KEY CONCEPTS

- We gather for Mass and prepare ourselves through the Introductory Rites so we are ready to receive God’s Word and the Eucharist.

- The Liturgy of the Word is of great importance in the celebration of liturgy. When it is proclaimed, we hear the voice of God, are brought into the story of our salvation, and strengthened by it.

- Embracing and praying through the Liturgy of the Word helps us to recognize and follow God’s voice outside of Mass and throughout our week.
GOAL OF THIS NIGHT
This Life Night provides teenagers with a foundational understanding of the Gathering Rites of Mass and the Liturgy of the Word. Teenagers are challenged to grow in their love and understanding of Sacred Scripture as the inspired Word of God.

ABOUT THIS NIGHT
This Life Night requires some advance preparation for the Gather activity. Recruit four or five teenagers to participate in the “Church’s Next Top Preacher” challenge ahead of the Life Night. Explain that this will be much like popular singing and talent competitions that appear on television. Pick teenagers that have a solid sense of humor and will understand that any criticism they receive from the activity is meant to be comical and not personally critical. Instruct these teenagers to review the readings for the upcoming week and put together a 90 second sermon to present before a panel of judges. The Life Night begins with this activity and then transitions into the Proclaim. Teenagers will be challenged to grow in their love of Sacred Scripture and be given a foundational understanding of the Liturgy of the Word. During the Break, teenagers participate in a small group Bible study. The Life Night ends with Lectio Divina, providing teenagers with an opportunity to pray using Sacred Scripture.

PARENTAL NOTICE
This week at Life Night we discussed the Introductory Rites of Mass and the Liturgy of the Word. We challenged teenagers to begin reading Sacred Scripture on their own and to prepare for Sunday Liturgy by praying through the readings for the week. The Liturgy of the Word can be a difficult part of Mass to engage in, oftentimes because we do not really understand what is happening. The context of the readings may seem vague, we mindlessly sing the Psalm Response, and we may start to daydream during the Gospel or homily. When we begin to read Sacred Scripture, this part of liturgy becomes vibrant and alive – it is an encounter with Christ through His Word.

Discuss ways that your family can integrate Sacred Scripture into daily life. The following questions can help you facilitate this discussion:

- Why is knowing and reading the Bible important? Are there ways that we can, as a family, get better at making Sacred Scripture a part of our daily lives?
- What is one thing that we can do every week to help us get ready to listen to the readings at Mass?

*This Life Night has a Parent Night that accompanies the topic. It is highly recommended that this Parent Night is implemented before or at the same time as the Life Night. This will promote discussion between parents and teenagers and help form faith at home.*

ENVIRONMENT
Set up a table for the panel of judges for the “Church’s Next Top Preacher." Write out the name of the game show on butcher paper or project it onto a screen. Along with the judge’s table in the front of the room, have a podium or lectern with an open Bible placed on it. Place a few Bibles in each small group area for the Bible study, as well.
GATHER

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS
(5 min)
The Core Member that is playing the role of “Show Host” will welcome all of the teenagers to the Life Night, introduce any new teens, and lead an opening prayer. He or she will then transition into the “Next Top Preacher” show.

THE CHURCH’S NEXT TOP PREACHER
(5 min)
One week prior to the Life Night, select four or five teens to participate in this challenge, which is modeled off shows like “X-Factor,” “The Voice,” and the “Got Talent” series. These teens will be asked to prepare a 90 second sermon on the readings from Mass for that week. (These can be found ahead of time by looking in your lectionary or in the Life Teen Liturgy Planning Guide.)

As a part of our baptismal mission, we are all called to preach the Gospel. The priest does this in a special way every week at Mass as part of his vocation, but each of us need to become preachers in our schools, at work, and in our family. This week a few lucky teens have the opportunity to see if they have what it takes to become the next top preacher. Introduce the panel of judges that will be evaluating each teen’s performance; this panel can include any priests that serve at your parish, the youth minister, deacons, and a Core Member playing the role of a grumpy parishioner. The panel will humorously evaluate each teen’s sermon and determine an overall winner.

Have fun with this game, since it is highly unlikely that any of the sermons given by the teens will be substantial with only 90 seconds and no prior experience. The grumpy parishioner can serve as comic relief by reading a bulletin while the teen is preaching, falling asleep, or shouting things back at him or her.

At the end, have a small prize for all the teens that participated and thank them for their preparation.
PROCLAIM

"LOUD AND CLEAR" TEACHING

(15 min )

This teaching focuses on the first half of the Sunday Liturgy – the Introductory Rites and the Liturgy of the Word. Teens will be challenged to understand the incredible way that Christ is present in Sacred Scripture and will come to a deeper understanding of how to pray through this part of Mass.

An outline of this teaching can be found in the attached PDF.
BREAK

SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY

(25 min)

Break the teens into small groups. If you are not using the same small groups for every Life Night in this semester, take a couple of minutes to divide teens into groups of six to eight with one Core Member in each group.

Core Members need to be given materials for this Bible study at least one week prior to the Life Night, so they can prepare by reading the Scripture passages and taking notes. Begin by leading a prayer asking for guidance and inspiration from the Holy Spirit.

An outline and discussion questions for the Bible study can be found in the PDF
SEND

LIFE NIGHT RECAP
(5 min)

Gather teens into the main meeting room and give them each paper and a pen for Lectio Divina. Recap the main concepts from the Life Night:

- We gather for Mass and prepare ourselves through the Introductory Rites so we are ready to receive God’s Word and the Eucharist.
- The Liturgy of the Word is of great importance in the celebration of liturgy. When it is proclaimed, we hear the voice of God, are brought into the story of our salvation, and strengthened by it.
- Embracing and praying through the Liturgy of the Word helps us to recognize and follow God’s voice outside of Mass and throughout our week.

LECTIO DIVINA
(15 min)

Transition into the closing prayer of the Life Night:

Sacred Scripture is not simply a historical writing or something we use to study; it is “living and effective” (Hebrews 4:12). We find Christ revealed in the Bible, and the Holy Spirit can speak to us through the Word of God. An ancient prayer that has been used for centuries to pray through Sacred Scripture is called Lectio Divina.

If your youth group is not familiar with Lectio Divina, take a few minutes to explain the various movements of Lectio Divina before praying it with the teens.

- **Lectio** – A short passage from Sacred Scripture is chosen and read three times. During each reading, teens quietly listen for a word of phrase that stands out to them from the reading. If they wish to journal, they can write this word or phrase down. The passage is read through slowly and deliberately each time, rather than rushed.
- **Meditatio** – Teens take time to reflect on the word or phrase that stood out to them from the reading. They repeat this phrase in their mind, allowing other thoughts, images, or words to connect. This is not an active prayer – it is passive. Teens simply meditate on the word or phrase.
- **Oratio** – This is an active form of prayer; teens may pray to God about their word or phrase and any other connecting thoughts they have. Teens can use this time to journal about the word or phrase.
- **Contemplatio** – This is a time of quiet, listening, and contemplating what God has revealed and continues to reveal through His Word. It is a time of thankfulness for God’s love, grace, and mercy.

Choose one or two verses from the readings for the current Sunday. Make sure that the selection is not more than three verses, as this can become too long for prayer, especially for teens that do not have a lot of experience with Lectio Divina.

Close the Life Night by asking for the intercession of Mary with a Hail Mary and Ave Maria.
CONCLUSION

ADAPTING THIS NIGHT

• If your youth group does not have teens that would be a good fit for the “Next Top Preacher” challenge, have a couple of Core Members participate instead.

• For smaller youth groups, combine the teaching and the Bible Study. Use the teaching and Bible study to facilitate a discussion with the teenagers through the Proclaim and Break.

• Pray *Lectio Divina* in the small groups for the Life Night, and invite teenagers to share what they received in prayer with their small group.

GOING DEEPER

• Invite teenagers to a mid-week Bible study based off the readings for the upcoming Sunday Liturgy. Utilize the Life Teen *Liturgy Planning Guide* to structure these gatherings.

• Use social media to publish the daily readings; challenge teenagers to use the readings for daily prayer for the next month.

FURTHER READING

These short statements can be used after the Life Night on your parish social media accounts to recap the theme of the Life Night, remind teenagers of important aspects of the Life Night, and help parishioners understand what teenagers are experiencing at Life Teen each week.

• We couldn’t find the next top preacher at Life Night, but it didn’t stop God from speaking #LoudAndClear

• Catholic Tip: The homily is not the best time to catch up on the parish bulletin #TheSummit

• Looking to hear the voice of God? Look no further than His Word #TheSummit #LoudAndClear

• Have you found your favorite Scripture passage, yet? God’s waiting to reveal it to you #TheSummit