



VOCA TIONS
ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI

High School Lesson Plan
"You are a Priest Forever" Psalm 110

Purpose:

Upon completion of this lesson, students will have a deeper appreciation for:

- 1) the role and ministry of the Hierarchical Priesthood in the Catholic Church today;
- 2) the priest as a model of embracing the sufferings of Christ for the salvation of souls; and
- 3) suffering in their own lives as a means to their own salvation.

Catechetical:

At the Last Supper, Jesus Christ ordained His closest followers as the first priests and bishops. This gift was not offered without cost, however, for during His last instruction to them, He promised that each of them, in his own way, would have to embrace a cross of suffering however that suffering may manifest itself. By his willingness to embrace the particular cross that Jesus would give him, each of the Twelve would give greater glory to God, for 'no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for a friend.' (John 15:13)

This commission, this promise that Jesus originally gave on the night He inaugurated His Paschal mystery, has echoed through the passage of time and continues to be given to those whom Jesus chooses for His work today: His priests and bishops. Just prior to his ordination, the new bishop, priest or deacon lays prostrate before the altar to submit His life completely to Christ. It is an act of complete submission of will; it is an act of laying down one's life for the sake of his brothers and sisters in Christ.

However, the priest is not the only one to accept this cross. Rather, the priest is a model of discipleship for all of Jesus' disciples, so that as the priest willingly embraces his cross, he gives an example to the lay faithful to embrace their crosses as well. As we do so, we find that our burdens are made lighter by asking Jesus Himself to help us carry our crosses. In doing so, we come to a deeper awareness of life; we come to a deeper appreciation of Jesus dying for our sins so that we might have life through him. Ultimately, we discover that our sufferings, our anguishes, and our tears have meaning, a meaning that is inseparably tied to our salvation.

In fact, looking at the course of history, the greatest witness of evangelization, the greatest force for bringing others into the loving fold of the Church is the witness of those who have given their lives for Christ: the martyrs. The very word 'martyr' is derived from the Greek word for 'witness,' for they 'witnessed' their faith in the shedding of their blood for Christ. While today it is unlikely (although not impossible) that we will re-enter a period of actual physical martyrdom here in the United States, the witness of committed Christians, lay and ordained alike, living out their faith in a joyful way, can continue the evangelization begun by the first Christians, who lived in an age not totally unlike our own.

Assignment/Activity

PART I

John 17 is known as the 'Great Priestly Prayer of Jesus.' In this prayer, uttered just prior to His going to the Garden of Gethsemane and His arrest, Jesus prays to be glorified by His Father, so that He might return that glory back to the Father. In doing so, He is drawing us, His disciples, into that very same glory, consecrating us for the mission He will pass on to us from the Cross.

- 1) Have your students read through this Chapter, prayerfully considering each of the statements that Jesus makes.
- 2) Either through discussion or a written assignment, lead them through a conversation about suffering:
 - a. How did Jesus suffer for us? With what result?
 - b. In the example of the martyrs, how do we learn to "pick up our cross and follow after Him?"
 - c. God could have chosen any event to save us from our sins, yet He chose to suffer and die on the cross. What does that say about suffering to you?
 - d. In priestly life, a priest wears black as a sign of simplicity and as a sign of death to this world, how can we embrace a life of simplicity and death to this world for the sake of the Gospel?
- 3) Through this discussion, help them to understand that suffering is not an evil thing to be avoided, but yet is truly an unavoidable aspect of human life. If we unite our sufferings with Christ, we will be able to transcend the limits of our own suffering and embrace a new depth of awareness of how precious life truly is.

PART II

View the Rite of Ordination of a Priest (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u87iWVtaSWc> or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdNU54iBATI>)

- 1) In a journal entry, have the students write down their reactions and reflections to what they saw.
- 2) How does the priest model a life of humility in his ordination? In his living out of his life to lay down his life for his sheep?
- 3) What are ways they can embrace this same calling in their life?