

Secondary Lesson on the Conclave and Election of a New Pope

Suitable for Grades 9-12

Time: One 75 minute period

Note: Specific Curriculum Expectations have not been provided. Teachers using this lesson should refer to their policy document to make connections.

The Catholic Graduate Expectations which will be met are:

1. A discerning believer formed in a Catholic Faith Community
 - g) Understands that one's purpose or call in life comes from God and strives to discern and live out this call throughout life's journey
 - h) Respects the faith traditions, world religions, and life-journeys of all people of good will
 - i) Integrates faith with life
2. An Effective Communicator
 - a) Listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values
 - b) Reads, understands and uses written materials effectively
 - c) Uses and integrates the Catholic faith tradition, in critical analysis of the arts, media, technology and information systems to enhance the quality of life
3. A Self-directed, Responsible, Lifelong Learner Who
 - f) applies effective communication, decision-making, problem-solving, time and resource management skills

Adapted from

http://www.evergreenexhibitions.com/images/pdf/Vatican_New_Religious_Educators_Guide.pdf

Goals:

1. To describe the role of the Pope and his teaching authority in the life and mission of the Church.
2. To understand the process of a conclave for electing a pope.
3. To examine and discuss critical issues facing the Church today.

Background for teacher:

The Pope's teaching authority pertains to both matters of faith and morals and promoting the Christian virtues to the Christian people in temporal matters of justice and charity. As the Vicar [representative] of Christ on earth, he can teach the faithful in several ways but always with the purpose of leading the faith of Christian people to the Truth. As part of the Magisterium [the official teaching office of the Church], he can speak infallibly in matters of faith and morals. This authority is exercised when he speaks from the chair of Saint Peter called "ex cathedra." Here he speaks under the authority of the Word of God in

Jesus Christ. This has been exercised twice in the dogmatic revelations of the Immaculate Conception and Mary's assumption into heaven. The extraordinary magisterium can also be exercised in communion with the bishops throughout the world. This teaching authority proposes truths to be believed by all the faithful in matters of faith and morals and when their intention binding the whole Church is sufficiently evident. The Ecumenical Councils are one example of this teaching practice. This does not necessarily make such teachings infallible (without error). It does make a presumption of truth.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 892

The Pope, like the bishops, may exercise the ordinary teaching magisterium. The Pope may teach the faithful through encyclicals, sermons, pastoral letters, explanations, and liturgical documents. Popes have taught in addressing the colonization of peoples, the right to own property, on international violence, the indissolubility of marriage, on just wages and conditions of the working person. The ordinary magisterium may propose teachings on matters of faith and morals when it is unanimous [universal agreement] in their teaching. One example of such a truth of faith is "The Church is the Body of Christ."

The conclave represents the electoral process for selecting a new pope.

All cardinals under 80 years old will remain, under locked doors, until they choose a new pope. The voting proceeds without speech or debate. Each cardinal receives a ballot and inscribes a name. A two-thirds majority is needed for election. Each completed ballot is placed on an open paten, then dropped into a chalice. If the two-thirds majority is not reached, the ballots are burned in a stove with a chemical to emit black smoke. White smoke signals the election of a new pope. Balloting occurs twice a day until a pope is elected. The presiding cardinal approaches the elected for his consent. If he accepts, he chooses a papal name. He then dresses in white [cassock and zucchetto] and is announced to the world from the balcony above Saint Peter's Square.

Lesson:

Minds On

Using ppt "Electing a New Pope" as a guide – review the process of the Conclave.

Activation

Class discussion on issues facing the Church today:

Say: "Pope John XXIII called us to dialogue on issues facing the Church [Second Vatican Council, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World"]. What do you think are the significant issues that a new pope will have to deal with?"

Here are a few of the issues, but students will likely have others:

1. Creating a more just world (e.g. alleviating poverty, assisting the oppressed, respecting the dignity of human life)
2. How can the Christian community bring [evangelize] Jesus' message of love more alive for the world?
3. What can the role of women be for today's Church?
4. What does the Church say about war and terrorism?

Continue discussion using powerpoint "The Contenders" to consider several of the frontrunners in light of what has been suggested by class as current issues in the church.

Close by taking a secret ballot and encouraging students to follow the news of the Conclave as more and more information will be coming out about the contenders and, of course, the final result.

Extensions:

Further research into the possible contenders, church issues, presentations on individual cardinals, or a mock conclave can be initiated.

Instructions for running a mock conclave in your class, suitable for grades 9-12 can be found at http://www.evergreenexhibitions.com/images/pdf/Vatican_New_Religious_Educators_Guide.pdf