

## FIRE GROUND PLAN

*For the CFC-SFC Lay Missionaries and Volunteer Catechists*

### TOPIC: GOD OUR FATHER

Audience: volunteer catechists, lay missionaries, young adults

Problem: Lack of better understanding, appreciation and trusting of God as God the Father

Time Frame: 2-3 hrs

### CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

#### Doctrine:

Jesus revealed that God is Father. He is Father not only in being creator; he is eternally Father by his relationship to his only Son, who reciprocally, is Son only in relation to his Father: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him." (*Mt 11:27*) (*CCC 240*)(*CFC 265*)

#### Worship:

Jesus taught that God is the Father of all, and instructed his disciples to pray to God as "Our Father." (*Mt 6:9*) (*CFC 281*)

#### Moral:

"Abba, Father" captures in a word that unique relationship to God enjoyed by Jesus. In this relationship Jesus invites all of us to share. To be a Christian, then, means to acknowledge that all persons are called to be adopted sons/daughters of the Father in Jesus Christ. Thus filial love of God our Father calls for loving service of our fellowmen. (*CFC 275*) "Love one another as I have loved you." (*Jn 13:34*)

### SOURCES:

CFC 270 – 282 God as Our Father

CCC 238-242 The Father revealed by the Son

John 1: 18 "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, ever at the Father side, who has revealed Him."

Matthew 11: 27 "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son..."

Matthew 6:9 Jesus taught that God is the Father of all, and instructed his disciples to pray to God as "Our Father."

Luke 15:11-31 The Parable of the Prodigal Son

### MEANS

- Think-Pair-Share
- Literal, Allegorical & Moral Reading of the Scriptural Text (*Luke 15:11-31*)
- Class discussion
- Prayer Construction
- Reflection

**OBJECTIVES:** At the end of the session, participants are expected to:

D: Reflect and express their understanding of God as Father in light of Jesus' "Abba" relationship

W: Compose a prayer to God the Father

M: Make resolutions on ways how to live a loving service of fellowmen as children of God our Father

### HUMAN EXPERIENCE BEFORE

The image of God as Father may have little relevance to many of Catholics. Some may have better appreciation of a God who is a Father because of their experience of healthy and good relationships with both of their parents. However, many are lacking of better understanding, appreciation and trusting of God as Father. Some may have difficulty in appreciating God as Father because of their unpleasant and negative experiences with their parents especially with their fathers.

### HUMAN EXPERIENCE DURING

**Think-Pair-Share:** Participants will be asked to recall their own experiences with their parents.

- Give at least 3 characteristics you like most of your father/guardian and 3 characteristics you like least of him.
- Give at least 3 characteristics you like most of your mother/guardian and 3 characteristics you like least of him.

After the sharing, a prayer of thanksgiving and forgiveness for our parents will be offered by the facilitator.

The facilitator summarizes the sharing.

Reflection Question: What is your image of God?

### Christian Message:

What is our image of God? **Jesus revealed that God is Father.** He is Father not only in being creator; he is eternally Father by his relationship to his only Son, who reciprocally, is Son only in relation to his Father: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him." (*Mt 11:27*) (*CCC 240*)(*CFC 265*)

By calling God "Father," the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and that he is at the same time goodness & loving care for all his children. God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood. (*Is 66:13, Ps 131:2*) The language of faith thus draws on the human experience of parents who are in a way the first representatives of God for man. This experience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood & motherhood. We ought to recall that God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is

neither man nor woman; he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood & motherhood. No one is father as God is FATHER. (CCC 239)

“Father” in the Creed means first and foremost “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and only in view of that, Father of all men. (CFC 265) Jesus’ own experience of God as “Abba” Father was the basis for his teaching. “No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, ever at the Father side, who has revealed Him. (Jn 1:18)

**Reflection Question:** What is your image of God as Father?

Link: One important image of God the Father that Jesus taught as is that image of the **“forgiving & merciful Father.”**

**Word of God:** The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-31)

Participants will be asked to read silently from their own Bible the text.

After individual silent reading of the text, the facilitator will read aloud the text.

The facilitator will lead the participants to the literal and allegorical meaning of the text.

Key texts:

**Verse 11-12:** The younger one said to his father, “Father, let me have the share of the estate that will come to me.” (A radical request of the young son to his father; it’s like saying to his father, “I wish you were dead.”)

**Verse 15:** so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on farm to feed the pigs (deepest and lowest stature in society)

**Verse 17-19:** “...treat me as one of your hired men.” (ambivalent feeling of the young son; “I will pay you up but I will not return.”)

**Verse 20:** He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him. (Father taking up the initiative; there is nothing we could do to merit God’s love)

**Verse 21:** “Father, I have sinned against heaven...I no longer deserve to be called your son.” (overwhelmed by the love of the Father; no more ambivalent feeling of the young son; conversion of the young son.)

**Verse 22-23:** “Quick, bring out the best robe...ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf...” (putting on the dignity, becoming free man, being reconciled with the community)

**Verse 31:** The father said to the elder son, “My son you are with me always and all I have is yours.” (Here we see how lost the elder son is. He has become a foreigner in his own house. True communion is gone.)

**Reflection Questions:** How do you see God as your Father? How would you describe your present relationship with Him?

**Reflection from Henri J. M. Nouwen**

(from the book The Return of the Prodigal Son):

The story of the prodigal son is the story of a God who goes searching for me and who doesn’t rest until he has found me. He urges and he pleads. He begs me to stop clinging to the powers of death and to let myself be embraced by arms that will carry me to the place where I will find the life I most desire.

The parable of the prodigal son is a story that speaks about a love that existed before any rejection was possible and a steadfast love that will still be there after all rejections have taken place. It is a love, if accepted in humility, is truly transforming, and thus enabling us to enter into a loving relationship with God, with ourselves and with others. It is the first and everlasting love of a God who is Father as well as Mother. It is the fountain of all true human love, even the most limited. Jesus’ whole life and preaching had only one aim: to reveal this inexhaustible motherly and fatherly love of his God

and to show the way to let that love guide every part of our daily lives.

**HUMAN EXPERIENCE AFTER**

The facilitator will lead the participants to the Moral reading of the text.

Jesus taught that God is the Father of all, and instructed his disciples to pray to God as **“Our Father.”** (Mt 6:9) (CFC 281)

“Abba, Father” captures in a word that unique relationship to God enjoyed by Jesus. In this relationship Jesus invites all of us to share. **To be a Christian, then, means to acknowledge that all persons are called to be adopted sons/daughters of the Father in Jesus Christ. Thus filial love of God our Father calls for loving service of our fellowmen.** (CFC 275) **“Love one another as I have loved you.”** (Jn 13:34)

**Activity:** Compose a personal prayer.

The participants will compose a personal prayer addressed to God the FATHER. Content of prayer may vary from praising of God, thanksgiving, asking for forgiveness, asking for grace of conversion/reparation. It will include concrete and specific actions/resolutions of loving service to fellowmen as brothers and sisters in Christ and as children of the loving and merciful Father.

(While composing the prayer, background music may be played.)

**Closing Prayer:**

After composing the prayer, each participant will recite in silence the prayer they made.

After praying silently their composition, the facilitator will lead the whole class in praying the **“OUR FATHER.”**