

Unpacking the Creed with Older Children and Teens

For the Year of Faith, the Pastoral Offices of the Diocese of Hamilton created a booklet, *The Faith We Believe: Unpacking the Creed*, to help people remember the fullness and beauty of what we profess every time we say the Creed. We certainly hope that adults and young people across the diocese find the reflections helpful.

The booklet itself can be used with intermediate or high school students. The following suggestions are to assist those working with these young people at home, in schools, or in parish settings, to make the ideas more accessible. In the sections below, we refer directly to each chapter of the booklet giving page references and pointing to particular insights from that chapter that may be especially helpful for reflection and discussion with young people.

In a class or youth group setting, you may also want to use the rituals found in the Facilitator's Guide.

Creation – Chapter 1

The image of the map used in the booklet may be helpful to this age range. (See page 7) Choose a city like Toronto. Have any of the young people been there? Have any of them seen a map of Toronto? How would the map be helpful? Would looking at a map be the same thing as going there?

How does this relate to the Creed?

Can they think of a way in which the Creed (or the study of the Creed) is helpful to their faith? In what ways is it not enough just to know the Creed?

Incarnation – Chapter 2

Young people usually have very positive feelings about Christmas. As they get older, there is an opportunity to help them deepen their appreciation of the mystery

of Christ's coming into the world. Pay particular attention to the author's explanation of the Incarnation on page 10. What does it mean to us that Jesus, the Son of God, became human? Remember that part of the mystery is that Jesus shows us what it is to be fully human. What does it mean that his mission, from the moment of his birth, was to save us? How can we see links between Christmas and Easter?

Think about the Christmas hymn, "Hark! The herald angels sing". Listen to the following lines:

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new born King,
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"

Later the song says:

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth,
born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new born King!"

We may have heard this hymn every Christmas and yet not thought very much about these words. Now is a wonderful opportunity to reflect.

Paschal Mystery – Chapter 3

The Creed booklet talks about the meaning of the stone being rolled away from Jesus' tomb. (See page 15) The ritual in the Facilitator's Guide picks up on this theme. The photo in the booklet for this chapter is a stained glass window depicting the women arriving at the tomb to find it empty. Read the account of Mary Magdalene finding the tomb empty and speaking to the "gardener" who turns out to be Jesus. She travelled with him, ate with him, listened to his teaching, but she does not recognize him ... until he speaks her name. (John 20: 11-18)

Do we recognize Jesus? Have we spent time getting to know him but still miss him when he shows up in our lives? Do we know he is always calling our name?

The End Things / The Ascension – Chapter 4

The conclusion of this chapter speaks of the meaning of the dismissal at Mass. (See page 19) Mass is always a gathering and a sending. The final reflection question in the booklet is helpful here:

"We are dismissed at Mass with the words, 'Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.' Does my life glorify the Lord?" (p. 20)

Young people often have a keen sense of social justice issues. How can they relate their good works to the dismissal at Mass? How do they understand the ability of the Mass to nourish and strengthen us to do good works? The quote on page 20 from the Mass for the Feast of the Assumption says "where the Head has gone before in glory, the Body is called to follow in hope."

The prayer from the Feast of the Assumption helps us to see we, as a church, are on a journey; we are a pilgrim church. How do young people experience the Body of Christ? Do they believe/understand that they are an important part of that Body?

The Church and the Holy Spirit – Chapter 5

There is a beautiful description of the work of the Holy Spirit in the booklet. (See page 23) These are only a few suggestions of how the Holy Spirit surprises, empowers, inspires, confronts, intercedes, and comforts.

What signs of the Holy Spirit are visible in their own lives, the lives of their community, or the world?

If they have been Confirmed, or are about to be, reflect on how they can use the gifts of the Spirit for the good of the world and the church. Note the author's caution on page 23, "Many of the Spirit's gifts are so simple that we often fail to recognize them as gifts." Use the fruits of the Spirit as one way of discerning the Spirit's work. (See Galatians 5: 22-23)