

2020-2021

SPiRIT Guide

Using SPiRIT is a transforming process that encourages teens to wrestle with what the Sunday gospels and Church tradition ask of them in their lives.

PASTORAL VISION

SPiRIT sows the Word of God in the good ground of teens' lives, where it can multiply a hundredfold in our world.

SPiRIT is a teaching tool for catechists and youth ministers.

Every issue invites young people into dialogue with the Sunday gospel and Catholic tradition—to question and imagine, to find words and speak for themselves, to share and pray.

SPiRIT makes faith sharing easy and worthwhile. Who will help teens do soul work if parish and school groups don't? Many families will—and who else?

If your teens are talking about everything but religion, SPiRIT



stories and articles can change that. They prime the pump for authentic God talk. They help teens value their own God moments and life questions, work through conflicts and doubts. *SPiRIT* stories spark the deep sharing that allows teens to know and trust one another and over time share their concerns.

SPiRIT issues call teens to put their faith into action—to live it!

SPiRIT initiates a habit of reflecting on the gospel that cycles the mystery of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection into teens' lives and over a lifetime transforms the Christian into Christ.

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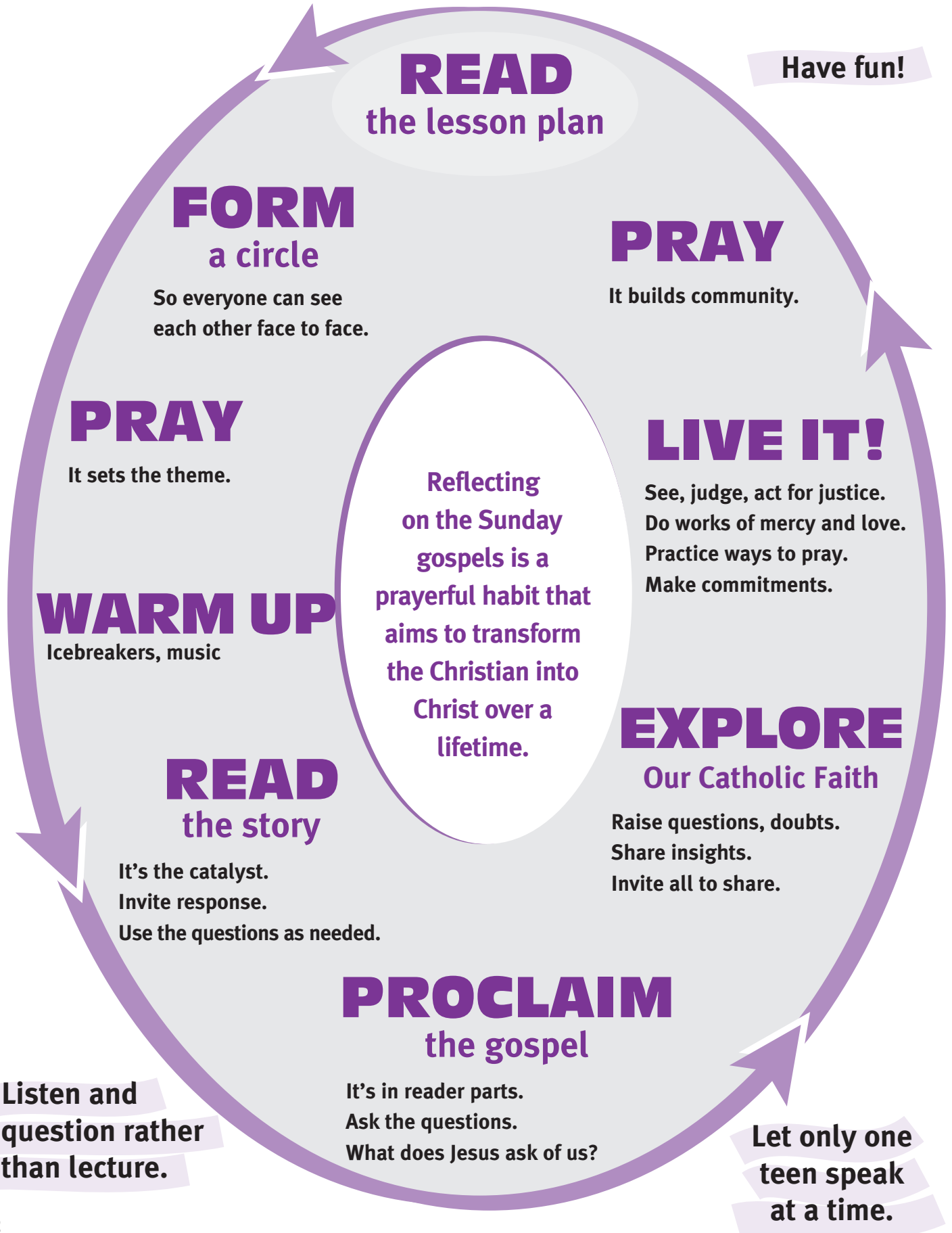
HOW SPiRIT WORKS

Each *SPiRIT* issue provides four pages written just for teens that include stories about life, the Sunday Gospel in reader parts, and presentations of Christian tradition.

- **Stories and interviews** anchor each session in teens' experience.
- **Questions** invite teens to interpret what the gospel asks of them.
- **Our Catholic Faith** helps teens explore Catholic tradition in their language.
- **Faith in Action!** activities challenge teens to put the gospel into action globally and locally in their schools, parishes, and neighborhoods.

Lesson plans inside ▶▶▶

Using SPIRIT Step by Step



How to Use a SPIRIT Issue

S*PIRIT* is a teen-friendly catechetical program that centers around the Sunday gospels of the liturgical year. This makes *SPIRIT* a lectionary-based program; the lectionary is the book that organizes the Church's reading of scripture into three yearly cycles.

The *SPIRIT* program provides 28 weekly issues that aim to instruct teens in the faith the Catholic Christian community lives. *SPIRIT* instructs through faith sharing,

through stories and questions that get teens talking to one another about their experience, values, and all the gospel asks of them in their lives. *SPIRIT* aims to build Christian community among teens through breaking open the Word, reflecting, and praying together.

Each *SPIRIT* issue has a one-page lesson plan that outlines a 60- to 90-minute session with teens. These lesson plans are the key to using every *SPIRIT* issue effectively.

Lessons are numbered and dated, so catechists can find the guide to the *SPIRIT* issue with ease.

Each *SPIRIT* session follows a three-step plan:

- 1 Sharing Life Stories
- 2 Reflecting on the Gospel
- 3 Living Our Catholic Faith.

SPIRIT's clear design makes preparing for sessions as quick and easy as reading through the issue and guide.

Step 1 Sharing Life Stories

Pray *SPIRIT* provides a prayer on its cover for each session. The prayer opens the theme of the gospel and lesson. Lesson plans suggest gathering your teens in a prayer circle and inviting them to bring any concern they have about people in their lives or events in the news into the prayer. Some teens may always keep these concerns in their hearts; some may welcome praying about them in the group.

Music A separate publication called *SPIRIT XTRA* suggests popular music to fit the theme of each weekly issue. *SPIRIT*'s music editor describes the theme of each song, provides key lyrics, and suggests questions that teens can discuss after listening to the song. As new music comes out, *SPIRIT* updates its music suggestions on its website: goodgroundpress.com.

Icebreakers *SPIRIT* lessons often provide easy and fun activities to help groups feel at ease and connect with themes in the issue. Some of these icebreakers are part of

the lesson plan. Many of them come from the *SPIRIT* book, *Icebreakers for Teen Groups*, which is available from Good Ground Press: 800-232-5533 or goodgroundpress.com.

A good icebreaker gives each group member a chance to speak, to hear his or her voice aloud talking about something non-threatening. Checklists, short games, remembering exercises, and preference questions invite participation rather than right answers. Icebreakers help groups bond in fun.

READ In every issue *SPIRIT* provides fiction, articles, or interviews by or about teens. These stories and articles provide teens a common medium for discussion and a catalyst for surfacing their own experiences. These stories are not an end in themselves but a means for teens to talk about their own issues.

Stories work like magic in helping young people explore their own experience. By struggling with the dilemmas of believable fiction or real-life characters, teens gain practice in

making their own moral judgments and expressing their own spiritual values.

Familiarize yourself with the story or article before the session. Always let teens respond freely to the piece when the group finishes reading it. Let their responses be a starting point for discussion.

Look over the questions in each issue. Make them your own, so you can work them into a session creatively. Look over the answer section in the guide to confirm what a question is getting at.

To read the stories, articles, or interviews, have teens take turns reading the piece aloud, breaking for a new reader at each large capital letter. Some stories lend themselves to silent reading. Some lesson plans suggest that teens read aloud to each other in small groups.

The purpose of the story or article is to provide the group a common starting point for surfacing experiences in teens' lives to which the gospel may speak.

Many adolescents have difficulty talking about themselves in any way or finding words for their feelings. Being able to talk about a story or interview can be a stepping stone to faith sharing in the group. Teens need to talk because they often feel isolated and alone; without talking they won't know others have similar feelings.

Building up the trust that will make teens comfortable talking about their real struggles takes time. It can take a year for them to realize you as a catechist or teacher will listen and help them think things through, not just put them down or tell them an easy right answer.

Questions *SPIRIT* questions invite teens to interpret the story. Make the questions your own, but don't be afraid to ask them as written. Ask your own questions, too, and invite teens to do the same. Don't have group members write answers out. That makes a faith-sharing group too much like school.

Step 2 Reflecting on the Gospel

Gospel *SPIRIT* puts the gospel in drama form to invite teens to step into conversation with Jesus and the other people in the stories. Putting the gospel in reader parts allows several teens to take an active part in proclaiming the gospel each week.

Be creative in proclaiming the gospel. Invite members of your group to create a gospel skit or do a contemporary version of the gospel situated in our time. If you have teen liturgies, have teens dramatize the gospel for these eucharistic celebrations.

Invite teens to respond to the gospel. Notice if someone has a question or an insight. Use the questions to interpret the gospel but not to limit faith sharing. If something in the gospel hits a chord, let the Spirit speak in the teens.

Questions Questions ask teens to interpret the gospel and challenge them to make links between the *SPIRIT* story or article, the gospel, and their lives. Talking about the gospel helps teens interpret it at their own level and explore its meaning for them in today's world.

The questions *SPIRIT* raises in no way exhaust the possible meanings of the gospel but are questions the editors think relevant to teens. Don't hesitate to go beyond these questions.

The aim of *SPIRIT* is conversion and transformation in Christ. The questions invite faith sharing—reflecting on one's own life experience. This is a transforming process. Teens and catechists open themselves to the possibility of Jesus and his teachings claiming their hearts, giving them direction, vision, and hope. A single insight may be enough to change a teen's life.

Step 3 Living Our Catholic Faith

Our Catholic Faith

Besides a story and the Sunday gospel, *SPIRIT* issues include each week a feature presenting Christian tradition—the doctrines of the *Apostles' Creed*, the sacraments, Christian moral life, ways to practice prayer. These features flow from the gospel. *SPIRIT* often supplies a short quotation from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to summarize a doctrinal concept. Teens can find the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* online and use the paragraph number to find further readings.

Faith in Action *SPIRIT* lessons lead teens toward action in their communities. The *Live It* activities especially call young people to do or act on the word Jesus speaks. *SPIRIT*

faith-sharing groups can become small Christian communities that reflect on and practice the gospel in an ongoing process.

Social Action *Live It* features often emphasize Catholic social teaching and concrete ways to do the work of both charity and justice. Social action takes both forms. The work of charity involves addressing immediate needs for basics, such as food, clothing, shelter, health care. The work of justice involves changing systems that leave people out or behind. Many of these references provide Internet sites that link teens to national and international groups working for human rights.

Concluding Prayer

The *SPIRIT* lesson plans provide prayer for the end of each session. In some cases, *SPIRIT* issues provide whole prayer services or directions for teens to create prayer services together. Lesson plans suggest that teens gather in a prayer circle. Catechists and teachers can follow the plan's suggestions for prayer or lead teens in making their own.

A catechist's or teacher's willingness to pray with teens gives powerful witness to the importance of God in our lives. It is a concrete way of sharing our deepest faith and of bonding together as a community. Do a simple prayer conclusion for every session.

Unit 2:

1st to 4th Sundays of Advent
November 29, 2020—December 20, 2020
Vol. 33, Nos. 9-12

Waking Up to God’s Nearness

Each year just after the busiest shopping day of the year (the Friday after Thanksgiving), the Church celebrates the 1st Sunday of Advent and begins a new liturgical year. This Advent we begin the Cycle B scriptures readings from the lectionary, which come mainly from the first gospel to be written—Mark.

In our North American culture the religious messages of the Advent season intermix with our consumer culture. “Peace, Joy, Sale!” says one Christmas window. Ours is not the only culture dulled to God’s presence. In the gospels of the Advent season, we hear prophetic voices from the Old Testament and from the gospels insisting, “Our God is here,” the theme of this four-week unit.

The word *Advent* means *coming*. The season of Advent celebrates three comings: the coming of God among us in the birth of Jesus; Jesus’ promised coming at the end of time; and Jesus’ coming in word, sacrament, and the experiences of our lives today.

The gospel for the 1st Sunday of Advent always looks toward the

end of time. Mark’s gospel insists in the passage we read on Sunday, November 27, that we don’t know the day or the hour Jesus will come. The gospel challenges us to watch, to stay awake. The door of the future opens every moment.

In the science fiction story “The Sky Is Falling,” *SPIRIT* taps into current threats to the capacity of Earth’s life systems to sustain our human overconsumption. This theme raises concern about the future and the end results of our lifestyles.

In the gospels of both the 2nd and 3rd Sundays of Advent the Church hears the prophetic voice of John the Baptist, whose preaching prepares the way for Jesus’ ministry. *SPIRIT* urges young people to wake up to the meaning in traditions, and to begin to see, judge, and act as prophets themselves.

A teenager accepts a call from God in the gospel for the 4th Sunday of Advent. The angel Gabriel asks the teenage Mary to be the mother of God’s son. Her prophetic yes is a model of faith for every Christian. She agrees that God can take flesh

in her womb. She will care for this child, rock and feed him, walk with him in his life. Our God is here, one of us, in Mary’s child.

The first readings for the first three Sundays of Advent come from the book of Isaiah. This book contains the prophetic words of at least three different prophets in three different centuries. Each adds chapters speaking for God in their own time. The Isaiah of chapters 40-55 comforts Israel in the 540s B.C. and calls the exiles home on the highway God is making through the wilderness.

The Isaiah of chapters 56-66 speaks to the people who are rebuilding Israel as a religious community in the 400s B.C. This Isaiah promises a Spirit-filled prophet who will bring good news of God’s favor to the poor. We Christians see Jesus as this prophet and take his mission to the poor as our own.

Every generation has its own work to recognize that our God is here. Every generation is an unfinished chapter in the unfolding history of God’s people.

Sundays/Seasons		Gospel/Theme	Teens’ Lives	Catholic Faith, Practice
November 29, 2020 1st Sunday of Advent	Unit 2 Waking Up to God’s Nearness	Mark 13.33-37 Stay Awake	Caring for our earth	Prayer: staying awake to life
December 6, 2020 2nd Sunday of Advent		Mark 1.1-8 Prepare the Way	Christmas traditions	Catholic traditions, Las Posada
December 13, 2020 3rd Sunday of Advent		John 1.6-8, 19-28 John the Baptist	A peer as prophet	See, judge, act
December 20, 2020 4th Sunday of Advent		Luke 1.26-38 Annunciation	Praying with Mary	We are God’s home

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND

The liturgical year begins on the 1st Sunday of Advent. In Advent we begin a new lectionary cycle of scripture readings. This Sunday we begin Cycle B during which we read semi-continuously from Mark's gospel on the Sundays of Ordinary Time. Strangely, however, we read from near the end of Mark's gospel, 13.33-37, this Sunday before reading Mark 1.1-8 next Sunday. Like people who read the end of a mystery book before deciding to finish reading it, the Church imagines how the mystery of God's coming among us turns out in the end before we begin exploring the mystery from the beginning.

Mark 13 is a chapter set apart in Mark's gospel by its apocalyptic character. Apocalyptic is a highly-symbolic kind of writing that pictures good and evil locked in a battle that good will win. In Christian apocalyptic Jesus is the savior, the one who will come again in glory. His second coming will be the end of the world—its goal and fulfillment. Mark 13 is the only apocalyptic chapter in Mark's gospel. It comes just before Mark's telling of the passion in chapters 14 and 15; it anticipates the challenge of following Jesus in the post-Easter church.

In the science fiction story "The Sky Is Falling," *SPIRIT* taps into current threats to the capacity of Earth's life systems to sustain our human overconsumption. This theme raises concern about the future and the end results of our lifestyles.

NOTE: As a Christmas gift for your teens, consider asking their parents to write letters in which they express their dreams for and appreciation of their sons and daughters. Write a letter to parents to suggest doing this. If you aren't sure all parents will come through so everyone in your group gets a letter, suggest parents do a letter as a gift they give to their teen at home.

SHARING LIFE STORIES

Objective: The young people will recognize God is present from beginning to end of creation.

Music: See *SPIRIT XTRA* for a song that fits the gospel theme.

Pray (cover) Have your teens make an Advent wreath for your gathering space, or gather for your prayer around the Advent wreath in your church. Light one candle. Invite your teens to mention people for whom they want to pray during the Advent season. Use your *SPIRIT* issue to pray together the prayer at top left.

Icebreaker: Consider using Arches of Trust, *Icebreakers for Teen Groups*, page 35.

Story: The Sky Is Falling (pages 1-3) To introduce the story and theme of Sunday's gospel, have your teens use the cover visual and story title to suggest what the story is about. Invite them to read and respond to the quote from Pope Benedict on page 2 about global warming.

● Have your teens take turns reading a few paragraphs at a time and respond to the story. Raise questions 1-4 as you need them to prompt discussion. 1. *Life on Ariel's planet is threatened; people are reluctant to explore the threat or to make any changes in their lives to deal with*

the threat. 2. Real change can be difficult. Sometimes it seems easier to bury our heads in the sand rather than face the truth about a situation. 3. Openended. 4. The nursery story is a tale of mistaken belief that disaster is imminent. People are reacting to the threat of climate change in our world today the way they do in the story: some believe it, some don't.

● Conclude by asking if any teens have visited the website mentioned on page 2 or computed their carbon footprint in another way. Have them read the box on page 3. Invite them to share all they know about changing our lifestyles to help sustain Earth. Perhaps they will want to take the St. Francis Pledge.

REFLECTING ON THE GOSPEL

Objective: The young people will appreciate Jesus' call to stay awake to who he is.

Stay Awake (page 3) Have two teens take the parts of Jesus 1 and Jesus 2, and proclaim the gospel.

● Discuss question 5-6. 5. *Encourage teens to talk personally about what keeps them awake to the significance of life and to God's presence in their lives. Perhaps activities in nature such as canoeing, backpacking, skiing awaken them to God's presence, or quiet time to reflect, or worship with other teens on retreats, or being with friends. If some teens find Sunday Mass puts them to sleep, encourage them to get involved with their church to improve the music. 6. Openended.*

● Have two students read the gospel a second time. Take a reflective minute to have group members echo aloud the words or phrases in the gospel that most touch them.

LIVING OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

Objective: The young people will evaluate what keeps them awake as Christians.

Our Catholic Faith: Stay Awake/Wake Up (page 4) Ask your teens to identify ways their faith in Jesus or in God has changed from when they were children. Explain that in Sunday's gospel Jesus anticipates his disciples will have to grow in their commitment to him. Read the opening paragraph aloud. Divide your group into fours to read the rest of page 4.

Faith in Action (page 4) Ask them to share one way to stay awake to what is important in life. Invite them to share kinds of prayer each likes. Perhaps some do centering prayer or have Advent customs in their families. Invite the small groups to share their ideas with the large group. Stress the importance of participating in parish worship.

Two Feet of Charity and Justice Both feet invite teens to use the Internet to learn about pressing human needs in the two-thirds world. Identify who can research the recommended sources and help the rest of the group plan ways to reach out to people in need during the Advent season.

Concluding Prayer Invite teens to name one person or insight for which each feels grateful. Pray together again the prayer on the *SPIRIT* cover.