

PRAYING *the*
STATIONS *with*
CATECHISTS

Gwen Costello

Sample-do not duplicate

TWENTY
THIRD *23rd*
PUBLICATIONS
www.23rdpublications.com

Twenty-Third Publications
A Division of Bayard
One Montauk Avenue, Suite 200
New London, CT 06320
(860) 437-3012 or (800) 321-0411
www.23publications.com

Copyright ©2008 Gwen Costello. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission of the publisher. Write to the Permissions Editor.

The Scripture passages contained herein are from the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, copyright ©1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A. All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-1-58595-719-4
Printed in the U.S.A

Introduction

Dear Catechists,

When Jesus issues the invitation “Come follow me,” he is speaking to real people like you. He invites you to follow him with heart, mind, body, and spirit—as a Christian disciple but also as a catechist. And just as Jesus felt joy, sadness, compassion, pain, and frustration in his ministry, so will you in your teaching ministry.

When you pray the Stations, you have the unique opportunity of uniting yourself to Jesus, reflecting on his life, teachings, death, and resurrection—and relating these to your own life.

Through the Stations you also have the opportunity to witness the tremendous compassion Jesus showed others: Pilate, who judged him falsely; the soldiers who were abusive; Simon, his reluctant helper; and the bystanders who jeered as he was crucified.

Jesus teaches that there is no greater love than to lay down your life for others. He teaches too that though your ministry may sometimes be difficult, “resurrection” will follow. This is what gives meaning to your donation of time, talent, and teaching. Though you will sometimes sow the seeds of learning in sorrow, you will also sometimes reap the harvest with joy. Why should you believe this? Because you are a disciple and Jesus is always with you to guide you.

“Remember, I am with you always, until the end of time.”
Matthew 28:20

Go forward now in his footsteps.

FIRST STATION

Jesus Is Condemned

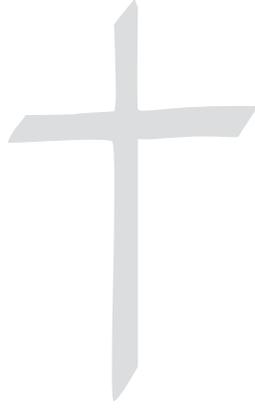
As far as we know, Pilate, the judge, did not know Jesus personally. On the word of others, he passed judgment on him. Jesus was at the mercy of this aloof Roman official, this stranger, and yet he did not protest. He was defenseless and vulnerable, and he accepted the situation for what it was.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

I am a catechist and I offer my time, talent, and energy to proclaim the gospel to those entrusted to my care. I am sometimes "condemned" by people who don't know me personally, especially parents. I am blamed when their children don't learn about their faith. I am held accountable when there are problems beyond my expertise. I sometimes feel defenseless and vulnerable, as Jesus did. Of course, there is no comparison, except for this: What sustained Jesus, his absolute faith in God, can also sustain me.

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about your own particular needs and concerns as a catechist. Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, Great Teacher...

I want to be like you.

*You did not try to defend yourself;
you did not make excuses.*

Your love overcame your need to do so.

*Help me to love those I teach
and to put their needs before my own.*

Help me to accept my limitations.

*I will do the best I can and try not to be
discouraged when I don't get it right.*

May I keep my sights ever on you.

Amen.

SECOND STATION

Jesus Carries His Cross

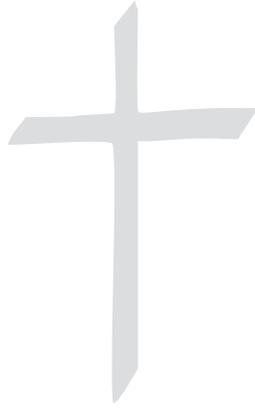
The decision was made. Jesus would die, and the instrument of his death was thrust upon his shoulders. He was pushed forward by the soldiers with curses and jeers. Where were all those people he had blessed and taught and healed?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

As a catechist I, too, am blessing and teaching and sometimes even healing in imitation of Jesus. More often than not I do this without support. But I continue to do it because I believe that parish faith formation is important. I believe that God is asking me to share my own faith, thus introducing those I teach to the Way of Jesus. I believe that knowing Jesus will change their lives.

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about your upcoming lesson. What particular concerns do you have? Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, My Leader...

*I can't help sometimes wanting
recognition for the ministry I do.*

*I want those I teach to love and appreciate me,
or at the very least to respect me.*

Help me not to look for rewards,

but to dedicate myself

to serving the needs of others

as you have called me to do.

Teach me how to follow you.

Teach me how to share what I so truly believe.

Amen.

Sample, do not duplicate

THIRD STATION

Jesus Falls the First Time

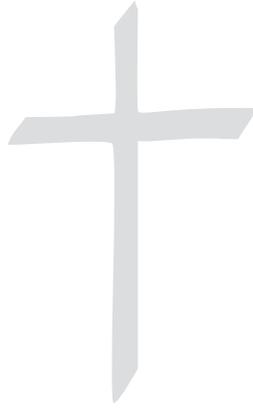
Far too much was demanded of Jesus. He was sleepless and weary and had already been beaten by the soldiers. A crown of thorns was piercing his head. The weight of the wooden beams was too much. He fell to the ground in front of the crowd. Some probably even cheered this sign of weakness in one who had been so strong.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Sometimes I feel that too much is demanded of me as a catechist. I am supposed to know it all and do it all, and sometimes have to pay for supplies on my own, and so I falter—and occasionally fall. It's difficult to remember that I am not alone, that I don't have to rely on myself. Nevertheless my burden gets heavy, and I don't always carry it well. But Jesus inspires me to carry on and do the best I can.

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about the children in your class. Is there one that troubles you? Is there one who gives you joy? Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, My Savior...

*The hardest thing for me as a catechist
is dealing with my own expectations.*

*As long as I think that it's up to me
to produce a perfect lesson,*

or to "make" the children remember from week to week,

I am going to jail, I am going to "fall."

Help me remember you at these moments.

You were able to accept people as they were.

Help me to accept the children as they are

and to accept my own limitations.

Teach me how to teach as you did.

Amen.

FOURTH STATION

Jesus Meets His Mother

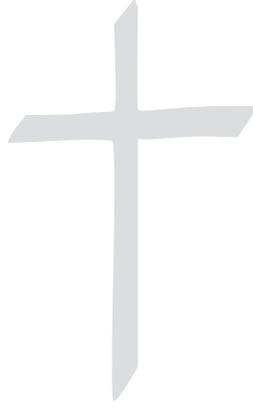
Mary was a mother, and so no doubt like every mother, she wanted the best for her child. She was proud of him and wanted others to applaud him, to like him, to marvel at the wonder of him. And yet, here she meets him as a public failure, carrying a cross for his own crucifixion.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

It's very difficult to watch those I teach sometimes stumble and fall. I teach them, I correct them, and I repeat the same things over and over. I want to love them and I want the best for them. Yet they still fail to pay attention, to cooperate, to complete their lessons. I don't want to give up on them. I want to believe that Jesus will touch their hearts, even through my feeble efforts.

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about your greatest challenge as a catechist. Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, My Brother...

*Your mother was well aware
that people in the crowd considered you a failure.
In some small way I can appreciate how she felt.*

*I am embarrassed when my class acts up
in front of the DPE or doesn't perform well
when parents or other catechists are watching.*

I take it personally.

*I want everyone to think I'm doing a great job,
but it doesn't always happen that way.*

It didn't happen that way for your mother either.

*Teach me how to accept life as Mary did
and to accept myself as I am.*

Amen.

FIFTH STATION

Simon Helps Jesus

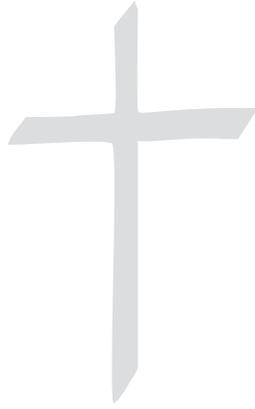
Jesus encounters Simon, the reluctant one. He was on his way home from the fields. Perhaps he was a migrant worker (a foreigner). He must have been tired from work already done. Simon probably didn't volunteer. Maybe he didn't want to be involved with Jesus at all. He was dragged into it by the soldiers. But quite possibly this encounter changed Simon's life forever.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

I am a catechist, so I know only too well how it feels to encounter "reluctant ones." They don't want to be there. Their parents have dragged them in. They seem to close their minds and hearts to my lessons, but I can't know this for sure. And so I continue to plan, to prepare, and to teach them, because I believe that this is what I have been called to do. Quite possibly, something I say or do can change one of them forever.

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about your greatest strengths as a catechist. Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, My Strength...

I can't help wondering about Simon.

*Was he a better person because
he met and helped you?*

*Are those I teach better in any way
because they encounter me?*

*I worry so much that I am wasting my time,
that I am not making a bit of difference in their lives.*

*Help me to think less often about myself
and more often about you.*

*Teach me how to be your helper,
but with a willing heart and out of love for you.*

Amen.

Sample, do not duplicate

SIXTH STATION

Veronica Offers Comfort

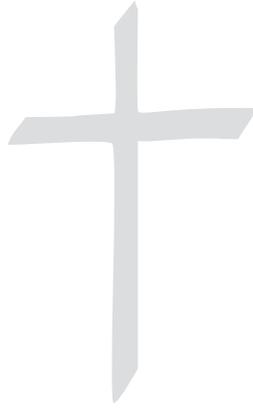
Veronica was oblivious to personal danger. She sprang forward to comfort and cleanse Jesus with a soothing cloth. She didn't care about the soldiers. She only saw the blood and sweat. It must have been agonizing to see that face, enough to make her act so spontaneously. Where had she met Jesus before, if ever? What moved her to take such a risk? What courage she had!

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Jesus says clearly in Scripture that when we do something for his least ones, his little ones, we do it for him. Veronica's compassionate act, though done for Jesus himself, inspires me to do a better job of holding out the cloth of shared faith to those I teach. They are the "little ones" Jesus shares with me. When I plan my lessons and activities I will try to remember this. And even when I feel frustrated or impatient, I will try to be as undaunted as Veronica.

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about your commitment to being a catechist. How can you sustain your energy and enthusiasm? Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, My Comforter..

*I know I spend far too much time
focusing on what my teaching costs ME.*

*I need to stop counting the cost
and just do what I do for love of you.*

*I do want to be a good catechist,
but I know that I won't be unless I learn
to focus more on the needs of the children
and less on my own.*

*Help me to understand their struggles,
their frustrations, even their boredom,
so that I can continue to share faith with them.*

*Teach me how to comfort them
as Veronica comforted you.*

Amen.

SEVENTH STATION

Jesus Falls Again

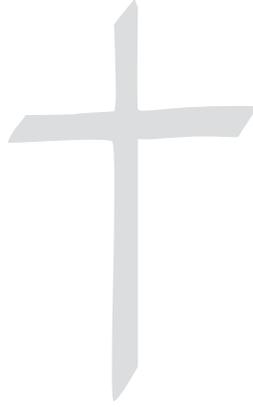
Jesus was overburdened by the weight of the cross, but he was left to fend for himself. Couldn't the soldiers have helped him? Couldn't someone from the crowd have come forward? Surely there was at least one person there who remembered the good Jesus had done. Where was that person now?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

I sometimes feel overburdened by my ministry and all its demands. I don't want it to be that way. I want to step forward to teach with joy and enthusiasm. But then class time comes and I feel reluctant. I falter and fall. I could really use more guidance and support, and I have to learn to ask for it. Jesus had to pick himself up and move forward. And he was struggling for his life. He is asking so little of me.

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about the unique gifts and talents you bring to your catechetical ministry. Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, My Sustainer...

*Forgive me for feeling sorry for myself
and focusing so much on my own needs.*

*I do get discouraged when the children
are not interested in something I'm excited about.*

*I get annoyed when they are rowdy
or rude or out of control,
and I don't know what to do.*

I get over my head and overwhelmed.

Help me to imitate you.

*Even when you knew you were
heading toward Calvary,
you picked yourself up and moved on.*

*Teach me how to follow you
with courage and commitment.*

Amen.

Sample, do not duplicate

EIGHTH STATION

Jesus Meets the Women

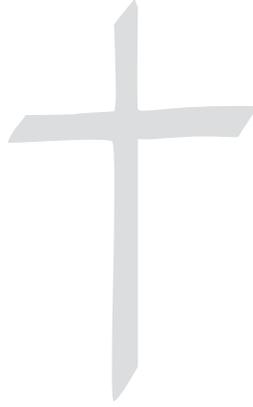
Those mysterious women of Jerusalem! They were weeping and wailing at the sight of Jesus passing by. He was suffering intensely, so why did he rebuke them? Why didn't he thank them for their grieving? Were they perhaps crying more out of fear and disgust than for Jesus himself? Or, were they simply looking for attention or praise?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

I have a definite kinship with those women. Don't I often feel like weeping and wailing when things don't go my way? I am weeping for myself, of course, and feeling sorry for myself. Perhaps my tears should be for the times I have failed to prepare well or the times I have been lackluster about presenting Jesus' message. He has done so much for me. I should do better for his little ones without seeking either attention or praise.

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about your limitations as a catechist. Are there ways you can get help or advice? Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, Lamb of God...

*I wonder what you think of my self pity!
It's so easy for me to blame everyone else:
the children are disrespectful;
their parents don't care;
the DRE (or pastor) expects too much;
my family won't give me the time and space
I need to prepare well.*

*I weep for myself,
and you must see right through me.*

*Help me to re-dedicate myself
to those I teach and to you.*

*Teach me how to imitate
your love and compassion.*

Amen.

Sample-do not duplicate

NINTH STATION

Jesus Falls Once Again

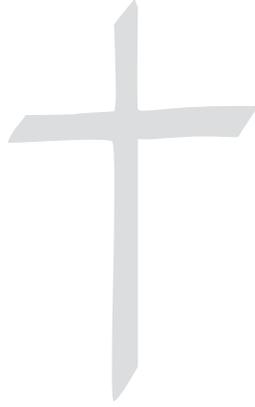
Jesus fell for the third time. Why was he forced to stumble along this way? Did the soldiers enjoy inflicting torture? Was the crowd enjoying it that someone who had been so well known and so self-assured was now so humiliated? And where were his friends, the ones he taught and loved and invested so much time in? Where were all of them now?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

From lesson to lesson I stumble along, sometimes failing miserably. No one comes forward to help. Why not? Do I even ask? Maybe I am unconsciously hiding my need for support because I don't want to admit failure. If Jesus would have accepted help, why won't I, why don't I?

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about your good experiences as a catechist. Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, Dear Friend (...)

*When I make a mistake
with one of the children in my class,
it would do me so much good
to sit down with my DRE or another catechist
to get their advice and reactions.*

*But this would be an admission
that I can't handle my own problems.*

Is that so bad?

*Why do I insist upon stumbling along?
Give me the courage to break this pattern,
to admit my needs, and to rely on others.*

*Thank you for all your gifts and graces
and for your love and friendship.*

Amen.

TENTH STATION

Jesus Is Stripped

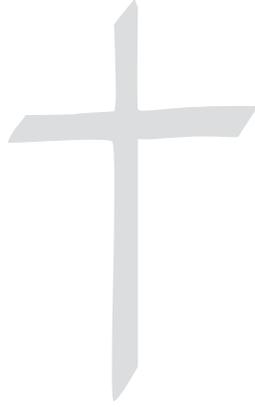
At this ignominious moment, Jesus was stripped of everything he owned, even his clothing. He was helpless against the cruelty of the soldiers, and he must have been humiliated by their disgraceful treatment. He had given so much to others, and this is what he got in return. Only the poor, only criminals, only the lowest of the low, were treated with such disdain. Jesus stood in their place.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

There are times when I too feel stripped, stripped of power to open hearts and minds, stripped of patience when I most need it, stripped of time because of lesson planning and classes. I know that these deprivations are nothing compared to what Jesus endured. Nothing. And yet I need courage to bear them.

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about a child (or children) in your class who needs your prayers. Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, Great Prophet...

You were the ultimate announcer of God's kingdom.

*You were God's beloved, God's most beloved,
And yet there was a moment in your life
when you were powerless against injustice.*

You were stripped, empty, and abandoned.

What were you feeling at that moment?

*You had risked everything to proclaim
a new way of living, God's way of living,
and this was your reward.*

*Help me to gain strength from your courage
and to gladly proclaim my faith in you,
in spite of my worries and fears.*

Amen.

ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

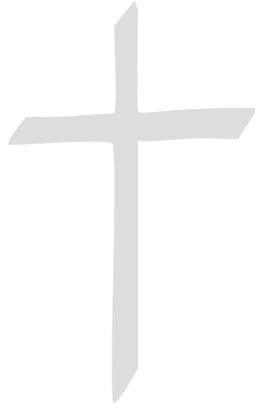
Jesus was pushed and prodded and then thrown down to be nailed to the cross. He was just one more body for the soldiers to dispense with. His clothing was just something to sell. His flesh was nothing to them. They were oblivious to his pain. After a lifetime of giving to others, how must it have been to be treated in such a harsh and cruel manner?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

I know that it's ridiculous to equate my problems and my ministry with Jesus'. I don't mean to do that, but rather to see from his example how I might be a better catechist, more giving and compassionate. I want to learn from him that even God's greatest prophet and most beloved son felt pain and abandonment. My minor irritations, put in the light, are nothing in comparison.

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about your relationship with Jesus, especially in your role as catechist. Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, God's Beloved.

*It's sometimes difficult for me
to think of the gospel as good news.
I do believe that the way of life you taught,
if I follow it, will make my life better
and make me a better catechist too.
But what you ask is "hard" news.
"Love one another as I have loved you."
Your way of life took you to the cross.
I know that alleluias followed eventually,
but what a price you paid.
Help me to have the kind of faith you had,
to believe so strongly in the God who loves me,
that I would give anything to
proclaim that love as truly good news.
Amen.*

TWELFTH STATION

Jesus Dies on the Cross

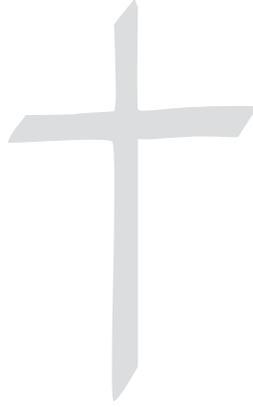
It has been said that at the moment of death we are utterly alone. No one can experience death with us. From the cross Jesus cried out, "My God, why have you abandoned me?" He too felt utterly alone, and yet he believed enough to ask that God forgive his enemies. "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they are doing." What astonishing faith.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

All that is asked of me is to be faithful to the gospel in my everyday life and in my ministry as a catechist. I very likely won't be asked to die for my beliefs, but only to hold on to them and share them. This seems like so little to ask and yet sometimes to me it is a heavy burden. I want to learn from Jesus that even if I feel alone in what I endure, he is there. Father, forgive me for not understanding this.

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about the price Jesus paid to proclaim God's kingdom. Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, Suffering Servant...

*Your death is a great mystery to me.
It goes so much against what I want to believe.
You should have been rewarded for your
preaching and healing and miracles.
Instead you were arrested
and beaten and crucified.
Faith itself is a mystery.
It is believing what we don't see
and can't fully explain.
If it is sometimes difficult for me,
it must be a great reach for those I teach.
Give them this gift of faith
and strengthen it in me.
I want to be your faithful catechist.
Amen.*

THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus Is Taken Down

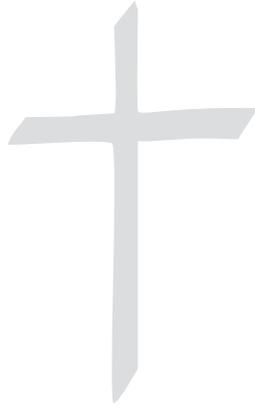
Tradition has it that when Jesus' body was taken from the cross, it was placed in the arms of his mother. In Scripture, it is Joseph of Arimathea who took down the body. Perhaps he first placed it in Mary's arms. Perhaps she anointed it with spices and helped Joseph wrap it in a burial cloth. Jesus' body was then placed in Joseph's own tomb.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

As I witness this tremendous act of love and compassion, it is clear to me that Joseph was a disciple who put his faith into action. He risked associating himself with Jesus, and he honored Jesus' body by treating it as his own. In my role as a catechist, I am given the "body of Christ" through the children I teach. They are Jesus' little ones. How do I show them the same kind of love and compassion that Joseph showed Jesus himself.

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about the generosity of Joseph of Arimathea. In what ways does he inspire you to be more compassionate? Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, My Lord.

I ask you to strengthen my faith.

As St. Paul teaches,

all of us are the Body of Christ.

Each member contributes something to the whole.

*Help me to see each child I teach
as an important member of the Church.*

*Help me to focus on each child's gifts
and to have compassion for any weaknesses.*

*Help me to be generous with my time and patience,
remembering always that you call these children
to discipleship, just as you call me.*

Amen.

FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus Is Placed in the Tomb

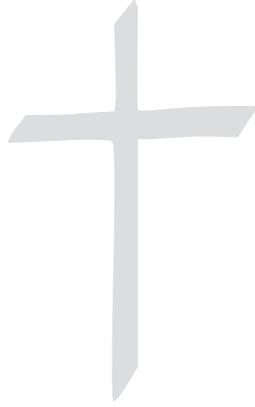
Mary Magdalene and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, followed Joseph to the tomb. The gospels note that they saw where Jesus was laid, but they couldn't linger because Passover was about to begin. There was no time to mourn. At least Mary must have been relieved that Joseph had provided a burial site. Though Jesus died as a criminal, he was buried with dignity.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

I try to imagine what all this meant to Mary. Her beloved son had been killed. He who was thought to be the messiah, had been arrested and humiliated and crucified. He who taught so beautifully about God's kingdom, who healed and consoled so many, was dead. She must have wondered how God could allow this to happen. Yet, perhaps at this moment too she said *fiat*, so be it.

SILENT MEDITATION

Spend a few minutes praying silently about Mary and her experiences. How can you bring a mother's heart to your ministry? Write your thoughts here if you wish.



Jesus, Son of Mary...

Help me to be more like you.

*I want to imitate you, especially
in your role as teacher.*

*You believed in God's call to preach
the good news of the kingdom,
and you were faithful to it unto death.*

Help me to believe in my call to teach.

*Help me to treasure each child
as one sent by God.*

I want to believe that with your grace,

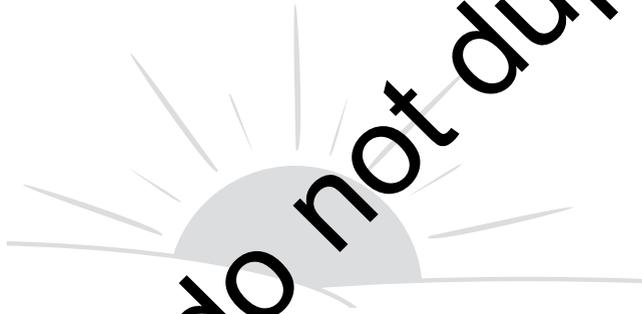
*I can preach the good news
and give witness to its effect in my own life.*

Amen.

Sample, do not duplicate

The Resurrection

Being a catechist involves "dying" in many small ways so that others may live more fully. As Jesus did, I must wait, in a way entombed, for God's grace to work in me. I believe that Jesus waits with me. He has shown me the way. I know that Jesus' story did not end on Good Friday. He was raised up by God to new life, and he offers me too the promise of resurrection. I too am called to be an Easter person and "Alleluia" is my song.



Jesus, My Redeemer...

*Until that day when I meet you
face to face,
may I be a faithful
and tireless catechist.
I hope when I see you,
you will embrace me and
greet me with these words,
"Well done, my good and faithful servant,
what you have done for my little ones,
you have done for me."*