

# Discussion Guide

JOE PAPROCKI AND  
JULIANNE STANZ

## THE CATECHIST'S BACKPACK



SPIRITUAL  
ESSENTIALS  
FOR THE JOURNEY

**LOYOLA PRESS.**  
A JESUIT MINISTRY

# The Catechist's Backpack: Discussion Guide

---

## Chapter 1

- Whom do you trust most in this world? Why? Who places trust in you?
- Identify a time when trust was broken in your life. How did (does) that affect you?
- Why do you personally believe that God can be trusted?
- How has your trust in God been validated or affirmed over the course of your life? This week? Today?
- If you are having difficulty trusting God, what may be causing that?
- In what situations do you find it most difficult to trust God? Easiest?
- What can you do to deepen your radical reliance on God?
- Who do you know who exhibits a radical reliance on God? What is it about this person that you would like to emulate?
- How does your reliance on God affect you in your role as a catechist?
- How do you recognize when you are spiritually thirsty? In what ways do you satisfy your thirst for the Living Waters of God?
- How can you help those you teach to be more reliant on God?
- Where do you feel the stirrings of hope in your heart as a catechist? How do you share that hope with those you teach?
- What would you let go of in order to feel really hopeful and trusting right now?

# The Catechist's Backpack: Discussion Guide

---

## Chapter 2

- Think of a family heirloom you have been entrusted with. What story is connected with this heirloom? How do you guard and protect it? How and to whom do you intend to pass it on?
- Who are the people who have entrusted the gospel message to you? (They may be family, friends, pastors, teachers, catechists, professors, and so on.) Through whom did you receive your calling to serve as a catechist? How did this calling come about?
- Describe your sense of belonging when it comes to the church. Is your sense of belonging strong or could it use some strengthening?
- What challenges and frustrations do you experience in family life? What joys do you experience? In your relationship with the church, what challenges, frustrations, and joys do you experience?
- What church teaching do you have difficulty understanding? What can you do to deepen your understanding of this and other church teachings? What is a teaching that you have to come to understand better recently?
- What sacrifices do you face as a catechist? How do you feel about these sacrifices and challenges? Why do you endure them?
- What do you or can you do to deepen to your commitment to the church?
- Whom do you know who exhibits a great commitment to the church? How can you emulate him or her?
- How does your commitment to the church affect you in your role as a catechist?
- How can you help those you teach to be more open to the church?
- What's your favorite family recipe? What is the story behind it? How has this recipe been passed through your family? What is your plan for passing it along?
- Why do you love the church? What moments in your life have confirmed and reconfirmed this love?
- If you had to describe your relationship with the church in one word, what would it be? Why?
- Do you feel a sense of responsibility to and for the church? How does this manifest itself in your life?

# The Catechist's Backpack: Discussion Guide

---

## Chapter 3

- What are some recent advances in society or technology that have made your head spin?
- What would you include in a time capsule for this day and age, in the place where you live? Why?
- What disturbing trends do you see in society today? What encouraging trends do you see?
- How would you describe the “doorway” into the lives of those you teach? In other words, what are they most fascinated with, worried about, or skilled at? What simple steps could you take to walk through that door?
- What are some strategies you have used to speak your students’ language? What are some strategies you could use?
- What is the greatest need of those you teach?
- Who are those who need a little extra time, attention, and prayer among those you teach or have taught/ How can you pray for them?
- Who is someone you know who is open to the world but does not “belong” to it? Who was a teacher you had who was open to the world? How can you emulate him or her?
- How can being open to the world make you a more effective catechist?
- What can, and will you do on your faith journey to be more open to the world?
- In what ways do you feel that you have conformed to values that are not consistent with the gospel? How might you become more conscious of this and how might you change this?
- In what ways do you feel that God has worked through you to transform your own “world” and the “world” of those you teach?
- Who in your life keeps you in touch with the Holy Spirit-your “GPSS,” or global positioning spiritual system? Why do you think it is important to have a spiritual mentor or friend on the journey?
- What are the best ways you know to hit the pause or reset button?

# The Catechist's Backpack: Discussion Guide

---

## Chapter 4

- What is something you purchased recently that attracted you because of its authenticity? What is something you chose not to purchase or give your money to because you perceived it as phony?
- Who do you consider a good example of authenticity and consistency in a life of faith? What are the hallmarks of this person's life?
- In what areas of your life are you experiencing tension between who you are and what you do? How do you reconcile this tension?
- When it comes to being a catechist, do you feel a harmony between who you are and what you do? If not, what is causing the disharmony? How might you resolve it?
- What is one church teaching with which you feel a sense of discomfort or disagreement? How might you become more comfortable with this teaching?
- What can you do or say to help those you teach see your faith as authentic?
- When was a time that your authenticity showed through to those you were teaching? How did you know? How did your students react to you? What was most powerful about this experience?
- How can the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation help you grow in authenticity and consistency?
- Who provides a good example of humility in your life? How can you emulate this person?
- What type of ongoing transformation will you do this year to help you conform to Christ and become a more authentic disciple?

# The Catechist's Backpack: Discussion Guide

---

## Chapter 5

- Reflect on your understanding of the word zeal. How do you exhibit zeal in your life?
- Who in your life radiates zeal in all they say and do? What do they teach you about zeal?
- Do you consider yourself to be a missionary disciple? Why or why not?
- What do you do to keep the fire of the Holy Spirit burning within you?
- Are you an introvert or an extrovert? How can you show passion and zeal and remain authentic?
- How do you express passion and zeal without using words?
- When was a time that someone gave you undivided attention when you needed it most? What images come to mind when you think of the Holy Spirit? What people come to mind when you think of the Holy Spirit?
- The Holy Spirit has often been called the “forgotten God.” Why do you think this is so? How can you call upon the power of the Holy Spirit each day in your life?

# The Catechist's Backpack: Discussion Guide

---

## Chapter 6

- How would you describe your relationship with Mary? What story from the life of Mary do you treasure most? Why?
- What characteristic of Mary do you wish to more closely imitate?
- How does devotion to Mary bring you closer to Christ? What forms does your devotion to Mary take?
- How does Mary exemplify some or all of the characteristics of the spirituality of the catechist—openness to God, openness to the church, openness to the world, authenticity and consistency, and missionary zeal?
- What can you do in the days and weeks ahead to increase your devotion to Mary?
- Who is someone you know who has extraordinary devotion to Mary? How can you imitate him or her?
- Why do you think devotion to Mary is so important for catechists?
- Recall a time when your devotion to Mary helped you follow God's will.
- How can a deeper devotion to Mary impact the lives of those you teach?
- Consider family names. Are there recurring names in your family that reference a particular saint?
- What confirmation name did you choose? Why did you choose that name?
- Would you choose the same confirmation name today? Why or why not?
- Who are your favorite saints? Why?
- What are some ways you can deepen your love for the saints?
- Is there someone in your life whom you would describe as a "living saint"? For what reasons?

# The Catechist's Backpack: Discussion Guide

---

## Chapter 7

- Who is the best storyteller you know? What qualities make him or her such a good storyteller? What can you learn from how this person tells stories?
- What are your favorite childhood stories? Why?
- What is your favorite Bible story? Why? What special meaning does it hold for you?
- Do you enjoy reading or hearing other people's stories? Why?
- What is your favorite Old Testament story? Why? What is your favorite New Testament story? Why?
- What stories have become important in your life?
- What stories do you find yourself sharing with other more than once?
- If you had to choose a title for the story of your life, what would it be?
- What stories from your life have you not shared with anyone? Why not? What would it take for you to be able to share one of them?
- The first time I felt God's presence in my life was...
- The first time I felt God speaking clearly to me was...