

CONFIRMATION PREP

STAGE 2: THE CREED

To be completed at home by the confirmation candidate and their sponsor(s)

Create a Formed account:

1. Go to formed.org
2. Click “sign up”
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4. Type in “St. James Catholic Church, Conway, SC” & choose our parish
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7. You now have full access to all the amazing Catholic resources that Formed offers! We encourage you to look at all the resources available and use them!



To access the The Creed: Symbolon for YDisciple program:

1. Sign into your Formed account
2. Click “programs” at the top of the screen
3. Click “youth programs”
4. Click on the “YDisciple” program
5. Click “The Creed: Symbolon for YDisciple”
 - Make sure NOT to click the “Living the Creed: Symbolon for YDisciple” program
6. Scroll down; all videos & resources are included on this screen



THE CREED: SESSION 1

THE JOURNEY OF FAITH

Introduction: *With this session, we are starting our journey into the heart of the Catholic faith. Like pilgrims of old, we are embarking on a sacred excursion. Over the next several weeks, we will be learning about many aspects of Catholicism—such as the Bible, the person of Jesus Christ, the Church, and the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

Opening Prayer:

“O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” —Psalm 139:1–4, 13–14

Theme Verse:

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” -Hebrews 11:1

Video & Reflection Questions: Please pull up the corresponding video for this session. After each segment of the video, reflect, with your sponsor, on the questions below. Make sure to write down your answers for the highlighted questions.

Watch the first video segment of Session 1. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

We heard in the video how, just like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we are all on a journey of faith.

- Why do you think two of Jesus’ disciples didn’t recognize Him on the road to Emmaus?
- The truth is that so many of us live our daily lives not thinking much about Jesus. In this sense, our own eyes are kept from seeing Him in our midst.
 - Can you describe an experience like these two disciples where your heart was on fire for God?

Watch the second video segment of Session 1. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

The Holy Trinity is revealed to us through Jesus Christ. In other words, God wanted us to know, as the Catechism says, that “God is one but not solitary [CCC 254].”

- Why do you think God wants you to know that He is not solitary?
- How does the love between a husband and wife reflect the inner life of God?

Watch the third video segment of Session 1. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

- What does it mean to your life that God is a God of love?
- How would you explain the trinity to someone?

- James 2:19 reads: ***“You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe— and shudder.”***
 - James is saying that demons believe in God and yet do not have faith. **How is faith more than believing?**

Watch the fourth video segment of Session 1.

- Jesus is calling you and inviting you to experience life to the fullest.
 - What do you think that looks like?
- **What is one new thing you learned from this session?**

Weekly Commitment: This week’s commitment is to ***choose a time each day to reflect on the quote below from the Catechism.*** Sit quietly asking for the grace to receive God’s loving gaze and speak to Him as a friend, sharing your thoughts, feelings, and desires. Afterward, share what you experienced in this prayer time with someone close to you, like your sponsor.

“God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange.” —CCC 221

Closing Prayer:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anoints my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” —Psalm 23:1–6

Please write or type your responses to the highlighted questions and return them to Mrs. Taylor no later than February 18. You can e-mail them to her at tlilly@stjamesconway.org OR by dropping them off to her at church.

***Be sure to title it “Session 1” and write the questions AND answer(s).**

THE CREED: SESSION 2

DIVINE REVELATION

Introduction: *This session, we are going to talk about how God, the all-powerful Creator of the universe, loves us so much that He wants to make Himself and His will known to us. How astonishing it is that God is so in love with each of us that He not only sent His Son to redeem us, but He has promised that the teachings of Jesus will be preserved until the end of time!*

Opening Prayer:

Father in heaven, give us the power of Your grace that we might always walk in the way You have revealed through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Free us from the darkness of our own desires and bring us into the light of Your truth. Form our lives according to Your will, and mold our hearts by Your love. Grant that we might always be open and receptive to the guidance of Your Church. We ask this in the name of the One who has promised to be with us always, now and forever. Amen.

Theme Verse:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” —John 3:16

Video & Reflection Questions: **Please pull up the corresponding video for this session. After each segment of the video, reflect, with your sponsor, on the questions below. Make sure to write down your answers for the highlighted questions.**

Watch the first video segment of Session 2. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

There are an estimated 1.2 billion Catholics today, and they’re found in nearly every part of the world. In this session we will discuss Jesus’ plan to guide His kingdom—His family—here on earth.

- There are many people who say they believe in God and that God is love. However, they are hesitant to say that we can know with confidence who God is and what His will is for our lives. Why do you think this is so?
- What is inconsistent with this line of reasoning: “There is a God, God is love, but we can’t know with confidence who God is and what His will is for us”?
- Simply stated, divine Revelation means “God has spoken truth to us for our salvation,” and the Church understands her mission to safeguard and communicate this revealed truth.
 - How do the “keys of the kingdom” given from Jesus to Peter demonstrate this mission?

Watch the second video segment of Session 2. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

Putting a veil on the bride goes way back to ancient Judaism. According to the Jews, that which is veiled is holy. The bride's femininity, her beauty, her virginity, her fertility, is holy. She is unveiled only in covenant love with her husband.

- What would you say to someone who told you that they didn't need the Church, only the Bible?
- Why did St. Paul use the method he did to establish Christian communities?

Watch the third video segment of Session 2. Pause the video when it says, "scene break".

- What does it mean that Jesus is the fullness of God's Revelation of Himself to us?
- Jesus was recognized as a great teacher. It has been said, "Jesus was no greater teacher than when He was hanging on the cross." What do you think that means?
- Catholics believe there is a difference between Sacred Tradition and the tradition of men. What do you think is the difference?

Watch the fourth video segment of Session 2.

St. Paul writes that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" [1 Timothy 2:4].

- How is it possible for us "to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"?
- What is one new thing you learned from this session?

Weekly Commitment: For this week's commitment take Philippians 2:5-8 into a quiet spot and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you three characteristics of who Jesus is from the scripture as you read. Write down the three characteristics and try to imitate them during your week.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, we ask You to reveal who You are to us a little more each day so that we can continue to grow in our relationship with You by knowing more about You. We ask that as we know more about You, we would be courageous in living out the truth of the Gospel. Amen.

Please write or type your responses to the highlighted questions and return them to Mrs. Taylor no later than February 25. You can e-mail them to her at tlilly@stjamesconway.org OR by dropping them off to her at church.

***Be sure to title it "Session 2" and write the questions AND answer(s).**

THE CREED: SESSION 3

THE BIBLE

Introduction: Did you know that the Bible is also your story? Within its 73 books, the Bible outlines God's plan for salvation, starting with Creation; moving through His interaction with His chosen people, Israel; and finally culminating with the story of how His Son, Jesus, entered into time and established a New Covenant in the Church—the People of God. That's you! In the Bible, God reaches out to us and seeks to initiate a conversation with us. When you think about it, it's astonishing that God wants to lovingly talk with each of us about our lives. Today we'll discuss how that happens.

Opening Prayer:

O Lord Jesus Christ, open the eyes of my heart, that I may hear Your Word and understand and do Your will, for I am a sojourner upon the earth. Hide not Your commandments from me, but open my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of Your law

Theme Verse:

"Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." —Psalm 119:105

Video & Reflection Questions: Please pull up the corresponding video for this session. After each segment of the video, reflect, with your sponsor, on the questions below. Make sure to write down your answers for the highlighted questions.

Watch the first video segment of Session 3. Pause the video when it says, "scene break".

St. Jerome said, "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." If we don't know and understand the Scriptures and the story of Salvation, we don't understand and know Jesus.

- St. Paul referred to the Word of God as "the Sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17). In what ways is the Bible a weapon?

Watch the second video segment of Session 3. Pause the video when it says, "scene break".

St. John, when referencing the Word of God, seems to suggest that it is alive when he says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

- Why do you think that the books in the New Testament had to be Apostolic? What does Apostolic mean?

Watch the third video segment of Session 3. Pause the video when it says, "scene break".

This segment went into the historical nature of the Bible and how it was composed. It is important to know and understand the history of the Bible so that we can understand that it is trustworthy. So much of what we

know and understand about our faith and the historical story of Jesus is found in the Bible. Those who seek to discredit the Bible seek to undermine our faith.

- How would you respond to the following statements?
 - “The Bible is not reliable. It is full of contradictions.”
 - “The Bible is not ‘God’s Word’ because it was written by human authors.”
- Let’s say a friend of yours, while speaking about a passage she was reading in the Bible, states, “It was like God was speaking directly to me—directly into a situation in my life— when I read the passage.” How is this possible?

Watch the fourth video segment of Session 3.

- Why is it true that “ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”?
- What is one new thing you learned from this session?

Commitment: This week’s commitment is to look up the Scripture readings for the upcoming Sunday Mass. You can find them at: usccb.org/bible/readings. Spend some time reflecting on how God, through the Scripture readings, is speaking to your head, heart, and hands. What is it telling you intellectually? What is it conveying to you personally? What action is it prompting you toward?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, we thank You for this time together to help us understand how Your Word is alive and active. Help us to grow in appreciation, awareness, and understanding of the Bible. Give us the desire to grow closer to You and to be in conversation with You throughout each day. Amen.

Please write or type your responses to the highlighted questions and return them to Mrs. Taylor no later than March 4. You can e-mail them to her at lilly@stjamesconway.org OR by dropping them off to her at church.

*Be sure to title it “Session 3” and write the questions AND answer(s).

THE CREED: SESSION 4

THE STORY OF SALVATION

Introduction: *In this session we are going to be looking at “The Greatest Story Ever Told,” the story of salvation from Creation to the present day. We will discuss our role in this great story and find ways to make us more open to accepting our roles.*

Opening Prayer:

Lord, as we listen to the story of salvation, we ask that You keep our hearts and minds open to what it is that You would like us to understand from this session. We ask that You grant us the grace to fulfill our role in this story.

Theme Verse:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” —Ephesians 1:3–10

Video & Reflection Questions: **Please pull up the corresponding video for this session. After each segment of the video, reflect, with your sponsor, on the questions below. Make sure to write down your answers for the highlighted questions.**

Watch the first video segment of Session 4. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

Dr. Sri talks about the story of salvation and how this story plays a role in each of our lives.

- What does it mean that “our modern world has lost its story,” and why does that matter?

Watch the second video segment of Session 4. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

The story of salvation demonstrates that God had a plan to bring mankind back to Him immediately following the Fall.

- There is a saying: “God writes straight with crooked lines.” What do you think that means?
- Consistent throughout salvation history are covenants. How does entering a covenant “define the relationship” between God and His people?

Watch the third video segment of Session 4. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

Read Genesis 3:15:

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” —Genesis 3:15

After the Fall of man, God tells the serpent, the woman, and the man each about the covenant curses that they have invoked as a result of their sin. In referring to the serpent, God says that He will put enmity, which means “no common ground,” between the woman and the serpent and between her offspring and his.

- Genesis 3:15 is called the Protoevangelium, which is Latin for “the First Gospel.” Why do you think this verse is called the First Gospel?
- How would you respond to someone who says “I have difficulty believing in a loving God when I see so much needless suffering in the world!”

We live in the era of the New Covenant and the Church. But there is one more era coming: the era when Jesus comes again. In that era, we will finally be completely reunited with Christ and in communion with each other.

Watch the fourth video segment of Session 4.

St. Augustine’s classic work *The City of God* puts history in the context of two cities born of two different loves: the City of Man, born of self-love, and the city of God, born of love of God and others. The City of Man represents those who live as if man is the center of the universe and has the solution to the problems of our human condition. The City of God represents those who live as if God is the center of the universe and only He has the solution to the problems of our human condition. To say “salvation history” is to imply that everyone in the history of the world—past, present, and future—is in need of the salvation God offers through Jesus Christ. In that sense, there is no salvation history in the City of Man.

- What are some examples of the City of Man in these times in which we live?
- If only God can save, what does it mean that you have a role in salvation history?
- What is one new thing you learned from this session?

Commitment:

Closing Prayer:

We give You praise, Father most holy, for You are great and You have fashioned all Your works in wisdom and in love. You formed man in Your own image and entrusted the whole world to his care, so that in serving You alone, the Creator, he might have dominion over all creatures. And when through disobedience he had lost Your friendship, You did not abandon him to the domain of death.... And You so loved the world, Father most holy, that in the fullness of time You sent Your Only Begotten Son to be our Savior.... To accomplish Your plan, He gave himself up to death, and, rising from the dead, He destroyed death and restored life. And that we might live no longer for ourselves but for Him who died and rose again for us, He sent the Holy Spirit from You, Father, as the first fruits for those who believe, so that, bringing to perfection His work in the world, He might sanctify creation to the full. Amen.

Please write or type your responses to the highlighted questions and return them to Mrs. Taylor no later than March 11. You can e-mail them to her at tlilly@stjamesconway.org OR by dropping them off to her at church. *Be sure to title it “Session 4” and write the questions AND answer(s).

THE CREED: SESSION 5

WHO IS JESUS?

Introduction: *The question of Jesus' identity is central to our faith. Many people today view Jesus as just one of the many great moral and religious teachers the world has known. But Jesus Himself claimed to be much more than that. He claimed to be God. Further, He made it clear that if you embrace who He says He is and His teachings, you are like a wise man who builds his house on the rock (Matthew 7:24–27). The divinity of Jesus is the sure and strong foundation upon which to build our lives. As Christians, we profess that truth each time we say the Creed. In this session, we will discuss what it really means to say that Jesus is true God and true man.*

Opening Prayer:

“O my Divine Savior, Transform me into Yourself. May my hands be the hands of Jesus. Grant that every faculty of my body may serve only to glorify You. Above all, transform my soul and all its powers so that my memory, will and affection may be the memory, will and affections of Jesus. I pray You to destroy in me all that is not of You. Grant that I may live but in You, by You and for You, so that I may truly say, with St. Paul, ‘I live—now not I—but Christ lives in me.’” —St. John Perboyre

Theme Verse:

“Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.’” —John 6:68–69

Video & Reflection Questions: Please pull up the corresponding video for this session. After each segment of the video, reflect, with your sponsor, on the questions below. Make sure to write down your answers for the highlighted questions.

Watch the first video segment of Session 5. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

- Dr. Sri explained to us the meaning of the painting of Jesus in the Basilica of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Rome. How does that painting confront us with a decision we all have to make?
- Famous Christian writer C.S. Lewis pointed out that a man who claims to be God can only be one of three things: a liar, a lunatic, or Lord.
 - Are there any compelling arguments that you have heard that would suggest Jesus was either a liar or a lunatic?

Watch the second video segment of Session 5. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

In John 8:58–59 we read:

“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’ So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.”

- Why did the Jews want to stone Jesus?
- The reason Jesus was put to death by the Pharisees and Sadducees is that He put Himself on the same level as God. This was considered blasphemy.
 - If Jesus was in fact God, what kinds of things would you expect Him to do?

Watch the third video segment of Session 5. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

There was a significant amount of questioning in the time of Jesus over who He was. Many thought that He was simply a great rabbi or a prophet. The Gospels tell us there were only a few who truly understood that Jesus was God among them.

- Name three people in the Gospels who made statements about knowing that Jesus was God.

Watch the fourth video segment of Session 5.

- Is Jesus the Lord of your life, or do you make yourself the lord of your life?
- What is one new thing you learned from this session?

Commitment: This week’s commitment is to take 15 minutes to read the quote below and reflect on the question, “Who do you say I am?”

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” —C.S. Lewis

Then, prayerfully imagine Jesus standing before you and asking you the question He asked His Apostles: “Who do you say that I am?” *How would you answer Him?*

Closing Prayer:

Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess You have given me: I surrender it all to You to be disposed of according to Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace; with these I will be rich enough, and will desire nothing more. Amen.

Please write or type your responses to the highlighted questions and return them to Mrs. Taylor no later than March 18. You can e-mail them to her at tlilly@stjamesconway.org OR by dropping them off to her at church.

*Be sure to title it “Session 5” and write the questions AND answer(s).

THE CREED: SESSION 6

THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

Introduction: *In this session we are going to focus on the “lows” and “highs” of Jesus’ Paschal Mystery: his death and resurrection. We will explore some central mysteries of our faith, such as: Why did Jesus have to die for the sins we committed? What does it mean when we say in the Creed that Jesus “descended into hell”? How can we be sure that Jesus really rose from the dead?*

Opening Prayer:

Lord, we thank You for dying on the cross for our sins, paying the price for our salvation. We ask You to open our hearts and minds to the Mystery of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Theme Verse:

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.” —Philippians 2:5–8

Video & Reflection Questions: Please pull up the corresponding video for this session. After each segment of the video, reflect, with your sponsor, on the questions below. Make sure to write down your answers for the highlighted questions.

Watch the first video segment of Session 6. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

Dr. Sri states that the question “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” is Jesus making a proclamation of what is to come. The Psalms were written about a thousand years before Christ. Open your Bible and Read Psalm 22.

- What similarities do you see between the crucifixion of Christ and Psalm 22?
- How do the final verses of Psalm 22 demonstrate how Christ was prophesying what was to come?

Watch the second video segment of Session 6. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

God was in a covenant with Adam, and Adam violated the covenant by eating from the tree that God had forbidden. In the covenant, God told Adam that if he ate of the tree, he would die. Because Adam broke the covenant, he and his descendants invoked the covenant curse. The only way out of a covenant is for one party to die—in this case either God or all of humanity. Therefore, God chose to die Himself to start a new covenant with man; He sent Jesus to die and fulfill the Old Covenant.

- How is it that the death and resurrection of Christ allows for God to be both just and merciful with humanity?
- There was a lot of talk about sacrificial love. Give me one example of someone who has demonstrated sacrificial love in your life. How?

Watch the third video segment of Session 6. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

Generally people try to avoid suffering. In the news we might even hear about some people with terminal illnesses who have committed suicide in order to avoid their suffering. But let's consider for a moment this quote from John 12:24:

“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

Here's another way of saying that: “Every death presents an opportunity for a resurrection. Every suffering can be a tremendous gift.”

- How can suffering or carrying a cross be a great gift?

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the most significant events in human history. Many people witnessed Jesus die a horrible and humiliating death, and then many of those same people witnessed Him alive after He had died. As Dr. Sri stated, unlike most influential leaders, His following grew after His death instead of dissipating. There is no doubt that Jesus Christ has had more impact on the world than any other person in human history.

- How would you respond to a friend who asks you: “How do you know the resurrection of Jesus happened and that it's not just a myth?”

Watch the fourth video segment of Session 6.

Dr. Sri says there are two ways to live your life: the way of self and the way of the Cross.

- Why is more joy and fulfillment found on the way of the Cross?
- What is one new thing you learned from this session?

Commitment: Because we live in a broken world, we should never ask, “Will I suffer?” but rather, “What will I do when I suffer?” As Peter says,

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you” (1 Peter 4:12).

In fact, Jesus Himself entered our humanity and has shared in our suffering. And He wants to be with us to help us in the midst of our trials. What do you do when you encounter suffering in your life? Do you turn to God, or do you turn away from God? **Make a commitment now to turn to God for help the next time suffering enters your life, and think of someone you know who is suffering and offer a prayer that they may unite their suffering to that of Christ on the cross.**

Closing Prayer:

“O Jesus, You have called me to suffer because You on Your part suffered for me, leaving me an example that I might follow. When You were insulted, You did not return the insult. When You were mistreated, You did not counter with threats but entrusted Yourself to the One who judges justly. By Your wounds we are healed. Help me to imitate You in suffering. Let me break with sin by means of my sufferings, so that I may no longer live according to the lusts of sinners but according to the will of the Father. Since You Yourself have suffered and been tempted, I know that You are able to bring aid to all who suffer and are tempted. I entrust myself to You and to the Father, my Creator, knowing that You will never fail me. Amen.” —Prayer to Imitate the Suffering Christ

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*Be sure to title it “Session 6” and write the questions AND answer(s).

THE CREED: SESSION 7

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE LIFE OF GRACE

Introduction: *A little boy who is said to have died and gone to heaven was asked to describe the Holy Spirit. He paused for a moment and then said, “Hmmm, that’s kind of a hard one. He is hard to describe, but you know He is there.” We all have mental images of Jesus and God the Father, but the Holy Spirit can be more challenging to describe. This week as we learn about the Holy Spirit and the important role He plays in our lives and in the life of the Church, we will see why it is critical that we come to know and love Him.*

Opening Prayer:

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Through Christ our Lord, amen.

Theme Verse:

“In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.” —Ephesians 1:13–14

Video & Reflection Questions: Please pull up the corresponding video for this session. After each segment of the video, reflect, with your sponsor, on the questions below. Make sure to write down your answers for the highlighted questions.

Watch the first video segment of Session 7. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

- Dr. Sri talks about the prominent place that the Holy Spirit plays in the artwork of St. Peter’s Basilica.
 - Why do you think the architect of the Basilica wanted the dove to shine light over the Chair of St. Peter?
- The images used to describe the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost are wind and fire.
 - What are some of the characteristics that wind and fire have in common with the Holy Spirit?

Watch the second video segment of Session 7. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches: “The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1830). A disposition is the tendency to act in a certain way under given circumstances. Therefore, the Holy Spirit desires to help us live our day-to-day life with wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

- What do you think is the difference between knowledge, understanding, and wisdom?

St. Augustine wrote: “The prophet begins with wisdom and ends with fear of the Lord... He begins, therefore, by identifying the goal we are striving for and ends with the starting point where we must begin.” In other words, St. Augustine emphasizes what the book of Proverbs repeats over a dozen times: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10).

- Why do you think “the fear of the Lord” is necessary for wisdom?

Watch the third video segment of Session 7. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

Faith, hope, and charity are called the theological virtues. These virtues are theological because they are given to us by God in our Baptism and are the foundation of our spiritual life. Faith empowers us to receive and accept God’s revelation. Hope empowers us to trust in God’s plan for our lives. And charity empowers us to love God above all else, which then flows over to our love for others.

- Looking at the circumstances in your life right now, how could faith help? How could hope help? How could charity help?
- Let’s say your friend says to you, “All you need to do is accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior to be saved. He did all the work for us.” How would you respond?

Watch the fourth video segment of Session 7.

The Holy Spirit is alive and dwelling in each one of us. He is a person, and like any person, He desires a relationship with us.

- Have you ever prayed to the Holy Spirit and heard or seen Him respond in your life?
- What is one new thing you learned from this session?

Commitment: When we live in harmony with the virtues and the gifts of the Spirit, we are blessed with the fruits of the Spirit. St. Paul lists nine fruits in Galatians 5:22–23. They are love, charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. It is fitting that love is the first fruit as the other fruits are an experience and expression of God’s love. **This week’s commitment is to focus on someone who needs to experience the fruits of the Holy Spirit in their life. Who is someone that God can love through you this week? What is the opportunity this week might bring for you to connect with this person?**

Closing Prayer:

“Breathe into me, Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy. Strengthen me, Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy. Protect me, Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy. Amen.”

-St. Augustine’s Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Please write or type your responses to the highlighted questions and return them to Mrs. Taylor no later than April 1. You can e-mail them to her at tlilly@stjamesconway.org OR by dropping them off to her at church.

*Be sure to title it “Session 7” and write the questions AND answer(s).

THE CREED: SESSION 8

WHY DO I NEED THE CHURCH?

Introduction: *Some people today say that they are “spiritual” but not religious. Or they say they don’t need to belong to a church because they have a personal relationship with Jesus. This week we will discuss why that’s not what Jesus intended. He didn’t come to save us as isolated individuals, but as a profound communion of all believers. He fulfilled the Father’s plan to unite all humanity into one covenant family, the Church.*

Opening Prayer:

Lord, we ask that You open our minds and hearts to what You are revealing to us today about Your Church. We ask that You help us to understand the mystery of the Church and what it means in our lives.

Theme Verse:

“So, then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” — Ephesians 2:19–22

Video & Reflection Questions: **Please pull up the corresponding video for this session. After each segment of the video, reflect, with your sponsor, on the questions below. Make sure to write down your answers for the highlighted questions.**

Watch the first video segment of Session 8. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

Dr. Sri speaks about the unity of the Church and alludes to the fact that the early Church had structure, worshipped the Eucharist, and had core teachings that were followed.

- How does the mosaic in the Basilica of San Clemente demonstrate that the Catholic Church is a universal church?
- Dr. Sri speaks about the first-century writings of St. Clement of Rome. Why is it so important to know the historical context of the Christian Church in the first century?

Watch the second video segment of Session 8. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

- Dr. Sri talks about the Church being like a family. In what ways is the Church like a family?

Watch the third video segment of Session 8. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

- Dr. Sri spoke at length about the elements of the visible Church. What are some of the things that you see in the invisible Church?
- Dr. Sri spoke about the Protestant Reformation. How would you respond to a friend who states, “The pope and bishops are not in the Bible”?
- Let’s say that your friend says to you that he (or she) is “spiritual” but not a “religious” person. What is the problem with that statement?

Watch the fourth video segment of Session 8.

- How does embracing the Church’s authority challenge us to deeper conversion?
- What is one new thing you learned from this session?

Commitment: “I’m spiritual, but I’m not religious.” How many times have you heard someone say something along those lines? In our day and age that stance is popular, especially among people who have stopped attending church but who continue to believe in God (or at least a “higher power”). When someone tells us that they just don’t want to be tied to rules and regulations, or that they prefer to have a “personal relationship” with Jesus, but they don’t need the Church, what should be our response? Merely telling them that they are wrong isn’t going to be convincing. **This session’s commitment is to take some time to formulate a response, using what you have learned in this session, to what you would say if someone said to you, “I am not into the whole Church thing; I can just have a personal relationship with Christ.”**

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, at Your Last Supper You prayed to the Father that all should be one. Send Your Holy Spirit upon all who bear Your name and seek to serve You. Strengthen our faith in You, and lead us to love one another in humility. May we who have been reborn in one baptism be united in one faith under one Shepherd. Amen.

Please write or type your responses to the highlighted questions and return them to Mrs. Taylor no later than April 8. You can e-mail them to her at tlilly@stjamesconway.org OR by dropping them off to her at church.

*Be sure to title it “Session 8” and write the questions AND answer(s).

THE CREED SESSION 9

MARY AND THE SAINTS

Introduction: *Christians acknowledge that Jesus was “born of the Virgin Mary,” but for many, Mary is little more than a statue in a nativity scene. Not for Catholics. For Catholics, Mary is the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven, and the first and most perfect disciple of the Lord. This week we are going to learn just who Mary of Nazareth is, and why loving Mary brings us closer to her son, Jesus.*

Opening Prayer:

Pray the Hail Mary

Theme Verse:

“In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.’” —Luke 1:39–45

Video & Reflection Questions: **Please pull up the corresponding video for this session. After each segment of the video, reflect, with your sponsor, on the questions below. Make sure to write down your answers for the highlighted questions.**

Watch the first video segment of Session 9. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

- Dr. Sri points us to the Old Testament understanding of the Queen Mother.
 - With the ancient understanding of the Queen Mother, what does Mary inherit as the Mother of Jesus?
- Some people have accused Catholics of worshipping Mary while others have accused the Catholic Church of treating women as “second class.”
 - How does the Catholic practice of venerating Mary disprove both viewpoints?

Watch the second video segment of Session 9. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

- Why do you think the Church considers Mary to be the new Ark of the Covenant?
- How would you respond to someone who says: “Mary cannot be without sin because the Bible says ‘all have sinned’ ” [Romans 3:23]?
- If Jesus came to save us from our sin and Mary is without sin, how does Jesus save Mary?

Watch the third video segment of Session 9. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

- Dr. Sri says it is fitting that Mary would be first to be assumed into heaven, body and soul, after Christ's resurrection. What did Dr. Sri mean by this?

The Hail Mary is one of the most recited and common prayers in the Catholic Church. Much of the Hail Mary is right from Scripture. When we say, “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you,” we are repeating the words of God Himself. We know this, because these were the words of St. Gabriel, who is a messenger of God. When we say, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb,” we are repeating the prophesy of St. Elizabeth, who knew, through the Holy Spirit, her Lord was in the womb of Mary.

- How would you respond to someone who says you should only pray to God and not to Mary and the saints?

Watch the fourth video segment of Session 9.

- St. John is Christ's beloved disciple.
 - How is Jesus' command to St. John to “Behold your mother” a challenge to us in our own prayer life and journey with Jesus?
- What is one new thing you learned from this session?

Commitment: This week's commitment is to pray the Prayer of Mary called the Magnificat each day and ask Mary to take you by the hand and lead you closer to her son, Jesus.

The Magnificat

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.” —Luke 1:46–55

Closing Prayer:

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, we fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins our Mother; to thee do we come, before thee we stand, sinful and sorrowful; O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not our petitions, but in thy mercy, hear and answer us. Amen.

Please write or type your responses to the highlighted questions and return them to Mrs. Taylor no later than April 15. You can e-mail them to her at tlilly@stjamesconway.org OR by dropping them off to her at church.

*Be sure to title it “Session 9” and write the questions AND answer(s).

THE CREED: SESSION 10

THE LAST THINGS

Introduction: *Death, and what happens afterward, is the last great mystery of life. While we all have questions, as Christians we have some answers as well, because Jesus has gone before us and through His resurrection has given us insight into what awaits us after the moment of our death. In this session we are going to explore what the Church calls the Four Last Things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell.*

Opening Prayer:

Lord, today we ask You to help us to better understand what happens to us when we die. In seeking this understanding we ask that You fill us with hope, that we will have peace about death—for we know that our purpose is knowing, loving, and serving You in this life so we can live happily with You in the next.

Theme Verse:

“All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” —John 10:8–10

Video & Reflection Questions: **Please pull up the corresponding video for this session. After each segment of the video, reflect, with your sponsor, on the questions below. Make sure to write down your answers for the highlighted questions.**

Watch the first video segment of Session 10. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

It is interesting to consider that the debate on whether or not there is an afterlife goes back thousands of years.

Watch the second video segment of Session 10. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

- Dr. Innerst speaks of the judgment that every soul will face after death.
 - Why is it accurate to state, “God doesn’t send people to hell”?
- Why is it necessary for purgatory to exist?
- The Creed tells us that after Jesus died and before His resurrection, He descended to the dead.
 - What do you think is meant by this?

Watch the third video segment of Session 10. Pause the video when it says, “scene break”.

- Why do the people in purgatory need our prayers?

Every human being will be judged immediately after death in what is called the particular judgment. The three possible outcomes of the particular judgment are heaven, purgatory, or hell. At the end of time Jesus will come back, our bodies will be resurrected and reunited with our souls, and there will be a general judgment. Every deliberate thought, word, deed, and omission of our lives will be brought to light before Christ.

- If everyone is judged immediately after death, why do you think there needs to be a general judgment as well?

Watch the fourth video segment of Session 10.

- Dr. Sri talks about how it is not enough to be a “good person.” We must have a relationship with Jesus Christ in order to spend eternity with Him in heaven.
 - If this is true, what happens to those who die having never heard the Gospel?
- What is one new thing you learned from this session?

Commitment: At the end of the presentation, Dr. Sri asks a fundamental question: “Are you moving toward eternity with Jesus or without Him?” **This week’s commitment is to take some time to look over your life, your priorities, the way you spend your days. Is your life moving toward Jesus or away from Him? How would your life be different if you were truly making all your decisions in the light of your eternal destiny?**

Closing Prayer:

Jesus Christ, my God, I adore You and thank You for all the graces You have given me this day. I offer You my sleep and all the moments of this night, and I beg of You to keep me without sin. Therefore, I put myself within Your sacred side and under the mantle of our lady, my Mother. Let Your holy angels stand about me and keep me in peace; and let Your blessing be upon me. Amen.

Please write or type your responses to the highlighted questions and return them to Mrs. Taylor no later than April 22. You can e-mail them to her at tlilly@stjamesconway.org OR by dropping them off to her at church.

*Be sure to title it “Session 10” and write the questions AND answer(s).