Nihil Obstat
Very Reverend John T. Putnam, J.C.L, J.V., V.F.
Censor Deputatus

Imprimatur
Most Reverend Peter J. Jugis J.C.D.
Bishop of Charlotte, North Carolina

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Mission Statement

The mission of Catholic Scripture Study International is to bring people closer to Jesus Christ and His Church through in-depth Bible study.

CSS Manual

The purpose of this manual is to provide guidelines and policies for CSS Leaders in launching new CSS groups and structuring the class format for effective group study. It is our desire that all CSS groups adhere to the guidelines in this manual in order to have both an organized and unified program for all participants worldwide.
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1. **Prayer**

As with all things, start with prayer, asking the Lord to bless all that you do and offering up yourself to His service.

2. **Location**

If you plan to hold your classes in a parish, be sure to first secure permission from the pastor. Schedule a meeting with him and give him an overview of CSS so that he may also be enthused about the program. Your pastor may be interested in being involved as a full-time or part-time lecturer if you choose not to use the audio/video lecture materials available to you.

3. **Schedule Day and Time**

Decide which day your classes will meet each week and a time frame (same day and time each week).

It is best to consult a Catholic calendar that shows holy days so that you can make sure that you do not schedule a class on these days. Make up the full schedule for the year, including orientation day (the first day when you give out the study materials and give instructions about the class). You may also want to schedule an extra day at the end of the study to have an end of the year luncheon or get together. Be sure to include breaks for holidays such as Christmas in the schedule. It may be helpful to be aware of the local school holiday schedules, especially if you are meeting during the daytime hours.

If you are holding the class at your parish, be sure to give a copy of this schedule to the person in the parish who coordinates the room reservations in this process.
Studying God’s Word in an atmosphere of Christian fellowship is a key ingredient for a successful Bible Study program.


1st CSS Class in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

CSS Author, Steve Ray with a CSS Group in Texas
4. Form Leadership Team

Start with the following Team Leaders:

- Study Leader (Facilitator/Leader of the class)
- Class Administrator (Assistant to the Study Leader)
- Treasurer (may be parish secretary)
- Group Leader(s) (leaders of small discussion groups)
- Music Director (optional for classes who may want to add music/singing to their class schedule)
- Children’s Leader(s) (optional for classes who may provide childcare – this may be the person(s) who care for the children)

The Study Leader

- Oversees the study program in his/her parish
- Sets the schedule of classes
- Chooses Class Administrator, Treasurer and optional Music Director
- Delegates certain duties to Class Administrator
- Oversees publicity
- Chooses Groups Leaders who are in good standing with the Church to facilitate in the discussion groups.

The Class Administrator

- Assistant to the Study Leader
- Handles registration
- Keeps class roster
- Handles all administrative duties
- Keeps templates for CSS forms such as registration forms, name badges, etc.

The Class Administrator should make a roster of all the registrants, listing their names, addresses, phone numbers and other pertinent information. It would be most helpful to keep this roster on a computer in Microsoft Excel or a similar program so that it may be easily updated. You may also
want to ask if the parish could supply you with a copy of the checks for your records or have the check number written on the registration form so that you will have some record indicating that the fee has been collected.

The Treasurer

- Handles the registration fees
- Handles banking
- Orders materials (or Study Leader may choose to do this)

The Treasurer may be your parish secretary if your parish prefers to handle the money. If this is the case, have the checks made payable to your parish. You may want to have the registration form and checks mailed or dropped off at your parish office with the understanding that the Treasurer or Class Administrator would pick up the registration forms on a regular basis.

If your parish does not desire to handle the bank account, then your Treasurer should set up a bank account, having checks made payable to that account or person and depositing the money so that when it is time to order your materials you may write one check for your order. We recommend that you place one large order for the bible studies. Individuals may order their own books but they will incur higher shipping costs.

Group Leaders

- Act as facilitators during small group discussion on the homework questions
- Make name badges for their group participants (or Study Leader may provide name badges using template found on CSS website.
- Takes attendance weekly and provides this information to Study Leader for yearly records. (This is especially important for those classes where the diocese gives religious education credit hours for CSS studies).
General Guidelines for Leaders

Dress Code: “Business casual” attire is appropriate for CSS leaders at all CSS meetings. No jeans or shorts, please!

A separate weekly CSS session at which the group leaders meet to complete their own study is ideal. The Study Leader should meet with the group leaders and at this time they would go over all the study questions and answers to be certain that all understand the lesson and are well equipped to lead their discussion groups that week.

The Leadership meeting each week between the Study Leader and Group Leaders is very important and ideally would be held the day before class so that all discussion of the lesson would be fresh in everyone’s mind. This time frame would also allow sufficient time for everyone to have done their homework and come to the meeting prepared to go over their answers. It is important that each Group Leader actually does their own homework each week and that they don’t just look at the answers.

(Please realize that having a weekly meeting with the group leaders is a suggestion only. This may not be possible for every group.)

• MP3 lectures – Those who purchase a Study Leader Set receive links to the MP3 (audio) lectures of that study. If a student misses a class, the Study Leader may choose to email the MP3 link to that week’s lecture to the student(s) who missed the class so that they will be able to listen to the lecture on their computer.

5. Promotion (Publicity)

The best way to promote CSS participation is word of mouth. Tell everyone you know and all those you meet about CSS (especially at Church-related activities) and ask them to do the same. Email your friends and family members around the country and the world as there are CSS classes all over the U.S. and abroad. If there is no class in the area it’s easy to start one in their parish. We also have Regional Directors around the country and in Canada who would be glad to assist anyone interested in starting a CSS
class. They can contact us via email at info@cssprogram and we will put them in touch with a Regional Director.

Another way to promote your class is to place announcements about CSS in your parish bulletin and neighboring parish bulletins and have these announcements run as many weeks as possible. This is especially important when you are first forming your group; then place them periodically to encourage new members to join. Promotional materials and templates for bulletin announcements are available on the CSS website.

Put flyers and/or a poster in your parish and neighboring parishes. Be sure to first obtain permission to do this. CSS provides files to create color and black and white posters and flyers. If possible, place registration cards and other materials such as CSS brochures on a table near this poster. You may want to take a flyer or poster to a local print shop to have it printed and/or enlarged. You could also choose to have the poster laminated and then mounted on a piece of foam or poster board to put on an easel in a visible place in your parish. You may want to make multiple copies of the black and white flyer to insert in your parish bulletins.

Some Promotional Materials available at www.cssprogram.net include:

- Posters or Flyers
- Registration form
- Sample bulletin announcements
- Sample announcements pulpit announcement
- Name badge template
- Table sign

6. Registering Participants

Everyone participating in the study, including the team members should fill out a registration form. Listed below are the steps to take for registering members:
Registration Forms:

A template for CSS registration forms is available on the CSS website. There are spaces on the registration form to fill in the name of the study, contact information, etc. Please remember to fill in this pertinent information on the registration form template prior to making additional copies.

Registration Tips:

• Put an announcement in the parish bulletin about the study (sample bulletin announcements templates in the Essential folder on the CSS website under Study Tools. Add additional information to the bulletin announcement such as where to find registration forms. Place a stack of the forms in the gathering area of the parish beside a large CSS poster.

• Ask the pastor if you may make an announcement about the CSS study after one of the weekend Masses, or ask that he make the announcement or request that it be added to the list of announcements made by the lector. Be sure to include information about where to find registration forms.

• One suggestion for the registration process would be to have a couple of weekends designated as “Sign Up” weekends for CSS registrations. Place an announcement in the bulletin or have someone make an announcement from the pulpit directing people to stop by the tables in the gathering area after Mass to pick up info and/or registration forms. Place the forms on a couple of tables with someone posted at each table for each Mass over the weekend. The people working at the tables would need to know how to answer questions about the study as well as give out forms and take registration fees. If you cannot find anyone willing to sit at the tables, then just have the forms and info on the table with a CSS table sign so people can stop by and read the info and pick up a registration form. Be sure to include information about where to send the completed registration form and how to make out the check (Normally the parish would collect all funds and then write one check at the end of the registration period for the order). Many
items that you may need for this table can be found in the Essential Folder, including a table sign.

• Another suggestion would be to announce (from the pulpit and/or in bulletins) a meeting for those interested in knowing more about the Bible study. At the meeting, have the registration forms as well as a cash box with change, pens and other materials needed so as to take care of registering people. Give a short talk about the study format, the length of the study, what book of the Bible you’ll be doing and explain that they will receive their study materials on the first day of class. Then hand out the registration forms and they can take them home and mail them in later or sign up at the meeting. Ask everyone at the meeting to invite their friends as well and spread the word about CSS.

• Scan the registration form into your computer and attach it to an email that you sent out, asking people to spread the word and letting them know that they can print out the registration form to fill out and send.

Registration Guidelines

Some couples may elect to share one book, however, it is better if each person has their own study book to get the most out of the study. If a couple wants separate books as we advise, they should fill out separate registration forms to avoid confusion or make a note on the one registration form.

There should always be a deadline for registration. Be sure that this deadline is well publicized and that the registration process is ended in plenty of time to order your study materials. Please allow two weeks from the time you place your order for study materials to be delivered if you are in the U.S. If overseas, please contact us at info@cssprogram.net for more information on the best way to receive your study materials.

Post-Registration Process

After registration the Study Leader will need to access how many group leaders will be needed according to the number of registrants. There should
be ten to twelve members in each discussion group, however, if there are between 13-19 people, it might be best to keep all the members together and the Study Leader would lead the entire class in discussing the study questions each week. If there are twenty or more in the class, these should be divided into groups of ten to twelve in each group.

7. Order Study Materials

At the end of the registration period, place your order for the study materials. To place your order, go to our website: www.cssprogram.net and login with your password. Remember your login will be the email address that you used when you registered. You will then see a link to our online store to order your study materials and other related products.

Study materials and DVDs cannot be ordered by anyone not registered with CSS. If your students wish to order any CSS products or study materials, they must be registered on our website. Please either encourage your students to register on the website so that they may take advantage of all the extra resources and features there for them. If they are not registered online they will not be able to access all these extras.

Class Format

Classes are held for an hour and a half every week for the studies that have the video lectures so as to allow enough time for discussion and watching the lecture. For some of our shorter studies that do not include video lectures, class time may be shorter unless the Study Leader opts to give a lecture or do offer some other activity. Below is the standard format:

• **Opening Program** – (The first fifteen minutes) The Study Leader may begin each class with prayer, and/or music, announcements or choose some of our suggested “openings”.

• **Discussion Groups** - The members go to their assigned discussion groups with their Group Leader. For the next forty-five minutes the group members discuss the study questions in the lesson for that
week. Each member should have already prepared their lessons by answering the questions at home prior to attending class. The Group Leader serves as a facilitator in the group. Each group should have between 10-12 members including the Group Leader. If there are less than 20 people in the class, all members should stay together and the Study Leader will lead the discussion. If the class grows to more than twenty, then the members can be divided into two or more groups with a group leader chosen to facilitate each group. The Study Leader should prayerfully discern who to choose to be the Group Leaders.

• **Lecture** — At the end of the forty-five minutes all small discussion groups come back together again in the main room where they started for a thirty-minute lecture. CSS provides video lectures on DVDs by our priest-lecturers. Some of our studies also have lecture outline notes called “Notes from the Podium” that are available on our website under Additional Study Tools. These are not available for all studies however.

**Guidelines for Study Leaders**

Study Leaders should specify at the beginning of the year that there will not be a question and answer period after the lecture. This guideline helps to protect the Study Leader from being put on the spot to answer questions that he/she may not be prepared to answer. Our Study Leaders do not have to be trained catechists or theologians. The only requirements are enthusiasm and a desire to bring God’s Word to others. There is a great hunger and thirst among Catholics for knowledge of Scripture and a better understanding of their own Catholic faith.

If members have questions that are not answered in the “suggested responses” or in the lecture, the Study Leader should make a note of the question and tell the students that they will try to get an answer for them by the next week. Then you can check to see if the study that you are doing has archived ‘Ask the Author’ questions and answers that may cover the question you have. If this feature is not available for your study or the answer is not covered in the archives, you can try using some of the extra resources that we recommend or links on our site to help find the answer or
encourage your students to do so themselves, using these recommended links or resources on our website.

**Scheduling**

*Holy Days, Holidays, Vacations,*

When planning your CSS schedule it may be best to avoid scheduling any meetings on Mondays or Fridays because of holidays. It would be best to also avoid these days for your leaders’ meeting day. If this is not possible, you may want to provide a schedule for your members to

When there is a holy day or holiday approaching, i.e., Christmas or Easter, the Study Leader will need to take care to remind the participants about the schedule. The Group Leaders should also remind their members of upcoming holidays during discussion time and again when they correspond with them via phone calls or emails.

*Snow Days/Inclement Weather/Community Emergencies*

In the case of bad weather or community emergency situations, it is best to instruct your members at the beginning of the year to tune into their local radio and/or TV station. If the public schools are cancelled, then CSS class will also be cancelled. This is the easiest way to be sure that everyone knows what to do. In addition to this, the Study Leader may want to email or call their group leaders and ask them to contact their group members via email or by phone to be sure all know that class is cancelled.

Also, each leader should have a roster of names, email addresses, and phone numbers of not only their group members but of all the other leaders so they can contact one another in case of emergencies. Each discussion group member should have the name, phone number and email address of their Group Leader as well as others in their discussion group. The GL should first secure permission from each group member to give out their contact information to the others in the group. The GL should also be sure that each member understands that they should not use this contact information for
personal use such as soliciting members to purchase merchandise, join an organization, etc.

Absences

If a member has more than three absences in a row, the Class Administrator should be alerted and he/she should, in turn let the Study Leader know. Either the CA or the SL should contact this person to determine if there is a problem. As the Group Leaders keep in touch with the group members, they should be able to determine if someone has lost interest or is not able to make the commitment to continue with the program. If that is the case, the Group Leader should bring this to the attention of the Class Administrator and the CA can then discuss this with the SL to decide which one will contact the person to discuss whether or not they will be dropping out of the class. If it is determined that the member will be dropping out, the CA should then remove this person’s name from the role.

It is a good idea for each group leader to stay in touch with his or her group members each week by sending at least one email to “touch base” with the group members to make them feel a part of the group. It would be wonderful to send each an individual email but sending a group email is also fine. The Group Leader could say something about that week’s lesson or perhaps remind all the members to pray for a certain member of their group for a specific prayer intention or to let others in the group know that someone is sick or hospitalized or had a baby. It’s always good to stay in touch on a weekly basis, in between classes – this will truly cut down on absences when members feel like they are included in the group.

Opening Day/Orientation

Everyone Welcomed

The first day of a Catholic Scripture Study class is a time to get to know one another, to settle any fears that “this is too hard”, to break the ice, and to let people know exactly what is involved in the study and what to expect each
week. It is good to point out that there will be members at all different levels of Scripture knowledge and from various backgrounds. This is a good thing as we encourage and support one another. It reflects who we are as Catholics—universal. Whether someone can quote Scripture chapter and verse, or whether he/she just bought his/her first Bible, everyone should feel welcomed.

Arrival

As people arrive, they should be directed to a table set up and hosted by the Class Administrator. (The Class Administrator should enlist the help of other leaders for this first day.) Here, those who have pre-registered and paid can pick up their study materials and new members may be welcomed and registered. Everyone can be directed to the large group discussion area (which may be in the Activity Center or in large room). Signs with direction arrows are helpful.
Prayerfully Prepare the Discussion Space

Each Group Leader should make sure there are enough chairs set out for the number of group members expected in their individual group. It is helpful to put members’ name badges on each chair for them to take as they sit down. It is also a very good practice to pray in your discussion space before anyone arrives. Ask the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts of all the members and give you the courage to lead with love and gentleness. We always want to acknowledge the presence of our loving God and ask Him to fill us and use us as to bring others closer to Him. It is nice to have tables but not absolutely necessary.

Beginning Session

The Group Leaders should always arrive early enough to prepare their discussion space before the beginning session. It is important for the GL to be on time each week and present at the opening session and also arrive on time each week. This encourages others to be conscious of being punctual as well. Care should be taken by the Study Leader to make this time valuable. On Orientation Day, the Study Leader will announce the Group Leaders by name and then their group members. Each GL will lead his/her group to their discussion area. The beginning session on opening day should consist of an opening prayer, perhaps singing if possible, and a welcome by the Study Leader or the parish pastor.
**Discussion Groups**

The discussion Group Leader welcomes everyone and introduces him or herself and perhaps also shares what brings him/her to CSS. Make sure everyone is wearing their nametag in a prominent place. Remind members to bring their nametag to each class and wear them at all times so that they will be able to better get to know each other. Even though the discussion groups will get to know each other, there may be new members joining during the year and the people in the other groups will want to see the nametags as well.

The GL should start each session with a brief prayer, assuring the other members that they will never be put on the spot to pray out loud. This prayer time should be downplayed so as not to make beginners in the group uncomfortable. If the Study Leader did not pray the prayer to the Holy Spirit prior to dismissing the groups to discussion time, then the Group Leader should lead the group in praying this prayer. (This prayer is included in this manual.)

After the brief prayer, each group member introduces himself/herself. At this point, the group could play an icebreaker game to become familiar with each other. See section on “Icebreakers” for ideas.

After the introduction and icebreaker, instruct group members to add their information page to their study binder with the Group Leader’s name and phone number and other information. (Class Administrators should provide data sheets that they obtain from Study Leader). Each leader should make a roster of their group members with pertinent contact information such as name, address, email address and phone number. A copy should be given to each member of the group. First, however, the GL should ask if there is anyone who objects to having their contact information on a group roster. After securing permission from each member to have their information included, then this roster should be handed out at the following class. The GL should emphasize that the list should be used for CSS purposes only and privacy should be respected. The GL should also tell members that he/she will probably call or email them on a regular basis just to keep in touch. Members should indicate what method of weekly communication works.
best, email or phone (some may not have email) and when is the best time to contact them if by phone.

Encourage group members to tell others about the Bible Study and invite them to join their class. New members and visitors should always check in at the Class Administrator’s table when they arrive. The CA should welcome them, make sure they get a temporary nametag (self-stick with name written with marker) and take their registration if they wish to join the class. If someone is visiting for one time only, they should check in and can just stay with the person who brought them. Those who wish to join the study should stay after the beginning session for a brief orientation by the Study Leader and then they will be assigned to a group.

Get-Acquainted Icebreakers for Discussion Groups

Two True, One False

In this activity, each participant is to think of three facts about themselves that they can share when it is their turn. Two of the facts should be true and one should be false. The fun happens when everyone tries to guess which fact is false.
1. Explain to the group that you are going to do a fun activity to get to know each other better.

2. Instruct the participants to think of three things about themselves. They should pick two true facts and one false. Explain to them that they are going to be sharing this data with the rest of the group who will then try to guess which statements are true and what is false.

3. The first participant shares three things about himself or herself. Ask the rest of the group to say which statement they think is false. The person who shared tells if they are correct or not. The person who shared could then elaborate on the information that they shared if desired.

4. The game continues with the next participant.

**Show and Tell**

Group members share an object from their purse, wallet, or pocket (or it could be a piece of jewelry or a pin they are wearing). The idea is to choose something that tells something about you.

1. Explain that you are going to play a game that will help everyone get to know one another a little better.

2. Instruct each participant to look in their purse, wallet, or pocket (or something they are wearing) for an object they can share that will tell something about them.

3. Each member takes turns showing and telling about the object.

**Unusual facts**

This is a good icebreaker for group members who already know one another. Members share facts about themselves that may already be known, and then one fact that they think most of the people in the
group do not know. It is a fun way to get to know each other even better!

1. Explain that you are going to do an activity that will help them to get to know each other even better.

2. Instruct the participants to tell two things about themselves that people may already know (like about their family, their job, etc.) and then unusual fact about themselves that most people in the group wouldn’t know.

**TP Game**

Begin this game without much direction.

1. Simply say that you are going to pass around a roll of toilet paper and “when it comes to you, you should take as much as you think you need.” Do not elaborate.

2. Pass the roll of TP around the group. Each person tears some off and passes it to the next person.

3. After each person has had a turn to take some TP, the game begins.

4. Now, reveal the rest of the game: each person is to share one fact about him/herself for each sheet of TP they took (for example, I have four children). It is lots of fun when someone has taken lots of TP!

**Introductions**

In this game, participants introduce each other to the rest of the group. Explain that you are going to do an activity to help everyone get better acquainted. In pairs, you are going to take turns telling each other three interesting facts about yourselves and then we will go around and have everyone introduce their partner to the group.

1. Pair off the participants.
2. Pairs take turns telling each other about three facts about themselves.

3. Each person in the group introduces his/her partner to the rest of the group.

FELLOWSHIP

Prayer Petitions

Discussion groups may desire to form prayer petitions to pray for concerns of their members. This should be done on a volunteer basis and no one
should feel pressured to participate. Some members may be too busy or too uncomfortable with the idea to take part. It is best to wait and introduce the prayer petition idea at the third or fourth meeting, however, so as not to overwhelm participants with too much on in the beginning classes. Check the CSS Group Leader Handbook for more details on prayer petitions. Group Leader Handbooks are available in the CSS store or for free download in the CSS website. We encourage each Group Leader to have a handbook.

**Luncheons**

Discussion groups can benefit from having a luncheon once/month or every so often to be able to spend more time together and share things not related to the lesson. The GL should plan the first luncheon or social which can be held either outside the class or after class in the parish. At this first gathering, the GL may discuss future functions of this type with the group and make plans depending on the interests of the members. Luncheons may be at member’s homes or at the church, depending on each situation. A different person might volunteer to be the host each month and provide a dessert or tea/soda if the group wishes to do it that way. The luncheons should be kept very simple. Each member should bring his/her own lunch. Evening groups might meet for dinner instead of doing a luncheon. If it is too difficult to plan an outside activity, have members bring a bag lunch and stay after class once a month to eat together.

**Discussion Group Guidelines**

**Preparation**

Personal bible study is very rewarding. The GL should relate enthusiasm and encourage group members to make the homework a priority. The rewards are immense. However, there will always be those weeks that for whatever reason, some will find themselves unable to do their homework.. No one should ever hesitate to come to the Bible study because they didn’t have time to do the lesson. It is always beneficial to come and listen to the discussion and the lecture. Then one can pick it back up and not get behind. No one will be ridiculed or lectured for not having finished the homework. However, if a member or members consistently comes without having done
their homework, the Group Leader should probably speak to this person outside of class and explain to this person that he or she should not share answers to the questions in the discussion group on those particular days, but rather just listen. This is out of fairness to those who did do the lesson and it also helps to keep the discussion focused on what each group member has discovered in the lesson and not on past experiences or personal opinion. It may be best to explain this policy at the beginning of the study so that everyone knows that if they didn’t get to do their homework that they should just listen on those days rather than giving their opinion rather than facts.

**Sticking to the Subject**

GLs should explain to the group that during the discussion times, all need to try diligently to stick to the lesson and move along so as to cover the whole lesson without getting off on tangents. It is important that every question is finished within the forty-five minute time allotment. Topics that come up during the class time that are not directly related to the lesson can be saved for discussion at another time. Staying focused on the lesson may take some discipline and everyone should be aware of it and try to make it happen. The study is the priority and everyone’s time should be valued. If a member has a question not directly related to the lesson, the GL should ask the person to write down their question and give it to him/her after the session, explaining that he/she will try to get back to the member with an answer before the next session. Then the GL could 1) give the question to the Study Leader to either be addressed at the next opening session; or 2) try to find the answer by using the resources and links on the CSS website. If there are questions related to the lesson that the GL is not sure of the answer or would rather not answer, the GL should then defer to the Study Leader with a statement such as this: “Let’s wait and see if this is answered in the lecture today. I think it might be.” The GL should **never** answer a question that they are not sure about and also should never be afraid to say, “I don’t know, but I’ll try to find out for you.” Many resource materials are available on the CSS website. As a last resort, you may email info@cssprogram.net for assistance as to where to find the answers. Group Leaders who are not sure about where to find answers that are loyal to Church teachings should email CSS about this so that we may guide them so as to avoid getting information from a source that contradicts the Magisterial teachings of Holy Mother Church. Unfortunately, there are some sites on the Internet that may call
themselves Catholic but have erroneous or contradictory information so please check with CSS for advice if you are not sure of your source.

**Scripture Memorization**

There should be a verse highlighted *(in bold print)* in each week’s Scripture passage in the lessons. This is the *suggested memory* verse, so members should feel free to choose another verse that they’d rather memorize. Everyone should be encouraged to give memorization a try. GLs should begin each discussion by asking if anyone has memorized the verse and giving anyone who has done so the chance to say it aloud.

**Childcare**

You may want to ask your pastor about providing childcare. Find out what regulations may be needed to be followed concerning this and determine how you will pay these childcare attendants. You may also want to talk to parents who are interested in childcare to see if they would be willing to take turns watching the children.

**Collections**

An envelope can be passed in the discussion groups for a free-will offering to help cover the costs of any snacks and craft materials that may be used during childcare or if it is a volunteer watching the children, it would be good to collect money to give this person or persons a stipend either weekly or saved up and presented at the end of the year or study session.

It is also good to have a collection twice yearly if classes are held in a parish to give to the parish unless there has been some other arrangement made.
Opening Prayer

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

COME HOLY SPIRIT

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit that we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.
Closing Prayer

Prayer to St. Michael

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do Thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the divine power of God, cast into hell, Satan and all the evil spirits, who prowl throughout the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.
The Study Format

Introduction to the Book

Every book that we study in our CSS program begins with at least one page of introduction. Every book of the Bible is part of the whole story of salvation – God’s plan for mankind’s redemption.
Introduction to the Lessons

Each lesson will have a brief introduction, giving you what you need to know to begin your work. In all but the first lesson, this space will review the important points from the previous lesson and preview the current one.

Text

The text of the passage of Scripture to be studied appears in the Revised Standard Version - Catholic Edition (RSV-CE). It is good for everyone in the study to use the same translation, although it is always good to read the passage in at least one other translation as well for comparison.

Memory Verse

Memory verses are in bold print in the actual Scripture text of each lesson. You may choose to memorize this verse or choose another. This section will always remind you that one excellent response to Scripture is to memorize it. As the Psalmist says, “Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Ps. 119:11).

Study Questions

After the text, you will have questions. Most of these questions are designed to help you engage directly with the text so as to understand its literal meaning. These questions are also formatted so as to help the student learn their way around the Bible by cross-referencing in the Old and New Testaments.

Voices of the Saints

This section includes a quote from a Saint that relates to the lesson.
Questions for Reflection

Included in the questions on the text is also a section, “Questions for Reflection”. These questions do not have to be shared in the group discussion because they may be personal, but if there is time, some may like to share their answers. This part of the lesson is very important since this is where the Scripture penetrates your soul.

Points to Ponder

This section is the commentary and the part that helps the student have a more complete understanding of the Scripture.

In every lesson there are layers of meaning in the text that simply cannot be reached by a question-and-answer approach. There may be theological points that are worth developing, comparisons with other parts of Scripture worth pursuing, or attention to the other senses of the text beyond the literal that are worth considering. For those ready to take the time to reflect more deeply on the passage in the lesson, we provide here further commentary for that purpose.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

These sections of the study will deepen and enrich your understanding of the Scripture.

Catechism Connection

In every study we include cross-references to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The Catechism helps the student to understand and apply the text within the larger context of the Living Tradition of the Church. “According to a saying of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church’s heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God’s Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures (‘according to the spiritual meaning which the Spirit grants to the Church’)” (CCC113). In this section we will list appropriate Catechism references to verses in the lesson (found in the index of the back of the CCC), with their paragraph numbers.
Responses to the Study Questions

The purpose of providing the Responses to the Questions is to model various ways the text of Scripture can be engaged by a Catholic student of Scripture. Many new students of Scripture profit from seeing how more experienced students tackle a text and dig out the many and varied nuggets of gold God has hidden there for us to find. So we offer this section as a way of helping the new student of Scripture see this “digging process” in action, as well as to create a starting point for others to offer their insights and discoveries as well and to wrestle with the meaning of the text.

These responses, although they are informed by the Tradition and magisterial teachings of the Church, are not magisterial themselves. They will provide you with solid direction as you investigate the meaning of the verses under discussion. They will not give you an “official interpretation” of the verses in the study. It is not the Church’s way to give definitive interpretations of Bible verses. Instead, she defines dogma (and even that she is profoundly disinclined to do unless she absolutely has to.) She prefers to give her children as much freedom as possible to plumb the depths of Scripture within the boundaries of a few basic and crucial guidelines. To understand those guidelines, it is important for you to read paragraphs 109-119 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

In providing our responses to the questions in the studies, we have paid particular attention to paragraphs 112-114. These guidelines are the bedrock upon which all truly Catholic Bible study rests. Scripture does not and cannot mean whatever we “feel” it to mean regardless of context, common sense, and the Tradition of the Church. In addition, we recognize that we have not said everything that can possibly be said about the verses you will be studying. To be sure, Scripture is unfathomably rich in meaning and often does its work by making startling and subtle connections in fascinating ways. This is what makes Scripture study new every time it is done. So, as in all things, we are to seek a balance as Catholics. We must do our Scripture study within the boundaries given in the Catechism but we must also remember that these boundaries are something like the boundaries on the playing field of a game or the rulings of an umpire. Use our responses to the questions as models, not laws. And have fun!
Summary

Each lesson will have a brief but thorough summary at the end. This summary will help you make sure that you have clearly understood the main ideas of the lesson. Beginners will find this particularly helpful. Study Leaders can use this summary to make sure their group has gotten everything important from the lesson.

CSS Website Resources (www.cssprogram.net)

There are several features on the website including links to:
Bible study tools and resources (RSV-CE, Catechism etc.
Daily Readings,
Office of Readings,
Catholic News Sources
Vatican Website
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
EWTN
And much more……..
Please encourage your students to also register on the CSS website and visit often to take advantage of the links we have made available.
CSS is on Facebook—Join our list of Facebook Friends and keep up to date on what is going on at CSS.

Other resources include:

• CSS Bible with 76 supplemental pages of Apologetics, faith facts, charts and article. There is also a topical index of over 130 subjects in the Bible with verses listed as to where to find these topics, beautiful colored pictures, schedule of Mass readings, and more. The bible has large print, three ribbon markers, and is bound in bonded leather with gold-edged pages and the beautiful CSS logo gold stamped on the cover.

• CSS Trifold Brochures –glossy brochures that help you promote and grow your CSS class.