

## Leading a RCIA - Breaking Open the Word Session

Mark Mueller

**I. The intent:** "This community now sends you forth **to reflect more deeply upon the word of God which you have shared with us today**. Be assured of our loving support and prayers for you. We look forward to the day when you will share fully in the Lord's Table", (RCIA, 67 B).

**II. The basics of leading a dismissal session:** There are five things to pay attention to:

1. Preparation and Prayer
2. The Room
3. The Flow of the Faith Sharing
4. The "So What"
5. The Session is an Extension of Liturgy, not a Catechetical Session - The focus is on the Liturgy of the Word.

**III. Preparation.**

- **The week before the session read the readings for Mass.** Pray over them, how do they relate to one another? Answer the three questions below, that you will use to lead the session. Write some answers down. Remember you are not teaching but leading the session. The session is an extension of Liturgy, not a lecture, so simply record the answers that move you. If you would like to research a few points that is great; however, your answers are useful only as a way to start the conversation, no more.
- **Attend Mass before the Breaking Open the Word Session.** Listen to Father's Homily, Partake in the Eucharist (as you will not be able to do so during the Mass where you lead the Breaking Open the Word).
- **Let the Holy Spirit Work!** .... Do not be Afraid!

**IV. The room (Classroom F&H)**

- Make sure the room is prepared ahead of time. The faith sharing after dismissal is not catechesis. It is an extension of the liturgy. So, if possible, you want to go to a room other than the catechetical space. If that's not possible, try to make the catechetical space look more like a prayer room and less like a classroom. You might want to have a candle, a cross, some flowers, and possibly a stand for the lectionary.
- Have the chairs arranged in a circle, and place a Bible on each chair.

**V. The flow**

**3 minutes:**

Try maintain an attitude of prayer as you gather. There will be time for socializing later. A simple way to keep the prayerful sense of the liturgy is to recite the refrain of the responsorial psalm from Mass and have the catechumens recite it back.

Next have everyone sit in the circle.

Re-read the Gospel Reading (Have the Catechumen and Candidates just listen)

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### **5 minutes:**

Begin the faith sharing with a statement like this:

Today we heard readings from \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. Tell us something you remember from the readings.

**What Touched You? What did you notice or see?** Encourage everyone to share something they remembered. After everyone has spoken, ask them to go deeper into the reading. Have them open their Bible's to the passage. Ask them each to name something they see in the reading. Keep going deeper, and keep focused on what they see. Characters, scenery, actions, crowds. Ask them to describe in as much details as they can.

Now go around again, asking everyone what they hear in the reading. Background sounds, quietness, wind, people talking. **Pay particular attention to questions they hear spoken. Ask them if they heard anything new or surprising.** Make sure to provide some of your insights.... THESE ARE IMPORTANT!

### **5 minutes:**

**What has this caused me to understand / believe about God?** Ask everyone to reflect in silence for a minute on why they think these readings matter. After some silence, ask the group questions about what the readings mean. So what? Why is this reading important. Draw on Father's Homily?

### **5 minutes:**

**What does Jesus invite me to DO ?** Or ask; how, having seen and heard what they have, their lives might be different in the coming week. Ask if they have discovered anything new about themselves, about God, or about the church. Ask what questions they are struggling with. Again, think back to your preparation and add your insights.

### **2 minutes:**

**Summarize** what you heard from the group and close with a prayer of your own or the Lord's Prayer.

**VI. Sign-up to lead this beautiful ministry again!**