

All Souls –Life and Death Intergenerational Learning Program

Learning Objectives

The “All Souls” learning session guides learners of all ages to ...

- Develop a contemporary understanding of the meaning of All Souls Day along with its associated practices and doctrines – praying for the dead, the hope of resurrection which dispels the fear associated with death, and Purgatory.
- Actively engage in the All Souls liturgy and to pray for the dead.
- Understand that the love of God transcends the barriers of time and death and binds our lives to the lives of those who are deceased.

Catechism Connection

954, 958, 1030-32, 1472-1473, 1475

Background Readings

Catholic Updates

Luebering, Carol. *The 'Last Things': Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell*, Catholic Update C0593

Zyromski, Page Mckean. *How Halloween can Be Redeemed*, Catholic Update C1099

Books and Articles

Sacramentum Mundi, Rahner, Karl SJ, ed. Volume 2. The relevant article is

Eternity by Adolf Darlap and Joseph de Finance, pp 249-252.

Purgatory is Necessary Purification by Pope John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Editorial and Management Offices, Via del Pellegrino, 00120, Vatican City, Europe, Telephone 39/6/698.99.390.

Potential Uses

- Preparation for All Souls Day

Session Resources

Before the Session

Environment

Mexicans decorate altars on All Souls Day with colorful flowers, paper cutouts, candles, photos of the deceased, and skulls or skeletons. All of this, along with a Bible, a funeral pall, the Easter candle, and a cross would be appropriate for the environment.

Home Kit

Home Activities at Generations of Faith Online

1. No Fear Skeleton Activity
2. All Souls Table Prayer (You may choose to include a small votive candle with this prayer.)
3. A Few Thoughts About All Souls Day
4. All Souls Shrine
5. Scripture Cut Outs

Prayer Resource

For additional prayer services consult:

Haas, David. *Increase Our Faith – Parish Prayer Services for Whole Community Catechesis*. (Three Volumes: Year A, B, C) Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2004, 2005, 2006.

Materials for the Session

Gathering

- Name tags
- Opening Prayer Service Handout
- Bible
- Candle (for opening prayer and closing prayer)

All Ages Opening Learning Experience

- Plain index cards (one per person)
- Markers and/or crayons for each table (All Ages Opening and In Depth Learning)

In-Depth Learning Experience

- Skeleton Poster (one per table group) Use the skeleton on the *Skeletons – Alive or Dead* handout to make an overhead transparency. Project the skeleton onto a poster board and trace it or take the skeleton handout to a print/copy shop that is able to make large images.
- Blank paper

- Plain Index cards (one per person)
- Tape or glue at each table
- A small candle with matches or lighters (one per table group)
- *Path to Purity Skits* handouts for actors
- *Love Conquers Fear Candle Reflection* copied onto card stock (one per family)
- Bibles for adolescent and adult learning groups

Sharing Learning Reflections and Home Application

Closing

- Closing Prayer Service

Session at a Glance

Part One: Gathering (45 minutes)

Community Builder: Halloween Guessing Game

Opening Prayer Service

Part Two: All Ages Learning Experience (15 minutes)

Holy Card Activity

Part Three: In Depth Learning Experience (90 minutes)

Choose a Learning Group Format

- Whole Group Format
- Age Group Format

Learning Plan

1. Skeletons: Alive or Dead
2. Purgatory – Hopeful Transformation
3. Love Conquers Fear

Part Four: Sharing Learning Experiences and Home Application (15 minutes)

Part Five: Closing Prayer Service (15 minutes)

Part 1

Gathering (45 minutes)

1. Registration and Hospitality

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags or invite people to make their own.
- Distribute the Home Kit for the session, including any handouts participants will need for the session. (You can also distribute handouts for the In-Depth Learning program at the beginning of the activity.)
- Invite people to share a meal; depending on time of day, the program may end with a meal instead.

[spoken text] Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session, using the words below or your own words.

How many of you think you will die someday? Ask for a show of hands. Isn't it interesting that every person in the world will experience death someday, but we spend so little time actually talking about it or intentionally planning for it. Death is coming whether we're ready or not. In truth, it could come tomorrow, or next week, or next month or not for another fifty years or more; but make no mistake about it – it's coming to all of us, just as surely as it has come to those who have gone before us. Before you all run out of the room because you think this is going to be a real downer of a session, let me say this: Death doesn't have to be scary. In fact, for a Christian, the day of your death may be the most important day of your future. Death is your entry into eternal life. For Christians, death is just one more change, albeit a big change, on the path of life – a path that never ends. All Souls Day is the day that the Church sets aside every year to help us express our belief that in death life does not end, it only changes. We also believe that the bonds of love that bind us to each other in this life do not unravel when one of us dies. We stay connected, and it is Jesus Christ who keeps us connected. On All Souls Day, we pray for those who have died, and as we pray for them, we are reminded that one day we too shall die. "The wise person prepares for the day of death." (Sirach 1:11)

2. Group Formation

Organize people into small groups of six to eight people. Ask all members of the same family to sit together for the Opening Prayer Service and the All Ages Opening Experience. Organize other participants into groups of six to eight people – adolescent groups (adolescents may or may not sit with their families – be flexible), young adult groups, adult groups.

Community Builder

[spoken text] Introduce the icebreaker with these or similar words: *Halloween, All Hallows Eve or the Eve of All Saints Day, is an excellent prelude to All Souls Day, which is celebrated on November 2nd every year. Halloween gives us an opportunity to make fun of death. Skeletons, monsters, and scary characters from movies are the subjects of many Halloween costumes. Wearing these costumes in a spirit of fun is a good way to put death and fear in their proper places. While death and fear are both real and*

can be serious, neither death nor fear have power over the love of Christ. Love gives us the power to look death in the face and laugh, rather than cower in fear.

Let's play a little Halloween game. One person at your table has a list of things you might see on Halloween. (This list, handout Halloween Guessing Game, can be given to a table leader in advance or you can pass them out at this point.) Everyone else at the table is going to try to guess what is on the list by taking turns asking yes/no questions. Every question counts for one point. The table with the fewest points at the end of the game wins. Each person takes a turn asking a yes/no question. For example, you may ask if the thing is an animal or if the thing has ever appeared in a movie, etc. After you have asked your question, you may take a guess, but if you guess incorrectly, your table adds one point to their score. (Note to leader: If your tables are close together, you will need to caution the person who is holding the list to keep it hidden from other tables. You should also tell people to write their guesses down and show them to the table leader rather than saying them out loud.) After you have asked your question and guessed the answer (or decided not to guess) the person next to you takes a turn. This continues until someone correctly guesses the thing on the list. Then you go to the next thing on the list and begin the questioning again with the person next to the one who guessed correctly. The person holding the list keeps score as the game progresses.

Tally the scores at the end of the game. Congratulate the table with the fewest points as the winners. Give a small prize to the losing table (table with the most points) and say: *The last shall be first, and the first shall be last.*

3. Opening Prayer Service

Preparation

Choose a scripture reading from the All Souls liturgy – Wisdom 3:1-9, or Romans 5:5-11, or John 6:37-40, or readings from Masses for the Dead #789-793. Recruit a reader or readers to proclaim the scripture readings.

Choose an opening and closing song based on the parish's music selections for the All Souls liturgy.

Place the Easter Candle or another large candle in the middle of the prayer space and place beside them a baptismal garment and a funeral pall.

Opening Song

Leader: Opening Prayer

Merciful God, guide us in our learning about death, so that we will place our hope in the resurrection of your son, Jesus. Help us to remember that his resurrection is the gateway to eternal happiness for us and for those whom we love who have already passed through death. We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading

Proclaim the chosen Scripture to the assembly.

Intercessions

Light a candle/the Easter candle.

Leader

*Let this candle be a reminder that the light of Christ overcomes the darkness of death.
The Response to our intercessions is, Light of Christ, dispel the darkness of death.*

All

Light of Christ, dispel the darkness of death.

Leader

That our faith in Christ will give us the courage to overcome our fear of death, we pray...

All

Light of Christ, dispel the darkness of death.

Leader

That our family members and friends who have gone before us in faith may enjoy eternal life with Christ, we pray...

All

Light of Christ, dispel the darkness of death.

Leader

For all who have died, may they be open to God's mercy as a guide to eternal life, we pray...

All

Light of Christ, dispel the darkness of death.

Leader

Let us pause silently for a moment to bring to mind a family member or a friend who recently passed away... (Pause)... we pray...

All

Light of Christ, dispel the darkness of death.

Leader: Closing Prayer

Merciful God, we thank you for the gift of Christ's resurrection. It is our hope in times of darkness. We pray in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Song

Part 2

All Ages Learning Experience (15 minutes)

The All Ages Learning Experience is a holy card activity that is designed to help participants recall and reflect on the life of a deceased friend, relative, or acquaintance. This initial reflection will continue and deepen throughout this session and with the Home Kit.

Preparation

- Plain index cards for each participant.
- Markers and/or crayons for each table.
- Copies of *Holy Card Scripture* Handout for each participant.

Activity Plan

1. [spoken text] Offer the following introduction using these or your own words. *One way that we remember loved ones who have passed away is through the use of holy cards. It is very common to visit a funeral home and find a stack of holy cards available for those who would like to take a small token remembrance with them after they pay their respects. Some people carry these holy cards with them all the time and use them as reminders to continue to pray for deceased loved ones. Others keep them in a special place at home. Today we will begin by making holy cards in honor of our loved ones who have passed away*
2. Invite participants to create a holy card for a friend or family member who is deceased. The holy card should consist of pictures or symbolic representations of things the person enjoyed or things that express the person's gifts. The person's name should appear on the holy card. If possible, the date of the person's birth and death is appropriate for the holy card. Each person may select a scripture quote from the *Holy Card Scripture* handout to use on the holy card.
3. When everyone is finished making the holy cards, instruct them to put them in their family's Take Home Kit.
4. Invite the group to keep this person in mind as they journey through this session. The holy card will also be used with the closing prayer and participants should be invited to display the holy card at home.

Part 3

In-Depth Learning Experiences (90 minutes)

Whole Group Format

This format guides the entire assembly through each of the learning experiences.

You might choose this format if you have:

- a large physical space with good acoustics/sound system and furniture to comfortably accommodate the learners
- a competent large group facilitator/master of ceremonies able to provide clear directions and to manage the dynamics and energy of a large group
- a group of catechists who feel comfortable moving through the assembly offering assistance, or a large enough team of table leader catechists to have one catechist work with each table group
- a learning topic that lends itself to everyone learning the same thing at the same time, but in different ways, in the same space

Facilitation Tips for This Format

Guide small groups through each of the activities at the same time.

- Organize people into table groups based on age groupings: families with children (grades 1-5), middle school adolescents, high school adolescents, young adults, and adults.
- The lead facilitator guides the entire group through each of the learning experiences. All presentations and activity instructions are given to the whole group.
- The age-appropriate learning activities within each learning experience are conducted in table groups.
- Where needed, catechists and small group leaders facilitate the work of the table groups.

Whole Group Format Outline (90 Minutes)

Learning Plan Outline

Learning Experience One (25 minutes)

Skeletons: Alive or Dead

Learning Experience Two (25 minutes)

Purgatory – Hopeful Transformation

Learning Experience Three (40 minutes)

Love Conquers Fear

Age Group Format

This format provides for three separate parallel learning programs. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic.

You might choose this format if you have:

- an adequate number of meeting spaces for the various groups to gather
- an adequate number of competent facilitators and catechists to work with each group
- a topic that is best explored through age-specific learning

Facilitation Tips for This Format

- Organize participants into three or more parallel learning groups: families with children (grades 1-5), adolescents (grades 6-12), and adults.
- If there are a large number of adolescents, divide them into two groups: middle school and high school.

Organize separate groups for young adults, adults, and older adults. Or you can give the adults their own choice for forming small groups.

- Direct the adolescents and adults into small groups. Give them all the handouts and learning materials needed for the learning experiences
- Guide the families with children into table groups of two or more families. Give each table all the handouts and learning materials necessary for the learning experiences.
- A facilitator must guide all of the families through each learning experience, while catechists move from table to table assisting.

Age Groups Format Outline

Learning Plan Outline

Learning Experience One (25 minutes)

Skeletons: Alive or Dead (Families with Children, Adolescents, and Adults)

Learning Experience Two (25 minutes)

Purgatory – Hopeful Transformation (Families with Children)

Purgatory – Path to Purity (Adolescents and Adults)

Learning Experience Three (40 minutes)

Love Conquers Fear Candle Reflection (Families with Children)

Purgatory in Scripture and Liturgy (Adolescents and Adults)

Learning Experience: Skeletons—Alive or Dead (25 Minutes)

Whole Group: Families with Children, Adolescents, and Adults

Age Group: Families with Children, Adolescents, and Adults

Materials and Preparation

- Divide the participants into table groups of about 8-10 people. Children should stay with parents.
- Each table should have a skeleton poster (developed from *Skeletons – Alive or Dead* handout) and markers or crayons.

Activity Plan

1. Ask someone to give you the date for Halloween. Ask if anyone remembers the date for All Souls Day. Point out that Halloween and All Souls Day are only two days apart and both of them help us to deal with the reality of death in our lives. Halloween helps us to laugh at some of the frightening aspects of death and All Souls Day reminds us that there is life beyond death. If you live in a part of the country where leaves are dying on the trees, you can also mention that death is happening very visibly in the trees during this time of year.
2. [spoken text] Use these or similar words to introduce the skeleton poster activity:
Death is something that happens all around us all the time, but we tend to think about it a little more at this time of year because of Halloween and All Souls Day. One of the benefits of All Souls Day is that it helps us to know that in death we have nothing to fear because Christ will raise us to new life.
3. [spoken text] *On your table you see a poster with a skeleton on it. What do you think? Is the person on the poster dead or alive? (Both answers could be correct because the person represented by the skeleton has died, but this person also enjoys new life with Christ.)*
4. Instruct the table groups to modify their skeletons. Each person at the table, using a marker or crayon, will add one thing to the skeleton poster. (If your numbers are small each person may add more than one thing.) They may draw on the skeleton and/or around the skeleton. Do not give any examples about what the people may draw. There are no limits, barring vulgarity, to what they may add to the skeleton poster. Allow 10-15 minutes for this activity. Most people will probably add clothing or hair or other things that are used by living people. The posters will probably look sillier than they did before anything was added.
5. Instruct the groups to hang their posters on the wall as they finish.

6. Give the groups an opportunity to explain what is on their posters after the last poster is displayed. NOTE: If there are too many groups for each to share their posters, pair groups up to share their posters with each other.
7. [spoken text] Ask the participants to express their opinion with a show of hands: *Are the posters more or less scary now that we've added things to them? How would you describe the things that we've added to the dead skeletons?* Ask the participants to review the skeleton poster and discuss in their groups the various things added to the poster and how they indicate signs of life.
8. Point out that they've added things that are normally associated with the living, not the dead. For example, dead people don't need clothing, but living people do.
9. [spoken text] Share the following in your own words:
The point of this activity is to show that we can take the fear out of death by putting life into it. If you believe that eternal life is beyond the realm of death, then there is no need to fear death. All Souls Day helps us to express our faith that in death we have nothing to fear because Christ will raise us to new life. Eternal life conquers death and dispels our fear. We do not have to be overcome by fear when someone dies or when we think about our own death because our faith tells us that death is not the end of life; rather, death is simply one more change on the path of life, a path that does not end.

Learning Experience: Purgatory—Hopeful Transformation (25 Minutes)

Whole Group: Families with Children, Adolescents, and Adults

Age Group: Families with Children

Materials and Preparation

- Each table needs a large blank piece of paper and markers
- Recruit some volunteers to prepare dramas before the session using *Purgatory – Path to Purity Skits* handout
- Plain index cards for each participant, crayons or markers
- Handout : *Excess Baggage*, one per person

Activity Plan

1. [spoken text] Use these or similar words to introduce this learning experience: *We believe that the bonds of love that unite us in this life do not unravel at death. In other words we continue to love and care for our family members and friends even after they die, and they continue to love and care for us. We are in communion with each other even after one of us dies. God, who is the God of the living and the dead, is the medium through which we commune with each other. We express our love and concern for them by praying for them. Our prayers assist them as they experience a state of being that we call Purgatory. Purgatory is an essential doctrine associated with All Souls Day. Purgatory is the experience of purification as we pass from this life to eternal life with God. Purgatory should not be understood as a place where people wait to get into heaven; rather, it is a big change, a purification in which one is set free from all imperfection by the mercy of Christ. It is a necessary change that we experience when we die because God cannot be in full communion with a being that is less than perfect.*

Provide paper for each table. Tell the participants to list on the paper the top ten times in life when people need our prayer

Ask one person at each table to report the top-ten list. Note: If there are too many groups to have each group report, invite one group to share their list and invite the others to add any items that group may have missed.

2. Point out that most of the things on the lists represent times of significant change. For example, we pray for people when they experience the birth of a child, or the loss of a job, or a move out of state, etc.
3. [Spoken text] *Now we're going to discuss an imaginary situation in which people are forced to go through a significant change, and I want you to pretend that you are the one going through the change. Hold on to your top-ten list because we will return to them later. Imagine that you are on a plane that is flying over the ocean. The plane begins to have engine trouble, and you have to prepare for an emergency landing. Everyone is told that they can*

only keep one suitcase per passenger on the plane. The other suitcases need to be thrown out so that plane will travel far enough to land near a deserted island. The island has no stores and no electricity and you have three suitcases with you. One suitcase has food, clothing, and water bottles. The second suitcase has one million dollars in it. The third suitcase has toys and games. As a table group, discuss which two suitcases you will throw out.

4. [spoken text] *The one suitcase you chose to keep on board is called essential baggage. The two suitcases you threw out are called excess baggage. Excess baggage is the stuff we don't need as we move from one place or experience to another.*
5. Give each table a copy of the handout *Excess Baggage* and enough plain index cards for each person to have one.
6. Tell each table group to look at the top-ten list they made earlier. Tell them to pick the one thing on the list that would require the biggest change in a person's life.
7. Give each person a blank index card.
8. Tell each person at the table to write or draw one thing that a person would have to give up or get rid of if they were actually going through this transition. They may draw or write about actual physical things or they may write about emotional attachments that the person might have to leave behind as he/she goes through the change. They can discuss while they draw. Parents may need to help children.
9. When everyone has something on their card, tell them to attach them to the suitcase on the handout *Excess Baggage* with tape or glue.

Tell them to answer the following question as each index card is added to the suitcase: *How will purging (getting rid of) this item from the person's life make their transition go more smoothly?*

When all the tables are finished, invite each table to share what they attached to their suitcase as excess baggage. Tell them also to explain why they thought this was excess baggage and why it is good to get rid of it.

10. [spoken text] Communicate the following using the text provided or in your own words. *Why do we pray for the dead? We pray for the dead because the moment of death is the biggest change a person will ever experience. The big change from this life to the next is Purgatory, and Purgatory is an opportunity for a person to purge him/herself of excess spiritual baggage on the journey to eternal life. Why would we not pray for them during this experience of Purgatory if we offered our prayers for them as they experienced all of the other significant changes in their lives? Transition times are times when people especially need our prayers. All Souls Day is a day we set aside every year on November 2nd to offer prayers for deceased friends, family members, and all people who have died. All Souls Day is the day that the entire Church is focused on assisting our loved ones with the profoundly merciful and hopeful transformation that we call Purgatory. Spiritual excess baggage that is purged when we move from this life to eternal life with God is sin. Sin is excess baggage that none of us*

need, and we pray on All Souls Day that our deceased loved ones will be purified from sin as they move closer to God. Listen carefully to the prayer over the gifts of bread and wine that we pray on All Souls Day:

All-powerful Father, may this sacrifice wash away the sins of our departed brothers and sisters in the blood of Christ. You cleansed them in the waters of baptism. In your loving mercy grant them pardon and peace. Amen.

Learning Experience: Purgatory—Path to Purity (40 Minutes)

Age Group: Adolescents and Adults

Preparation

- Recruit some volunteers to act out the skits (Handout # 7, Path to Purity Skits)

Activity Plan

1. [spoken text] Use these or similar words: *Where do we get the ideas of Purgatory and praying for the dead? Both of these ideas are rooted in the experiences of people of faith throughout the centuries beginning with people in the Bible. Although the doctrine of Purgatory is not described in detail in the Bible, the basic principles for the doctrine come from the Bible. We've prepared a couple of skits to help us understand the roots of our belief in Purgatory.*
2. Invite the pre-chosen volunteers to perform Skit #1, "An Unblemished Offering", then facilitate the following discussion in your own words or using the text provided:

The experience of Purgatory is an experience of change. We experience something of Purgatory when we purge, or get rid of, our self-centered plans and open ourselves to God's plan for us. We move from selfishness to love. How did you see this happen in Sasha's situation?

Purgatory is the experience of being purified so that we can offer to God the gift of our lives in a perfect way. In the skit, it was clear that the Rodriguez's would be happy with either pie. Why was it important for Sasha to give them the unblemished pie?

3. Invite participants to open their Bibles to Leviticus 22:17-20. Read the passage together, then discuss using the following question:

When you hear this passage, what strikes you as more important: the gift or the giver? Why?

[spoken text] Add the following commentary if needed: *Presenting perfect gifts to God has been a part of our religious heritage from the very beginning. Our ancient ancestors sacrificed animals to God as a representation of themselves. The gift was not as important as what the gift said about the giver. Notice verse 20. The imperfect gift is not acceptable **for the giver**. The giver and the giver's motives are the important things, not the gift itself.*

4. Perform Skit #2, *Purging Preparation*.
5. [spoken text] Facilitate the following discussion in your own words or using the text provided:

The Bible often presents physical purity as a metaphor for spiritual purity. If we pay attention to the process of becoming physically pure, we can learn something about becoming spiritually pure; the experience of Purgatory is actually about both physical and spiritual purity.

NOTE: The leader of this discussion needs to be careful about two opposing tendencies. First, do not draw too much of a distinction between physical and spiritual. Our physical and our spiritual selves are a unified whole and must always be held together. Even in heaven we will express ourselves in a glorified body. Second, we need to be careful not to glorify physical existence to the point of materialism. The ideal physical condition from a human perspective is not equal to the ideal spiritual condition. The perfect body in the perfect house with the perfect stuff does not translate into the perfect soul. Try to maintain a healthy tension between these two tendencies.

6. Invite participants to Look up Leviticus 21:16-21 in their Bibles. Read the passage together and discuss:

What is your first impression about this passage? Why do you have that impression?

Note: Even though this passage sounds like it is making a negative statement about the holiness of persons with disabilities, it is really just a metaphor for the importance of self-purification before we come before the Lord.

Why was Jared working out with so much intensity?

Note: Jared had to purge from his body everything that was keeping him from being in shape. If he did not do this he would be purged from the team. This idea of physical perfection is more fully developed in a passage in the New Testament Book of Jude.

7. Invite learners to look up and read together Jude 1:20-25.
Share the following in your own words or using the text below:

[spoken text] Verses 20 and 21 of this passage tell us to have faith, to pray, and to remain in love as we await the mercy of Christ. Verses 24 and 25 make reference to Christ presenting us “unblemished” to God.

We can hope for a glorified eternal existence with God because of our faith in God’s mercy and our love for each other. We express our love for God and prepare ourselves and our departed loved ones for God through prayer. All Souls Day helps us to recall the importance of preparation, purification, and the role of prayer in our lives.

Learning Experience: Love Conquers Fear Candle Reflection (40 Minutes)

Whole Group: All Ages

Age Group: Families with Children

Materials and Preparation

- Candle and matches or lighters
- Markers or crayons
- One copy of the handout *Love Conquers Fear Candle* per family/household or participant, copied onto cardstock
- Colored cellophane paper (yellow and at least three other colors)
- Clear drying glue

Activity Plan

1. Instruct an adult at each table to light the candle.
2. Tell the participants that the traditional symbol for Purgatory is fire.
3. Instruct them to watch the candle burn and to observe all of the changes that are happening as a result of the candle burning.
4. Tell the groups to share their observations while one person in the group records the observations on the reverse side of the paper with the top-ten list done earlier.
5. Ask the table groups to share what they observed with the large group.
6. Highlight some of the following changes:
 - a. The wax softens and melts.
 - b. The wick changes color.
 - c. The wick gets smaller.
 - d. The candle gets shorter (more noticeable with thin candles).
 - e. The flame warms the air around it.
 - f. The flame makes the room brighter.

Some may notice changes within themselves as they watch the candle burn.

7. [spoken text] Comment using these or similar words: *The flame helps the candle to achieve the purpose for which it was created. The candle is created to be consumed by a fire. As it is consumed by the fire it is able to release the warmth and the light that we need from it. The fire transforms the wax and the wick into warmth and light.*

There is a story in the 24th chapter of Luke's gospel that describes two sad disciples of Jesus leaving Jerusalem and heading to Emmaus after Jesus had been crucified. Jesus, in his resurrected form, appeared to them, but they did not recognize him. He taught them all about

how his death was a fulfillment of the scriptures. Later, after Jesus had disappeared from their sight, they realized that it was he who was with them all the time and they recalled that their hearts were burning within them as he spoke to them.

Their hearts were burning. This does not mean that their hearts were literally on fire. This means that their hearts were changing. Their sadness was transformed into great joy. The love of Christ burned in their hearts and destroyed their fears and doubts so that they could freely give themselves to God. This is what we mean by the fire of Purgatory. It is a fire of love that consumes what we don't need in our lives and sets us free to be embraced by God for eternity.

8. Give each table group one or more copies of the handout *Love Conquers Fear Candle*, depending upon how many families and individuals are at each table. (Each family group should get one, and each individual person who is not sitting with their family such as adolescents and adults should each get one.) You may give each table group a utility knife to cut out the marked sections of the candle, but it is preferable for you to cut them out in advance for safety and time management. Remember to put cardboard behind the handout before you begin cutting to protect the table.
9. Tell the participants that Purgatory is the process of being purified by the fire of God's love. God's fire consumes us and purifies us by burning away sin from our lives.
10. Tell each group/person to write "God's fire purifies" on the top diagonal bar going across the candle on the handout *Love Conquers Fear Candle*.
11. Tell each family to write their family name on the bottom diagonal bar going across the candle on the handout *Love Conquers Fear Candle* (individuals working alone should write their own name).
12. Give participants about ten minutes to cut out pieces of cellophane and glue them to the backs of the candles to give them a stained glass look.
13. When everyone is finished, put the candles in the Take Home kits and tell the participants to display them at home as reminders of God's purifying fire of love.
14. Invite participants to discuss the following question:

What are some of the things that they as a community and as families need to be purified of? For example, some communities need to be purified of racism, or greed, or violence, or gossip, etc. Some families need to be purified of bickering, or yelling, or hitting, or lying, and so on.

After they have had time to name a few things, help participants to focus on a particular purification. Invite families to focus on one family trait that can be changed for the better. Adolescents and adults can focus on one community trait,

perhaps in the schools or in the community in general that can be changed for the better.

15. Instruct each group to identify one specific step they can take to begin the process of purification for their families/communities.
16. Encourage participants to reflect silently on the burning candles once again and close this section with the following prayer:

Lord God, each one of us needs your grace to purify our hearts. Release the fire of your love within us so that our transformation will change our individual lives, our families, and our communities. We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Learning Experience: Purgatory in Scripture and Liturgy (40 Minutes)

Age group: Adolescents and Adults

Preparation

- Copies of the handout , *Purgatory in Scripture and Liturgy*, one per group
- Copies of Today's Missal or another missalette that contains the four Eucharistic prayers, two or three missals for each learning group

Activity Plan – Part A

This activity focuses on the biblical roots of praying for the dead.

1. Tell participants that they will be exploring the biblical roots of the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory. This activity builds upon and complements the scriptural work done earlier in the skits activity.
2. Invite participants to open their Bibles to 2 Maccabees 12:38-46. Explain that this passage follows stories about military victories of the Jews under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus. This passage explains why some of the Jews died in battle and how Judas Maccabeus responded to the circumstances of their deaths.
3. Invite someone to read to the group 2 Maccabees 12:38-46.
4. Discuss the following with the participants:
What are some of the elements of this reading that relate to the things we have learned so far about All Souls Day and Purgatory? Instruct the teens/adults to discuss this question in their table groups. Give them time to share their discussion results with the larger group.

Highlight the following points before continuing:

- V. 38 – They purify themselves as preparation to come before the Lord on the Sabbath.
- V. 40 – It is clear that the slain need purification as they prepare for resurrection.
- V. 42 – Judas and his men pray for the slain.
- V. 43 – Judas takes up a collection to pay for a ritual sacrifice to be offered for the forgiveness of the slain.
- V. 44-45 – Judas' prayer for the dead is a good thing because it will assist them in their transformation from this life to resurrected life.

It may be helpful to explain that many Protestants do not accept our doctrine of Purgatory and our practice of praying for the dead because the books of Maccabees are not accepted as canonical scripture in Protestant translations of the Bible. The

books of Maccabees, along with the books of Judith, Tobit, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch and sections of other books of the Old Testament were originally written in Greek. While early Christians accepted these books as inspired scripture, Jewish rabbis rejected them because they were not written in Hebrew, the official language of Judaism. When the Protestant Reformation happened in the 16th century, the Protestant reformers also rejected these Old Testament books that were originally written in Greek, even though Christians from the 1st century on consistently used them.

Other passages in the Bible that support the doctrine of Purgatory and/or the practice of praying for the dead are 2 Timothy 1:16-18, 1 Peter 3: 18-20, and 1 Corinthians 3:13-15. Invite the participants to look up each of these passages, using the handout as a guide, and discuss how the readings support either the doctrine of Purgatory and/or the practice of praying for the dead.

Activity Plan: Part B

This activity will help participants to appreciate the Church's tradition of praying for the dead every time we gather for Sunday liturgies.

1. [spoken text] *We pray for the dead every Sunday when we gather as a community for liturgy. We offer our prayers for the dead at the most sacred part of the liturgy: the Eucharistic Prayer.*
2. Divide the group into four smaller groups.
3. Give each group copies of one of the four Eucharistic Prayers. Group 1 gets Eucharistic Prayer 1, Group 2 gets Eucharistic Prayer 2, and so on.
4. Instruct the groups to read and study the prayer and underline or write down all of the references to the faithful departed in the prayer. Invite them to circle any wording that seems to be used in reference to Purgatory.
5. Give the groups time to discuss what they found. Ask each group to assign one person to report back to the large group.
6. [spoken text] *The Church's weekly, and even daily, practice of praying for the dead in the context of the Eucharistic Prayer reminds us of our deep concern and love for our departed loved ones. It also reminds us that the Eucharistic liturgy gives us a profound opportunity to mingle our lives with God's realm of eternity. We touch eternity with this prayer as eternal love breaks into our lives in our Eucharistic communion. It is a great sign of unity between ourselves, our departed loved ones, all the saints, and God.*
7. Close by praying the Solemn Blessing or Prayer Over the People in the Sacramentary from the liturgy for All Souls.

Part 4

Sharing Learning Reflections and Home Application (15 minutes)

Advanced Preparation

Home Kit

Develop an All Souls Home Kit that *extends* and *expands* the learning that has taken place through the intergenerational learning program. It should *engage* families and individuals in living their faith at home through traditions and celebrations, rituals, symbols, prayers, service projects, learning activities, and enrichment activities.

Include specific activities on the event that you have selected as a focus for the session. These additional activities can include learning activities about the event, Scripture readings, table rituals, prayers, and so on.

Use a variety of design formats for your activities, such as a prayer card, stand-up card, poster, placemat, newsletter, booklet, magnet, bookmark, and artwork.

1. Whole Group Sharing and Reflection

The whole group sharing experience provides an opportunity for each age group to share something they have learned with the entire group. Ask the participants to join intergenerational groups.

Ask each group to share what they learned about death, All Souls Day, Purgatory, and anything else their group covered during the In Depth Learning.

Remind everyone exactly when the All Souls liturgy will be celebrated. Strongly encourage them to attend and participate, as they now have been adequately prepared. Tell them that this preparation session will reach its fulfillment in the celebration of All Souls Day and in the living out of what we have learned here and of what we will experience on All Souls Day.

2. Reflection—Application Strategies

Prepare strategies and activities to guide individuals and families in *reflecting* on the meaning of their learning and their participation in the Church event and in *applying* their learning to daily living as a Catholic. The goal is to help people apply the beliefs and practices to their daily life, and report or “publish” their learning with others in the parish community.

Reflection and application activities and strategies can be included with the Home Kit. You can also include a time for feedback in your next intergenerational learning program

There are a variety of formats for reflection – application activities. Reflection tools include unfinished sentences, reflection questions, and learning journals. Application tools include action plans, practice plans, “to do” lists, and resolutions.

Art and media strategies can also be used to express reflection and application. Consider activities such as bumper stickers, picture collages, “recipe for living” cards, posters, photos, and projects that create and bring back to Sunday Mass or the next intergenerational learning program.

Part 5

Closing Prayer Service (15 minutes)

Leader

Begin the prayer service by inviting everyone into silent reflection on the presence of God.

As we gather in the presence of God, we call to mind that our departed loved ones are with God. As we become aware of God's presence, we also become aware of their presence with God. Think for a moment of someone you love who has died and is with God.

Song

Play a song for reflection, preferably a song that will be used at the All Souls liturgy.

Leader: Opening Prayer

Merciful God, we entrust our beloved family members and friends into your care. We ask you to grant them eternal rest and let perpetual light shine upon them. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading

Choose a scripture reading, or a portion of a reading, that will be used in the All Souls parish liturgy. (All Souls readings are taken from the Lectionary section entitled *Masses for the Dead* #789-#793.) You may also use a scripture quote from that handout *Holy Card Scripture Page* for the reading – all of the quotes on this handout are from the *Masses for the Dead*.

Leader

Light a candle.

Let this candle be a reminder that the light of Christ overcomes the darkness of death.

Explain to the participants that you will now pass a candle from group to group. When the candle reaches your group, anyone at your group may speak the name of a departed family member or friend, perhaps the person on the prayer card that was made earlier in the session. After each name is spoken, we will all say the following response: *May God's mercy embrace you into eternal life.* If no one at a particular table offers a name for prayer, simply pass the candle on to the next table.

Leader: Closing Prayer

Merciful God, we offer to you the names of those we love, and we also offer to you our own lives as signs of our love for you and for each other. Eternal rest grant unto them Oh Lord.

All

And let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen