

Session 8 of 8 | Until the End of the Age

What We Receive, We Hand On

The mission entrusted to the whole Church

After seven weeks on bishops, keys, and altars, what belongs to you?

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers that the first community handed on a life and not only information, that Timothy received the faith from his grandmother before he received it from Paul, and that every baptized person shares Christ's mission without every person holding the same office. Then each person makes one concrete commitment.

Catholic Touchstone. The whole Church is apostolic. All the baptized share in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission. The common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood differ in essence, not only in degree, and are ordered to one another. (CCC 863-864; 1546-1547; Lumen Gentium, 10.)

What You Need to Know

Acts 2 shows what was actually handed on. The first believers "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Teaching, communion, Eucharist, prayer, and material care for one another, in one community. A faith passed on only as information would be too small to describe this. So would religious activity cut loose from the Apostles' teaching. The study has spent seven weeks on the structure. Tonight is about the life the structure carries.

Timothy is the study's best case for the whole Church. Paul appointed him and laid hands on him. But Paul is careful to say where Timothy's faith came from first: "a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice," and "from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings." Two women and a household delivered the faith to the boy before the Apostle ordained the man. Recognizing the ministry of bishops and priests does not make parents, sponsors, friends, or catechists passive. Their mission is real. It is not the same office.

Say the distinction one last time, and say it warmly. All the baptized share in Christ's priesthood by faith, worship, witness, and charity. The ministerial priesthood exists to serve that baptismal life and differs from it in essence, not only in degree (CCC 1547). Baptism gives a true share in Christ's mission. It does not give the power to consecrate the Eucharist or to absolve sins (CCC 1411; 1461). Neither side of that sentence should be dropped, and neither side should be said with a sneer.

The last session must not end as a successful argument. Vine and branches sets the tone: fruit comes from remaining in Christ, and the Catechism applies exactly that to the apostolate (CCC 864). Give the sealed guesses one final revision, then ask each person for one specific, realistic commitment to accompany another person. Faithful accompaniment normally takes patience, not one perfect explanation.

Terms, in plain words

- **Apostolate:** the mission of the whole Church to spread Christ's kingdom, in which every member has a part (CCC 863).
- **Common priesthood:** the share in Christ's priesthood that all the baptized have, exercised by faith, worship, and a holy life.
- **Ministerial priesthood:** the priesthood of bishops and priests, conferred by Holy Orders, which serves the common priesthood and differs from it in essence.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Psalms 78:1-7. What "our fathers have told us" we will not hide from the children, but tell to the coming generation, so that they should "set their hope in God." The purpose is not nostalgia. It is a living faith reaching people not yet born. Read it as a description of what the group is now responsible for.

Keep this distinction | leader only

Do not describe every Catholic as an apostolic successor in the episcopal sense. Baptism gives a real share in Christ's mission, not the power to consecrate or to absolve (CCC 1411; 1461; 1546-1547). And do not let the distinction sound like a demotion. The whole study has been about gifts reaching people; tonight they reach the group.

Voices of the Church

St. John Paul II

Summary: The lay faithful are sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of Christ. They exercise the priestly office by uniting their daily lives to the Eucharist. They exercise the prophetic office by witnessing to the Gospel in word and deed, and the kingly office by ordering the affairs of the world according to God. This is not a lesser Christianity; it is the Christian life of the baptized in the world.

Christifideles Laici, 14

Second Vatican Council

Summary: The laity derive the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ the Head. Incorporated into his Body by Baptism and strengthened by the Spirit in Confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself. The apostolate is exercised in faith, hope, and charity, which the Spirit pours into all the members of the Church.

Apostolicam Actuositatem, 3

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Summary: Christ is the source of the Church's whole apostolate, and its fruitfulness depends on the members' living union with him. Charity, drawn above all from the Eucharist, is the soul of the whole apostolate.

CCC 864

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 863-864.** The whole Church is apostolic; fruitfulness depends on union with Christ.
- **CCC 1546-1547.** The common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood, differing in essence and ordered to one another.
- **CCC 1411; 1461.** Consecration and absolution belong to the ordained ministry.
- **CCC 897-900.** The vocation and apostolate of the laity.

Session Goals

1. Describe the shared life of the community in Acts 2 and what would be missing if the faith were only information.
2. Distinguish lay discipleship from ordained ministry without devaluing either, using Timothy's grandmother and Timothy's ordination.
3. Revise the sealed guess a final time, and make one specific, realistic commitment to accompany another person.

Thread Watch | leader only

Thread A resolves: Christ's teaching, pastoral ministry, and sacramental gifts belong together, and all the baptized share the mission they serve. After Question 5, invite each person to rewrite their sealed guess in one sentence. Do not grade it. Then move straight to Send and hold the group to one concrete commitment each.

Timed Plan | 75 to 90 minutes

Clock	Segment	If you only have 60
0 to 8	Opening prayer and Win	One Win question
8 to 26	Build, Questions 1 and 2	Keep
26 to 44	Build, Questions 3 to 5, with the live discovery	Drop Question 5. Assign Psalm 78:1-7 for home
44 to 50	Final revision of the sealed guess	Keep, three minutes
50 to 60	The objection, built then pressed	Keep
60 to 70	Send: one commitment each	Keep
70 to 75	Memory verse and closing prayer	Keep

For 90 minutes, let the Build discussion breathe and add the Dig Deeper passage at the end.

OBJECTION BENCH | leader only. Answers for questions that may come up. Do not read aloud.

If someone says: *This whole study made lay people sound like spectators.*

You can answer: Then tonight is the correction, and it is in the text. Timothy's faith came from Lois and Eunice before Paul ever laid hands on him. The first community in Acts 2 was not clergy. Every baptized person shares Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission (CCC 897-900). What not everyone holds is a particular office within it.

If someone says: *Peter says we are all a royal priesthood. So there is no special priesthood.*

You can answer: The Church says the same thing Peter does: the baptized are a royal priesthood (CCC 1546). The same Bible also shows Paul laying hands on Timothy and telling Titus to appoint elders. Two participations in one priesthood, ordered to each other. Neither cancels the other.

If someone says: *I am not qualified to hand on the faith. I barely understand it.*

You can answer: Lois and Eunice were not theologians. Psalm 78 asks parents to tell the next generation what they were told. You hand on what you received, admit what you do not know, and bring people to those who know more. That is not a lesser form of the mission. It is most of the mission.

Answers at a Glance

One line per question, for the leader who needs to check quickly during the night. Full answers are in Part Two.

1. Acts 2: teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayers, sharing. A life, not a file.
2. 2 Timothy 1 and 3: Lois, Eunice, the sacred writings from childhood. Faith reached Timothy through a household first.
3. John 15: fruit comes from remaining in the vine. Our effort cannot replace union with Christ. CCC 864 says the same of the apostolate.
4. Matthew 28 with CCC 1546-1547: all the baptized share the mission; the ordained hold a distinct sacramental ministry within it.
5. Psalm 78: tell the coming generation, so they set their hope in God. The commission, in a family.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Read aloud everything marked SAY, ASK, and READ. Keep everything marked LEADER to yourself. Share each parchment box only after the group has talked.

Opening Prayer

SAY Lord Jesus, thank you for the faith we have received. Join our learning to love and our prayer to action. Show each of us how to serve the people you have already placed in our lives. Amen.

Win | Begin with experience

LEADER Invite brief responses. Anyone may pass. Take one question if time is short.

ASK 1. Who has helped you grow in faith by staying beside you over time, patiently?

ASK 2. What one part of this study has changed how you see your own place in the Church?

Build | Let the text lead

READ Read Acts 2:42-47.

ASK 1. What practices mark the community's life? Which of them is teaching, and which is something more? What would be missing if the faith were reduced to information?

ANSWER | share after the discussion

They devoted themselves to "the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." They shared possessions with those in need, attended the temple together, and broke bread in homes with glad hearts. Teaching is there, first. But so are communion, Eucharist, prayer, and charity. A Church that hands on the faith must teach the truth, worship, and care for people as one life, not three programs.

READ Read 2 Timothy 1:5 and 3:14-15.

ASK 2. Who gave Timothy the faith, and in what order? What does that do to a picture in which only ordained ministers hand the faith on?

LEADER Two women are named. Make sure the group says their names.

ANSWER | share after the discussion

Paul remembers a sincere faith "that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice," and reminds Timothy that "from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings." Timothy received the faith from a household before he received a ministry from an Apostle. Both happened. The continuing mission is not carried only by the ordained. Families and ordinary believers have a real part in bringing people into the life of faith, and Paul honors it by name.

Live Discovery

SAY Look in John's account of Jesus' last teaching before his Passion for the image of a vine and branches. Find what he says is necessary for bearing fruit.

LEADER Allow a short search. Supply John 15:1-8 only if the group is stuck. Then have someone read the passage the group found.

ASK 3. What does Jesus say produces fruit? What must stay central for anyone trying to help another person receive the faith?

ANSWER | share after the discussion

"He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." Fruit comes from remaining in the vine. Effort, technique, and good arguments cannot replace union with Christ. Prayer, obedience, and dependence on grace are not extras added to an evangelization plan; they are the plan. The Catechism says the same of the whole apostolate: its fruitfulness depends on living union with Christ. (CCC 864.)

READ Return to Matthew 28:18-20 and read CCC 1546-1547.

SAY We end where we began. Listen for what belongs to everyone and what belongs to some.

ASK 4. How do all the baptized take part in this mission without everyone holding the same office? Give an example of each.

ANSWER | share after the discussion

All the baptized are called to worship God, bear witness to Christ, and serve in love; that is the common priesthood, exercised by every Christian life. Bishops and priests hold a distinct sacramental ministry within the same Church; that is the ministerial priesthood, which serves the common one and differs from it in essence. A parent teaching a child, a friend walking with a seeker, and a priest absolving or consecrating are not interchangeable. They are one mission, centered on Christ, with gifts for all and offices for some. That is the sentence this study has been building since Session 1. (CCC 1546-1547.)

READ Read Psalm 78:1-7.

SAY The psalm describes handing on the faith inside a family.

ASK 5. What is one generation told to do for the next, and why? Who in your life is "the coming generation" for you?

ANSWER | share after the discussion

The psalm tells the coming generation "the glorious deeds of the LORD," so that they "should set their hope in God" and not forget his works. The purpose is a living faith in people not yet born. The commission in Matthew 28, at the scale of a household. The last question is not rhetorical. Let people answer it.

Final revision of the sealed guess | leader only

Ask each person to rewrite their Session 1 guess in one sentence, now, on the back of Take-Home 7 or any paper. Invite two or three to read the before and after. Hold it to three minutes and do not grade anything.

A Serious Objection | build it, then press it

SAY The last objection is different. It comes from inside the Church, from people who sat through a study like this and felt smaller at the end of it.

THE OBJECTION | read aloud

"Seven weeks of bishops, keys, absolution, and consecration. Every real thing in this study is done by a man in a collar. If the mission is theirs, what is left for the rest of us except to show up and receive? A simpler Christianity, without all these offices, would give ordinary believers a real job instead of a seat."

ASK Does Catholic teaching make ordained ministry a substitute for the baptized, or a service to them? Use Timothy's grandmother and Acts 2 in your answer.

LEADER Let the group try to answer from the passages read tonight before you share the response. Do not rescue the discussion too early.

CATHOLIC RESPONSE | share after the discussion

Catholic teaching rejects a passive picture of the baptized, and the New Testament will not allow one. The first community in Acts 2 was not a clergy meeting. Timothy's faith came from Lois and Eunice before it came from Paul. The common priesthood is exercised in faith, worship, witness, and charity, by every Christian, every day, in places no priest will ever go. That is not a seat. That is most of the mission.

The ministerial priesthood exists to serve that baptismal life, and it differs from it in essence rather than in rank. A priest consecrates so that you can be fed; he absolves so that you can be sent. Erasing ordained ministry would not give the laity a bigger job. It would take away the sacraments the job runs on. The right response is neither to remove the offices nor to excuse lay inactivity. It is for each person to receive what Christ gives and to carry it to someone else. (CCC 863-864; 1547; Apostolicam Actuositatem, 3.)

Send | Respond personally

ASK 1. Who is one person you could accompany more intentionally in the faith, without pressure or manipulation?

ASK 2. What specific step will you take with that person, and when? Say it out loud.

Live It This Week

Receive. Choose one sustainable practice of prayer, learning, or sacramental preparation that this study showed you need. Start it this week.

Accompany. Invite one person into a next step: a conversation, a Mass, a prayer, or another study. Then listen more than you talk.

Continue. Set the next conversation or meeting before you leave tonight. Faithful accompaniment needs patience, not one perfect explanation.

Scripture Memory

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

Acts 2:42 (RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

SAY Lord Jesus Christ, you called the Apostles and entrusted them with your mission. Give us grateful hearts for the faith we have received. Help us receive your mercy, worship you faithfully, stay united to your Church, and lead others to you. Make our lives a faithful witness to the Gospel we hand on. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used tonight, in the order it appears. Materials: RSV2CE Bibles for everyone, this guide, the Take-Home sheets, paper for the final revision of the guesses, and if possible a printed copy of CCC 1546-1547.

When	Passage	Purpose
1	Acts 2:42-47	A life handed on, not only information
2	2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15	Lois, Eunice, and the sacred writings
3	John 15:1-8	Live discovery: remaining in the vine
4	Matthew 28:18-20 with CCC 1546-1547	Gifts for all, offices for some
5	Psalm 78:1-7	Telling the coming generation
Memory	Acts 2:42	The Church's shared life

Dig Deeper | 1 Peter 2:4-10

"A royal priesthood, a holy nation." Read it with CCC 1546. This is the common priesthood of all the baptized, stated by the first pope. Then reread 2 Timothy 1:6. The same New Testament that calls every believer a priest also shows an Apostle conferring a gift by the laying on of hands. The Church holds both without embarrassment.

After the meeting

Hand out Take-Home 8. Do not distribute this answer-bearing leader guide as a participant workbook. This is the last session. Consider ending with a shared meal, and give each person the study's "What Now" suggestions from the front matter.