Thank you for those whose lives make our lives holy

For those whose love and service inspires us and for those whose holiness draws us closer to you. Amen.

**Story:** The story is told about a bishop of the last century and how he got his call, his vocation. He was a noted evangelizer, making it his special outreach to cynics, unbelievers and scoffers. He liked to tell the story of a young man who used to

stand outside the cathedral shouting derogatory remarks at people entering to worship. He would call them fools and all kinds of names. The people tried to ignore him but it was difficult. So finally the parish priest went outside to confront the young man, who simply ranted and rave against everything the priest told him. Finally the priest addressed the young scoffer. "Look, let's get this over with once and for all. I'm going to make a deal with you. I'm going to put you on a dare and I bet you can't do it."

The young man shot back, "I can do anything you propose, you black-robed wimp!"

"Fine," said the priest all I ask you to do is to come into the sanctuary with me and I want you to stare at the figure of Christ and I want you to scream at the very top of your lungs, as loud as you can, "Christ died on the cross for me and I don't care one bit."

So the young man screamed as loud as he could, looking at the figure, "Christ died on the cross for me and I don't care one bit."

The priest said, "Very good. Now do it again."

And again the young man screamed, with a little more hesitancy, "Christ died on the cross for me and I don't care one bit."

"You're almost done now," said the priest. "One more time."

The young man raised his fist, kept looking at the statue, but the words wouldn't come. He just could not look at the face of Christ and say that anymore.

The real punch line came when, after he told the story, the bishop said, "I was that young man. That young man, that defiant young man was me. I thought I didn't need God, but found out that I did."

### **Questions:**

- To what kinds of people did the bishop have a special calling?
- Why do you think he had this particular calling?
- What was the moment of conversion in the bishop's life?
- What did the bishop discover about himself in that moment?

### **What does the Catechism say?**

**Q.** Who can receive the sacrament of Holy Orders? (Youcat 256)

**Q.** What happens in priestly ordination? (Youcat 254)

**Q.** What are the three degrees of the sacrament of Holy Orders? (Youcat 251)

### **What does the Bible say?**

**Q.** What is John telling the apostles about their priestly vocation in **John 13: 1 – 17**?

### **You Chat:**

St John Vianney, (the patron saint of parish priests), says, "If someone wants to destroy religion, he begins by attacking priests"

Do you agree with this?

Why do you think it might be so?

### **Activity:**

**1.** Write down the name for each of the following:

- The Pope
- The Catholic Archbishop of Cape Town
- The Head of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference
- The Dean of your Deanery
- Your own Parish Priest
- Your Deacon (if you have one)

**2.** Write down the name of the patron saint of parish priests.

(See 'You Chat', above)

See if you can find out a few facts about his life.

3. Write a prayer for priestly vocations, for people who will answer the call to serve Christ's Church, in holiness of life, as ordained ministers.
4. Write down 3 ways in which you feel called to share in Christ's Priesthood through mission and service.

**Celebration:**

- Give each participant a votive candle or tea-light
- Light the 'Christ-Light' candle in front of your statue/icon of the Good Shepherd on your focus table
- Share some of the prayers, (written during the activity), for priestly vocations
- Let each person light their own candle from the "Christ Light" and think about how they feel called to share in Christ's mission of service.
- Sing: I, the Lord of Sea and Sky (285 – Celebration Hymnal for Everyone, vs 1 + 2)

### *Three: Called by Name to Communion*

**Aim:** To reflect on the calling to Married Life to help the young people understand the nature of this calling and to see that this calling reflects everyone's calling to communion with God and each other.

**Focus:** Prepare a small table as a focus. On your table you could put:

- A Green Cloth (for Ordinary Time)
- A Large Candle as a "Christ-Light"
- A Bible
- Grapes (Wine) and Bread as a symbol of communion (at-one-with)

**Prayer:** Light the 'Christ-Light' candle

- Read **John 15:12-17** slowly
- Pray the following prayer or any other suitable prayer:

Leader: Let us pray that we may always be mindful of those whom we love and be grateful for the blessings that they bring to our lives...

All: Lord, fill us with your Spirit of care and kindness

Leader: May we honour your presence as it is shown in our families and in our friends...

All: Lord, fill us with your Spirit of care and kindness

Leader: That those who annoy or disturb us may find words of welcome on our lips...

All: Lord, fill us with your Spirit of care and kindness

Leader: May we find ways to communicate messages of greeting and friendship to those who are lonely or hurting...

All: Lord, fill us with your Spirit of care and kindness

Leader: Let us now share a sign of peace and commitment to the task of being a sign of God's love in our families, in our parish and in the world.

(Invite the participants to share a sign of peace with each other).

**Story:** Two centuries ago there lived a very famous German-Jewish philosopher named Moses Mendelssohn. Moses Mendelssohn was brilliant and compassionate, but he had one flaw. He was a small, hunchbacked man. Hunchback that he was, he fell in love with a beautiful and charming young woman named Gretchen, the daughter of a prosperous banker. Several months after he had met Gretchen, Mendelssohn visited her father. He asked him, very cautiously, how his daughter might feel about the possibility of marrying him, for he had come to love her very much. "Please, tell me the truth," Mendelssohn insisted.

The father hesitated and then replied, "The truth is that the girl is frightened of you because... because..."

Mendelssohn finished his sentence for him, "... because I am a hunchback?"

"Yes," said the father, "because you are a hunchback."

Mendelssohn paused. Then after some silence he asked permission to see the daughter on the pretext that he wanted to say farewell to her. The father agreed. Mendelssohn went up-stairs and found Gretchen in a room where she was busy with needlework. She avoided looking at him during the conversation, which Mendelssohn eventually directed to the subject of marriage.

In the course of the conversation, the young woman asked him if he really believed in the old saying that "marriages are made in heaven."

"Of course," he replied. "And while we're on that subject, I might as well tell you that something unusual happened to me. As you know, when boys are born the angels in heaven call out for all to hear, "This little boy is destined to have this special girl for a wife. It is decreed from all eternity and no one may change it." So when I

was born, the angels made the usual announcements about me and the name of my future wife was announced. But then the angels paused and added, “But alas, Mendelssohn’s wife will have a terrible hump on her back!”

“Then I shouted out loud before the court of heaven. I cried, ‘Oh, Lord, no. A girl who is hunchbacked will very easily become bitter and hard, and the object of awful jokes and hurts. No, Lord, a girl should be beautiful. Oh, Lord, please, please give the hump to me and let her be well formed.’ And you know what, Gretchen? God heard my prayer and I was glad. I am that boy and you are that girl.”

Gretchen was deeply moved. She saw Mendelssohn in a whole new way, and so she became his faithful and loving wife and they had a long and loving marriage.

Moses gave his wholeness to ransom Gretchen, Gretchen gave her trust to ransom Moses, and both, in the exchange and in the sharing, found love.

### **Questions:**

- Why did Gretchen’s father hesitate when Mendelssohn asked for her hand in marriage?
- What helped Gretchen to see Mendelssohn in a whole new way?
- What do you think “Marriages are made in heaven” means? Do you agree with this saying?

### **What does the Catechism say about Marriage?**

**Q.** How do a man and a woman come to be married? (Youcat 260-261)

**Q.** Why can a marriage not be broken? (Youcat 263)

**Q.** What threatens marriage? What renews marriage? (Youcat 264)

### **What does the Bible say?**

**Q.** What inspired advice does St Paul give to married couples in **Ephesians 5:21-33**?

**Q.** How does Ruth's promise to her mother-in-law, in **Ruth 1:16 – 17**, echo the promise that a Christian couple make to each other in marriage?

**Q.** What does the story of the Wedding Feast of Cana, in **John 2:1-11** say to us about Marriage?

**You Chat:**

The writer and philosopher Francois Mauriac, once wrote, "To love someone means to be the only one to see a miracle that is invisible to others."

What do you think is the meaning of this statement?

Can you see a connection to the story of Moses Mendelssohn, read at the beginning of this session?

Do you agree with this statement? Why?

**Activity:**

1. Imagine you were creating a Christian Dating Service. Compose a list of 10 questions you think would be important to help show what a person is really like.
2. Tick off which of the following you think are good reasons for marrying. If an engaged couple expressed these, would you permit them to marry if you were the priest doing the interviewing?

**Why are you getting married?**

- To escape the hassles from my parents
- To escape boredom
- Because I love my fiancée for who she is
- Because I am aging and no one else better has come along
- Because he will fulfill me as a person
- Because I need someone
- Because of pregnancy
- To love my fiancée wholeheartedly
- Because of my fiancée's good looks
- Because our friends are all getting married
- To have and raise a family
- To escape loneliness
- Because he/she is my best friend

- Because it would be tough to live without him/her
- 3. Ask your parish priest what a couple needs to do in order to get married in your parish.
- 4. Interview a successful happily married couple. Write a short story about their marriage together and try and say why it was both successful and happy. (Catechists might like to get a happily married couple to come in and tell their story and answer questions).
- 5. Write down a list of 5 of the most important qualities you would look for in a good friend. (Make the point that we all belong to the family of God, with God as our Father).

**Celebration:**

- Give each participant a votive candle or a tea-light
- Light the 'Christ-Light' candle on your focus table
- Invite each participant to think of someone in their own family or in the family of God who needs special prayers
- Participants are invited to light their candle from the 'Christ-Light' candle and say their prayer for that person or those people, either sharing it aloud with the group, or silently in the depth of their hearts
- Sing: Into one we all are gathered through the love of Christ (312 – Celebration Hymnal for Everyone, vs 1 + 2)



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