



*foundational  
preparation  
course*

**WITH BISHOP LUIS ZARAMA**

**THE OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION + DISCIPLESHIP**

# **ALWAYS BE READY**

*“ALWAYS BE READY TO MAKE A DEFENSE TO ANY ONE  
WHO CALLS YOU TO ACCOUNT FOR THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU, YET DO IT  
WITH GENTLENESS AND REVERENCE”*

(1 PET. 3:15)

**FORMATION**  
**DAY**



LAST UPDATE: **07.26.22**

CATHOLIC DIOCESE *of* RALEIGH

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## 'ALWAYS BE READY' FORMATION DAY

### Opening Prayer and Introduction

### Session I: Following Jesus Christ

- Video (5:12)
- Discussion 20 minutes

download

[bit.ly/3z19tgU](https://bit.ly/3z19tgU)



stream

[bit.ly/3z95tLF](https://bit.ly/3z95tLF)



### Session II: Proclaiming Jesus Christ

- Video (15:44)
- Small Group Discussion (25 minutes)
- Testimonies in Large Group (20 minutes)

[bit.ly/3vgEJrk](https://bit.ly/3vgEJrk)



[bit.ly/3SfwoOH](https://bit.ly/3SfwoOH)



### Session III: Accompanying Others to Jesus Christ

- Video (7:11)
- Discussion (30 minutes)

[bit.ly/3PwZV4q](https://bit.ly/3PwZV4q)



[bit.ly/3oCruxf](https://bit.ly/3oCruxf)



### Prayer and Reflection

### Lunch

### Session IV: Thresholds of Conversion

- Video (7:37)
- Discussion (30 minutes)

[bit.ly/3vgXP0l](https://bit.ly/3vgXP0l)



[bit.ly/3PDUb91](https://bit.ly/3PDUb91)



### Session V: Knowing God's Love

- Video (9:26)
- Discussion (30 minutes)

[bit.ly/3cHI4Jn](https://bit.ly/3cHI4Jn)



[bit.ly/3BmWgSv](https://bit.ly/3BmWgSv)



### Session VI: Commitment to God

- Video (8:09)
- Discussion (20 minutes)
- Commitment Card and Prayer of Commitment (10 minutes)

[bit.ly/3otigUf](https://bit.ly/3otigUf)



[bit.ly/3PZcm8P](https://bit.ly/3PZcm8P)



### Final Prayer and Dismissal

## SESSION I: FOLLOWING JESUS CHRIST

**IT IS VERY LIKELY** that most of the people we interact with on a daily basis are not committed followers of Jesus Christ. Most likely, through no fault of their own, their faith in him has not yet been activated and many times they are not even interested in the idea altogether. In this first video we look at ways in which we can make ourselves the spark that creates interest in the faith and in the person of Jesus.

### PART I: TALKING ABOUT JESUS

With the help of your group put together the story line between the two young people (Lettie and Bert) shown throughout the first video. **Discuss the following questions about the storyline of the video:**

- ▶ **Why do you think Lettie reached out to Bert? What do you think she perceived about him?**

- ▶ **What was their conversation like at the coffee shop?**

- ▶ **How did Bert finish his conversation with Lettie?**



## PART II. BEING LIKE JESUS

Bishop Luis Zarama described how the people were in awe of Jesus, how he acted, how he spoke, how he carried himself. This attracted people to him and his message.

In your group discuss the following questions:

- ▶ **How important do you think it is for us to attract people to the faith by the way we live our lives?**

- ▶ **What ways do you think you attract people to faith in Jesus?**



**PART III: BEING FOLLOWERS OF JESUS:**

Our Bishop also stressed that to evangelize we need “followers of Jesus” and not “Doctors of the Law”. While it is important to know about our faith, we will ultimately help others by the way we live our faith. In your group discuss the following questions:

▶ **What does it mean to follow Jesus?**

▶ **When did you make your decision to follow Jesus?**

▶ **Name some ways you find it hard to follow Jesus:**

***“IF ANY MAN WOULD COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS DAILY AND FOLLOW ME.” (LUKE 9:23)***



## SESSION II: PROCLAIMING JESUS CHRIST

**OUR FIRST POPE**, St. Peter the Apostle, wrote in his first letter: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”(1 Peter 3:15) If someone were to ask you “Why are you a Catholic?” or “Why do you go to church?” or “Why do you believe in Jesus?” What would your response be? In these next activities we will look at forming our own testimonies that we can share with those who ask us these questions and we will also form a presentation of why everyone needs to believe in Jesus and be members of His Holy Church.

### PART I: FORMING OUR OWN SHORT PERSONAL TESTIMONY

When someone asks why you personally follow Jesus or live your faith you need to share a personal testimony. In this activity you will form a 1-minute personal testimony you can refer to anytime someone questions you about your personal faith. Answer the following questions:

▶ **When did my faith become important to me?**

▶ **How did your life change when you began living it in Christ?**

▶ **How important is your relationship with God to you now?**



## PART II. GIVING A REASON TO WHY ALL ARE CALLED TO FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST (THE KERYGMA)

A common response to your testimony will be “well, that is good for you, and if that’s what makes you happy, I am happy for you” or something to that effect. The truth God wills everyone to enter into a relationship with Him in Jesus, who is the only way to salvation and fellowship with the Father. God wills everyone to be a part of His family, the Body of Christ, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

*First, let's remember from the video the steps of the proclamation of our faith:*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Recognizing we are created for communion with God      | 4. Recognize that it is up to us to say 'yes' to that plan |
| 2. Recognize that we have lost that communion through sin | 5. Recognize that the Church is where this takes place     |
| 3. Recognize that God's plan to rectify this Jesus Christ |  |

*Now, answer the following questions as simply as possible:*

▶ **In your own words, what does it mean that God is love and he created us for love?**

▶ **Explain briefly how sin separates us from the love of God.**

▶ **In your own words describe how Jesus' life and death was His plan for us.**

▶ **In your own words describe how Jesus' plan is for everyone and how we can say 'yes' to Him.**

▶ **How would you explain to someone how we can receive this relationship with God through the Church?**

Now, put those 5 responses together and share with someone in your group your first proclamation of our faith in Jesus!

*Each of us should find ways to communicate Jesus wherever we are. All of us are called to offer others an explicit witness to the saving love of the Lord, who despite our imperfections offers us his closeness, his word and his strength, and gives meaning to our lives.*



### SESSION III: ACCOMPANYING OTHERS TO JESUS

#### PART I: THOSE WHO HAVE BROUGHT US TO JESUS

As followers of Christ there will be people that help us in our journey towards living a life in Christ Jesus. They are part of our story of conversion. They participated in our evangelization, sometimes through simple and sometimes in profound ways.

In the space below, write the names of people who have helped you to come to faith in Jesus and one moment that person shared with you that impacted your faith life.

▶ **Name of the Person:**

▶ **One important moment:**

▶ **Name of the Person:**

▶ **One important moment:**

#### PART II: THOSE WHO WE ARE CALLED TO BRING TO JESUS

Just like the people mentioned above have helped us to know Jesus Christ and grow in our faith, we too will be called to do this in other's lives. God has already placed people in your life that are in need of knowing Jesus and who you can help to evangelize. Take some time in prayer to think about the people God may be "giving to you" to help them along this path.

Write down a few names in the space below. Say a prayer for these people and ask God to make you an instrument of conversion for them

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.





### PART III. BEGINNING TO ACCOMPANY THOSE WE ARE CALLED TO SERVE

As our bishop explains, just as it is a challenge to see Jesus in the Eucharist, it is a challenge to truly perceive those we serve. Many times, in our ministry with others, we go right to “the work”. “The work” is our catechesis lesson of the day, the food we give at the pantry, being ushers at mass, leading an activity for youth, etc. It is easy to lose sight of the individuals we are called to serve.

- ▶ **What are some ways that you can be more interested, invested and attentive to the people that you serve, especially those who you identified Part II?**

### PART IV. SHOWING THE JOY OF FOLLOWING CHRIST

In his Apostolic Exhortation “Joy of the Gospel” Pope Francis says:

*“Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but “by attraction”.*

- ▶ **Share some of the reasons your faith in Jesus brings joy to your life with a person in your group. Also discuss some ways that you can better show forth the joy of Jesus to those you serve.**

*“Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way.”*

*(Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis)*

## SESSION IV: THRESHOLDS OF CONVERSION

**GOD IS CALLING ALL OF US** to the difficult task of bringing people to Jesus Christ. This is a long process that has identifiable stages that we must be aware of if we are to effectively help the people God entrusts to us. The “Thresholds of Conversion” indicated in Sherry Weddell’s *Forming Intentional Disciples* provides us with a framework for understanding where people are at and how we can bring them to the next step in their conversion. These activities are designed to help give you the mindset of a “disciple maker”.

### PART I: IDENTIFYING THRESHOLDS

- A)** To begin with, go to the Threshold Discernment Chart and in the first column **add in the people “given to you”** that you identified in Part II of the Activity Sheet for Video 4 (Those who we are called to bring to Jesus).
- B)** Using the “Threshold Discernment Questions” below, try and figure out where these people might be in their process of conversion. **Write each person’s current threshold** in the second column of the “Threshold Discernment Chart”

### PART II. ACCOMPANYING OUR PEOPLE THROUGH THE NEXT THRESHOLD

Knowing what threshold someone is currently at will go a long way to helping you to help them to take their next step in their conversion process to Jesus Christ. If you are unsure of where someone is at that means that you simply have to spend more time with them as was looked at in Part III of Activity Sheet 3 (Beginning to accompany those we serve).

If you were able to put an answer to the threshold for each person that you are satisfied with, we will now think of ways that we can help them to move through this path towards discipleship.

For example: If someone does not yet have trust with you or the Church what are some ways you think you could help create that trust? If someone has a trusting relationship with you or seems to have a positive view of some aspect of our faith, how can you provoke curiosity in that person? And so on. . .

- C)** Try to think of two examples for each person. Fill in your ideas in the third column of the “Threshold Discernment Chart”.

### PART III. THRESHOLD DISCERNMENT QUESTIONS

These questions can help you identify where someone may be at in their conversion towards Jesus. If you are not sure how to answer these questions it probably means you need to spend more time being present and listening to them.

**INITIAL TRUST:** *“A person is able to trust or has a positive association with Jesus Christ, the Church, a Christian believer, or something identifiably Christian.”*

1. Does the person seem closed off or angry about things of faith? (If “yes” it is a sign of no trust)
2. Is this person at all interested in things of faith? (If “no” it is a sign of no trust)
3. Is this person friendly and genuinely glad to see you and spend time with you in real conversation? (If “yes” you are the bridge of trust for this person. If “no” keep working)

**SPIRITUAL CURIOSITY:** *“A person finds himself intrigued by or desiring to know more about Jesus, his life, and his teachings or some aspect of the Christian faith.”*

1. Is the person challenging you on your own faith?
2. Is the person asking questions about faith?
3. Is the person asking questions about your life and practices?

**SPIRITUAL OPENNESS:** *“A person acknowledges to him or herself and to God that he or she is open to the possibility of personal and spiritual change.”*

1. Is the person open to attending faith-related activities?
2. Does the person ask for prayers for themselves or others?
3. Does the person seem to enjoy listening to faith-related messages and generally agree with them?

**SPIRITUAL SEEKING:** *“The person moves from being essentially passive to actively seeking to know the God who is calling him or her.”*

1. Is the person seeking answers to spiritual questions by themselves?
2. Does the person go to faith-based activities without being invited or encouraged by others?
3. Is the person praying and attending mass, sacraments more regularly?
4. Have you seen a notable change in the way the person acts?

**INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP:** *“This is the decision to “drop one’s nets,” to make a conscious commitment to follow Jesus in the midst of his Church as an obedient disciple and to reorder one’s life accordingly.”*

1. Is the person excited about their faith and eager to tell others about God?
2. Does the person spend extra time in study, prayer, ministry, faith-events?
3. Does the person live a moral life that is in keeping with God’s plan for us?



## THRESHOLD DISCERNMENT CHART

NAME	THRESHOLD	IDEAS TO ACCOMPANY



## SESSION V: KNOWING GOD'S LOVE

### PART I: KNOWING GOD'S LOVE FOR US IN PRAYER

God's love for us is intimate and personal. We may have heard the phrase "God loves you" so many times that it no longer has meaning. To understand His love, we have to reflect on the love others have shown us.

▶ What person in your life loves you?

▶ How do you know this person/these people love you?

▶ What does it feel like to be loved?

▶ Can you imagine God knowing and loving you in the same way as the people in your life love you?

▶ Do you believe it is possible to experience the love of God in prayer in an even more real way than with the people in your life?

▶ How does spending time with the people in your life make your love and relationship grow?



## **PART II: KNOWING GOD’S LOVE FOR US THROUGH HIS CHURCH**

As Catholics we know that God has never abandoned the Church he founded (Matt. 16:18) and that He loves His Church like a spouse (Eph. 5:25), the Church is the pillar and foundation of truth (1 Tim 3:15) who by the power of the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth (John 16:13). God’s gift of love to us, and the way we experience His love is His Holy Church. Jesus continues to teach to us through the Church and he continues to be present to us in the Holy Sacraments. Answer the following questions in your group or individually to discern whether we are allowing God to love in the way he desires.

▶ **Do I sometimes struggle with the teachings of the Church?**

▶ **What can I do to better understand the teachings God has given to us through the Church?**

▶ **Do I attend mass on Sundays and Holy days? Do I attend confession often?**

▶ **Do I trust that following the teachings of the Church and going to the sacraments frequently will help my relationship with Jesus grow?**

▶ **In the video you may have noticed a change in Lettie. She has now begun to pray, to receive the sacraments and is involved in parish ministry. How do these things relate to one another?**

*“I have loved you with an everlasting love; and so, I have continued my faithfulness to you” (Jer. 31:3)*

## SESSION VI: OUR COMMITMENT TO GOD

**IN ORDER TO TRULY BEAR FRUIT IN OUR MINISTRY** we must have an intimate relationship with God. The only way we can grow this relationship is by experiencing Him in prayer and the sacraments. In these activities we will solidify our commitment to God as missionary disciples.

### PART I: OUR COMMITMENT TO PRAYER:

Meditation is spending intimate time with God in prayer. It goes beyond words and focuses on being in His presence, listening to His personal word to us and being convicted of His will for us. In order to meditate in a Christian way, read the following as a group:

*Let's Review of the Steps of Lectio Divina from Video:*

1. Read the passage
2. Think about the passage (meditation)
3. Talk to God about the passage and listen to His response (prayer)
4. Spending time in God's presence (contemplation)

*The same steps are present when praying a decade of the Rosary:*

1. Read out the mystery (use scripture if possible)
2. Think about the mystery as you pray the prayers (meditation)
3. Talk to God about the mystery and listen to his response (prayer)
4. Spend time in God's presence through the mystery (contemplation)

Choose a story from the Gospels or a mystery of the rosary and go through the steps explained above. (See attachment for Gospel examples and mysteries of the rosary)

If you wish to grow in your love of God, it is important to make a daily commitment to prayerful Christian meditation. What will your commitment be? Make sure to set a realistic goal that you can achieve and then build on in the future. It might only be one passage or one mystery a day to begin with. The importance is not the amount of content covered but the time spent in the presence of God.

Answer the following questions to formalize your commitment to prayerful meditation:

▶ **Can you commit 15 to 30 minutes of time each day for mediation?**

▶ **What time of day will you spend this time with God?**

▶ **Where will you do your daily prayer** (Choose a place with minimal distractions that is conducive to prayer)



## PART II: OUR COMMITMENT TO GOD'S MERCY

Do not be deceived! Sin is the greatest obstacle to union with God and fruitfulness in ministry. We are all sinners, have all fallen short of the glory of God and are in need of His forgiveness. In order to share God's mercy with others, we must experience God's mercy in the sacrament he gave to us. Answer the following questions to create a plan to take advantage of God's mercy in confession:

▶ **What are the obstacles I experience to making a regular confession?**

▶ **When is confession available at my church and the churches around me?** (Check the parish websites)

▶ **When will I go to confession next?** (Put a date, time and place)

▶ **How often will I commit to go to confession?** (Once every Advent and Easter, every month, more often?)

Remember that confession takes away sin, but in the sacrament, we also receive grace to help us to not fall into those same sins again.



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### **PART III: OUR COMMITMENT TO JESUS' PRESENCE IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT**

Jesus is always truly and uniquely present in our Catholic churches in the tabernacles waiting for us to visit and bless us by his special presence there. Spending time in His presence will help us to grow in love of Him and help us to know His will for our lives. Some examples of how we can spend more time in His presence in our churches are:

- Visiting a Catholic Church close to my place of work or somewhere I visit once a week.
- Showing up early to Sunday mass to spend time in prayer and prepare for mass.
- Attending a holy hour conducted at a local church
- Visiting a perpetual adoration chapel

We recommend that you make a visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament at least once a week for prayer.

▶ **What is your plan to make this a reality in your life?**

### **PART IV: OUR COMMITMENT TO STUDY**

Once we begin to truly lead others to God, they will have many questions for us. While we may never have all of the answers, there are ways that we can prepare ourselves for basic questions about what we believe and begin to know God better. Would you be willing to?:

- Go through the basic catechist certification offered through the diocese of Raleigh?
- Begin to read from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, or the smaller Compendium to the Catechism?
- Look up answers to our own questions we have online (Catholic Answers webpage for example)

▶ **What small increase in study can you make to know God and his truth better?**

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## THE COMMITMENT OF THE MINISTRY SERVANT

### DAILY

Meditate for at least 15 minutes (preferably Lectio Divina)

Pray with or for your family

### WEEKLY

Attend Holy Mass on the Lord's Day

Make a visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament for prayer

Spend time in faith study or spiritual reading

### MONTHLY

Make a good sacramental confession



### COMMITMENT PRAYER

**LORD JESUS,** You are the vine and I am your branch. I cannot bear fruit in myself or others unless I abide in You.

I commit myself to these practices as a way of remaining in You, trusting in You, and allowing You to work in me and through me as You will. By your grace and the accompaniment of Your Blessed Mother I pray for the grace of perseverance. That in all things You may be glorified, and that sinners would turn to You and receive your mercy.

*Amen.*

SIGNATURE:

DATE:



**CATHOLIC DIOCESE *of* RALEIGH**

**FOUNDATIONAL PREPARATION WAS CREATED BY THE OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION AND DISCIPLESHIP  
AND FUNDED BY THE BISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL**



*foundational preparation course*  
WITH BISHOP LUIS RAFAEL ZARAMA