

Guidelines for Breaking Open the Word

What has become known as “Breaking Open the Word” is found in RCIA 67.

67. After the dismissal formulary, the group of catechumens goes out but does not disperse. With the help of some of the faithful, the catechumens remain together to share their joy and spiritual experiences.

The Rite of dismissal is not an end in itself, but a means to move the catechumens (unbaptized) and perhaps candidates (baptized) (see RCIA 406) to a place where they can be spiritually fed. Though they cannot yet come to the table of the Eucharist, Mother Church still has an obligation to feed those who have entered into a relationship with her through the Rites of Acceptance and Welcoming (celebrated recently). This obligation is fulfilled by sending them out to dwell more richly on the Word of God that they have just heard at Mass.

His Word is their only food during this period. Participants depart from the Mass with one or several RCIA team members, godparents, and sponsors to go out to discuss the readings for that Sunday and experience more fully the impact of the Scriptures in their lives. While the congregation is being nourished by Jesus in the Eucharist, those seeking to join us at the sacred table are being nourished by Jesus in the sacred words of Scripture.

The session is not catechetical in its intent; it follows from the liturgical experience, and concludes approximately when the Mass concludes. Breaking Open the Word sessions are not opportunities for the delivery of a prepared catechesis. It is to be a facilitated reflection upon the content of the Liturgy of Word for that Sunday, and opportunity for each participant to actively engage the Scriptural text and to be fed by that encounter with the Word.

Facilitator Notes

1. Welcome everyone to class.
2. Open the class with a short prayer. It could be a simple statement, such as:

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.

V. Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray. O God, Who didst instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us in the same Spirit to be truly wise, and ever to rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

3. Remind the class of the questions that can help them explore the Sunday reading. The questions should be written on the white board before the session starts. Each participant (catechumens, candidates, sponsors) should try to answer at least one question. Not all questions apply to each reading.
 - a. What does the reading tell us about God?
 - b. What does the reading tell us about God's plan for us?
 - c. What does the reading tell us about what God expects of us?
 - d. What did the priest say about the reading during Holy Mass?
 - e. How does the reading apply to our time?
 - f. How does the reading apply to my life?
 - g. How should I act on this message?
4. Have a volunteer read the Gospel reading from the prior Sunday.
5. Give the participants about five minutes to consider the reading.
6. When everyone is ready ask the participants to share their thoughts.
7. If time permits, ask if anyone has any questions about the reading and briefly address the questions.
8. Close with a brief prayer such as

Thank you Lord for this opportunity to explore Your holy word. May it remain with us and work in us. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

The facilitator may ask questions to make the points of the participants more clear.

The facilitator should not use this session as an opportunity for catechesis; however, he must correct any misstatements of the faith that come up.

The facilitator (if possible) should have attended holy Mass at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church the prior Sunday and be ready to remind the participant's of important aspects of the priest's message related to the Gospel. If unsure he should consult other catechists or the pastor about the message.

The session and a break MUST be complete by 7:30 PM so that the class can begin the instructional class at that time.

NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

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Amen.

Questions for Breaking Open the Word

- a. What does the reading tell us about God?
- b. What does the reading tell us about God's plan for us?
- c. What does the reading tell us about what God expects of us?
- d. What did the priest say about the reading during Holy Mass?
- e. How does the reading apply to our time?
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- g. How should I act on this message?