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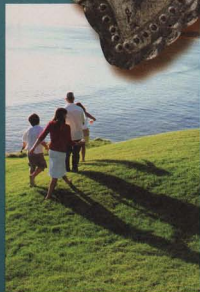
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# Teaches

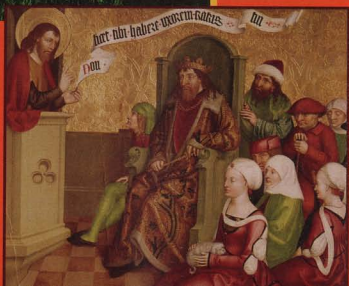
# Teaches

## Mark Teaches Us about Jesus

### THE GOSPEL OF MARK

✦ The Gospel of Mark was most likely written between the years 65 and 70. These were troublesome years for both Jews and for the first Christians in the Mediterranean world. The Church in Rome had just suffered the first large-scale persecution at the hands of the Roman government. The Church in Palestine, still close to its Jewish roots, watched as Roman armies invaded to crush a Jewish uprising. This invasion ended with the conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in the year 70. Early Christians who had been converted and who had embraced Jesus with a great spirit of hope and expectation discovered that they now lived in the midst of suffering and destruction.

In the midst of these times of trouble, what message of comfort and hope could be given to Christians? Mark responded by writing the first Gospel. In it he proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God sent by the Father to save the human family through his service and the sacrifice of his life.



## WRITING THE GOSPEL

From his vantage point of being Peter's companion in Rome, Mark collected the stories and preaching about Jesus, Jesus' teachings and sayings, and the stories of the events of the Last Supper and Jesus' death on the cross. He then shaped these stories into a larger story to help Christians recognize that Jesus was the Son of God. The Gospel of Mark was written in everyday Greek so it could be read by the mostly Greek-speaking audience. Mark presents Jesus as a dynamic figure who was always on the move, proclaiming the Kingdom of God to all who would listen. Mark's was the first written Gospel, and his work strongly influenced the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

## JESUS AS HEALER AND TEACHER

Mark 1–8 presents Jesus as a powerful healer and preacher. Even as he performs a number of miracles and explains the meaning of his parables, his disciples don't seem to understand the meaning of who he is. (Mark 4:13) After he performs miracles, he orders his disciples not to talk about it, but they continue to anyway. (Mark 7:36) The disciples don't understand that the real meaning of Jesus is not in his miracles and parables. The consistent theme in Mark is that it is not simply the miracles that reveal Jesus' true nature. It is Jesus' willingness to face the cross that defines who he is for us. And if we are to be his disciples, we must face the same difficulties: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." (Mark 8:34)

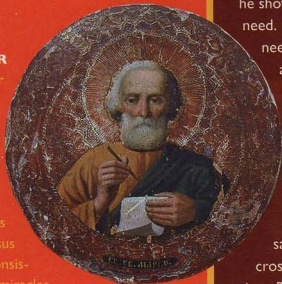
Mark 9–15 tells the story of Jesus' passion and death. In these chapters Jesus reveals the nature of true discipleship. Jesus tells his followers that life in service to him is a life in service to others.

"Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you, will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:43–44)

The Gospel then describes the Crucifixion and death of Jesus. Jesus is recognized as the Son of God by a Roman centurion who witnesses his death. Mark is telling us that we look to the cross to understand the depth of God's love for us.

## MARK IN THIS UNIT

In this unit the Gospel of Mark helps us to explore the mystery of Jesus and who he is in our life. Jesus is proclaimed at the beginning of the Gospel as the Son of God. This is how he is identified after he is baptized by John the Baptist. Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God has come, and he shows God's care for those in need. He acts to address these needs in his works of healing and in his forgiveness of sins. We celebrate the healing ministry of Jesus today in the Sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick. Jesus finally shows the depths of his love through the sacrifice of his life on the cross for the sake of our salvation. But the story is not over. The women who come to minister to Jesus' body discover an empty tomb and hear the message of his Resurrection. They are then sent to tell Peter and the disciples that Jesus would meet them in Galilee.



# I D Details

INTERESTING

When we go through security at an airport or apply for library cards, we are often asked to show identification. People want to make sure we are who we say we are. Name some other situations when you might be asked to show identification.



## For Your Eyes Only

Create an ID card for yourself that tells more about you than just your vital statistics.

NAME:

Hobbies:

Favorite book:

Favorite music:

Favorite class:





# Who Is This Man?

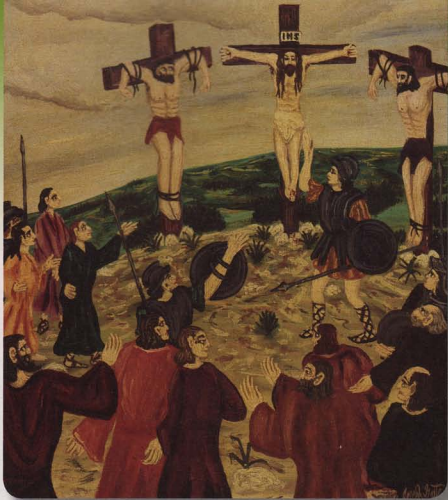
**When we read** the stories of the heroes in the Old Testament, we discover that people who seem ordinary sometimes do extraordinary things. They have unexpected talents or depths of character that are revealed during a crisis. Joseph is sold by his brothers into slavery, and he is later thrown into prison in Egypt. It is then revealed that he is an interpreter of dreams, which leads to his becoming pharaoh's most important representative. The boy David lives as an ordinary shepherd until he defeats the mighty Goliath and is revealed as a faithful warrior for

## Jesus is God living among us.

God. Later, as King David, he is known as a musician and is credited with writing some of the psalms. Esther is a young Jewish woman who lost her parents and was adopted by her uncle Mordecai. She wins the favor of the Persian king and is made Queen of Persia. When she discovers the king's plan to execute all the Jews in Persia, Esther risks her life to prevent the tragedy.

### MESSIAH

The Gospel of Mark begins with the proclamation that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. As he continues writing, Mark gradually tells us what this means. In the early



*Crucifixion, Victor Joseph Gatto, 20th Century, New York*

part of Mark's Gospel, Jesus heals a number of people and then tells his disciples not to speak of it. Mark is telling us that Jesus did wonderful deeds, but we should not let ourselves be distracted by them. There is more to Jesus than being a miraculous healer. As you continue to read the Gospel, Mark presents Jesus as a mystery to be further explored. Like the hidden strengths of the heroes of the Old Testament, there are things about Jesus that are revealed gradually.

In Mark 8:27 Jesus himself asks the question, "Who do people say that I am?" Peter speaks up and answers for all the apostles. He says that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus cautions the apostles not to tell anyone. He knows that the people have many ideas about who the expected Messiah should be and how he should act. Some thought the Messiah would be a liberator who would lead the people against their enemies. In Mark it is clear that Jesus doesn't want people to see him in this way.

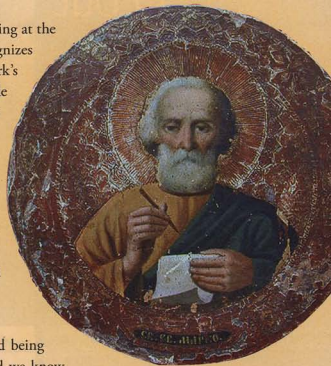
Jesus' Crucifixion revealed the real meaning of who he is. Looking at the bruised and battered Jesus on the cross, the Roman centurion recognizes that Jesus is the Son of God. (Mark 15:39) It is at this point in Mark's Gospel that we too recognize that Jesus is much more than a miracle worker; he is the Messiah, the anointed one, the Christ. Over the centuries the Church has continued to reflect on who Jesus is and who he is for us.

### HUMAN

God wanted us to share in his divine nature, so the Son of God became man. Jesus is human like us in every way except sin. He assumed human nature without losing his divine nature. People could see and hear him, and he could touch them with human hands.

### GOD

Jesus is God living among us. Jesus is man, but he never stopped being God, so that means that God is one of us. We look at Jesus, and we know that our God is not someone who is set apart from us on a distant mighty throne. Our God walks and talks with us. He knows our thoughts and feelings because he had human thoughts and feelings. That is why he can save us from ourselves and from our sinful nature. That is why his name is *Jesus*, which means "God saves."

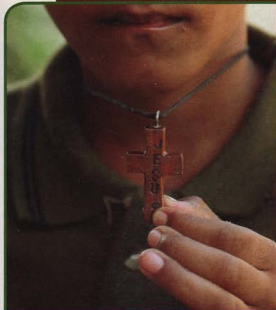


### art • i • fact

Antique Russian icon depicting Saint Mark the Evangelist

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## They Just Don't Get It



**Mark tells many stories** about Jesus performing miracles, but his Gospel is not primarily about miracles. He also tells stories about Jesus teaching people things they need to know about God, but his Gospel is not primarily about what Jesus taught. What is his Gospel about?

Mark's Gospel is about being a disciple of Jesus. Mark knew that the disciples had a hard time understanding what it means to follow Jesus. In his Gospel he showed how they struggled to follow Jesus, and only understood what it meant after he had been crucified and raised from the dead. The disciples thought that following Jesus would mean that they would have power and fame in this world. Jesus' Crucifixion taught them that being his disciple means serving the kingdom. Along the way the disciples will suffer, as people will reject them and even be hostile towards them. In the midst of this journey, Jesus will be with them, sharing the load of the cross. (Mark 8:34–35)



# This Way Out

► continued from page 67



**In Jesus' time** a Jewish student became a disciple by choosing a rabbi (or teacher) and spending time with him. The student would learn the rabbi's teaching and do his best to imitate the rabbi's life. Eventually when the student had learned all that he could, he could become a rabbi himself. In contrast, Jesus' disciples did not choose him but were chosen by him. The goal of the Christian disciple is to grow into a close relationship with Jesus and follow him by proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Becoming a disciple of Jesus means answering his call to discover his presence in everyday life.

*I really need to have someone from the phone company swim out and check my line. Whenever Jesus calls me to be a disciple, he sounds like he's under water.*



## SON OF GOD

Jesus is the Son of God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Mark calls our attention to this at the beginning of his Gospel, when Jesus is revealed to be the Son of God after his baptism by John the Baptist. Mark wrote, "On coming up out of the water [Jesus] saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'" (Mark 1:9–11)


Jesus is God's Son. Because he is God the Father's Son, he reveals the Father to us and shows us how much the Father loves us.

## GOD AND MAN

Jesus, then, is true God and true man. He is one divine person with a divine and human nature. He is the only one who bridges the gap between God and us. Jesus, the God-man, is the only mediator, the only one who can reconcile us with God after the break caused by human sinfulness.

## LORD

For all these reasons, Jesus is Lord. He is the one who rules our lives. When we call Jesus Lord, we are saying that he is God. We can recognize this because it has been revealed to us through the Holy Spirit.

"Who do people say that I am?" Jesus asked his disciples this question, but he also asks us that same question every day. Who do we say that he is? As Christians each of us is called to be open to the Holy Spirit, who helps us understand how Jesus, God and man, Lord and Savior, is calling us. 

**IM**

"Truly this man was the Son of God!"  
(Mark 15:39)



# Is He for Real?

**I**t was not hard for the people who followed Jesus in Palestine to see that he was a man. They looked into his eyes. They heard his voice. They heard his laughter when a joke was told. They felt his comforting touch on their shoulders. He was a man. What else were they supposed to think?

As time passed and people who had never met Jesus learned about him through the preaching of the disciples and from the Gospels, some people were less inclined to believe that Jesus was man. The Gospel of Matthew describes that when Jesus was born a special star appeared in the sky. When he died, there was an earthquake. During his life Jesus did amazing things. He touched lepers and cured them without catching the disease himself. The Gospel of John tells the story of how Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead after he had been buried for four days. He fed thousands of people with only the amount of food that would



*A Jesus Image, Fr. Jim Hasse, S.J., Cincinnati, Ohio*

fit in a grocery bag today. He walked on water. At the Transfiguration his face shone like the sun. Three days after he died, his disciples discovered an empty tomb, and later Jesus appeared and spoke to them.

You can understand why some early Christians decided that Jesus was God and not a man. They thought that he was something like what today we would consider a hologram. We see examples of holograms in science-fiction films and TV shows. Holograms are images of people in three dimensions, in which we see

*continued on page 70 ▶*



## Where's the Baby?

**When Matthew and Luke** wrote their Gospels, they started with stories about Jesus' birth and infancy. They used those stories to teach us how from his infancy, Jesus was recognized as a special person, Emmanuel, God with us, who would save us from our sins. Mark, on the other hand, didn't write anything about Jesus' childhood. Mark starts his Gospel with Jesus as an adult, ready to teach people the Good News. Mark does this so that he can devote his attention to the Incarnation and its meaning for us. The word *Incarnation* means that Jesus is one person who is both God and man. *Incarnate* means "made flesh." Jesus is God made flesh. Mark wanted to show that in Jesus, God became one of us and gave his life for us. So that's why Mark doesn't write about Jesus' birth and childhood. He is anxious to get to the main message about Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection for our salvation.



## The Gospel of Mark especially highlights many of the human qualities of Jesus.

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what looks like a real person standing before us. The hologram is not a real person, just light. This is how some people in early Christianity thought of Jesus. Instead of saying he was a real man, they pictured him as we would a hologram, seeming to have the physical appearance of a man, but not actually being human.

### **BORN AND RAISED A JEW**

In response, the early Church stressed that Jesus was human in the same way that we are except for sin. His

mother was a Jewish woman named Mary, and his foster father was a Jewish man named Joseph. Jesus was born in the Jewish province of the Roman empire and was raised in the Jewish culture and religion.

Jesus grew up in the town of Nazareth, a small town in the part of Israel known as Galilee. He helped his dad in his carpentry business. He was intelligent and learned about his Jewish religious heritage. By the time he was about 30 years old, he was ready to start his work as a traveling teacher.

The Gospel of Mark especially highlights many of the human qualities of Jesus. Mark tells how Jesus experienced joy at social gatherings, impatience when his disciples didn't get the point he was making, and compassion for sinners and for the sick. Mark also vividly describes the pain and suffering Jesus endured as he faced his passion and death.

## Sister Marie of the Incarnation

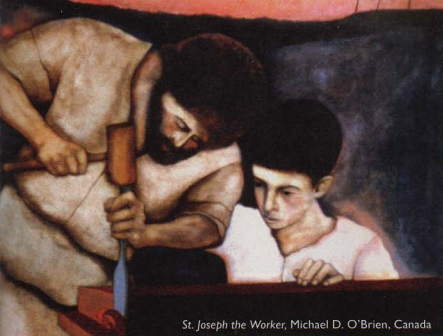
**Marie Guyart (1599–1672)**—wife, mother, missionary, and mystic—was born in Tours, France. In her youth she considered becoming a nun, but her parents arranged for her to marry a man named Claude Martin. She married, had a son, and at age 19 was left a widow. Throughout this time, her desire to enter religious life never left her.

At the age of 30, Marie joined the Ursuline nuns in Tours and took the name Sister Marie of the Incarnation. Feeling called to a missionary life, Marie made the four-month journey to Canada, arriving in Quebec in 1639. For the next 30 years, Marie dedicated herself to the native people of Canada, learning the Algonquin and Iroquois languages and writing dictionaries for them.

Why would Marie Guyart choose to name herself after the Incarnation? Perhaps it was because Jesus was the inspiration for her work. Just as God sought to save us by becoming one of us in the Incarnation, so Sister Marie sought to be the hands, feet, and voice of God for the native peoples of Canada.







St. Joseph the Worker, Michael D. O'Brien, Canada


### JOY AND SUFFERING

Jesus knew happiness. He experienced the joy of being loved by his parents. He went to parties and celebrations, and he enjoyed eating and drinking like the rest of us. He had close friends and enjoyed spending time with them. Jesus also knew unhappiness. He lived in a country that was controlled by the Romans. In his lifetime many Jewish men were crucified, and their bodies were hung on country roads to warn people of the consequences of rebellion against Rome. Jesus faced rejection, not only by strangers but also by friends and relatives. He was saddened by the suffering he saw in the world. In the days leading up to the end of his life, he experienced great suffering. Before his death he was arrested, tortured, and subjected to a form of execution that the Romans reserved for the people they despised the most—crucifixion.

### OUR RISEN LORD

Jesus suffered and died for our sins, was resurrected by the Father, ascended into heaven, and now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. From there Jesus intercedes for us. In heaven Jesus' human nature is transformed and glorified; as the firstborn of the dead, he has traced the path to the Father that we all will follow.

### TEACHER

We also can't forget that one reason Jesus lived his life on earth was to teach us how to be fully human and how to love God. Everything he did—his miracles, his actions, his prayer, his loving treatment of people, his special care for children, the elderly, and the poor, and his acceptance of the cross—all of these were done to help us learn how to live as God wants us to live. 

## IT'S LIKE THIS

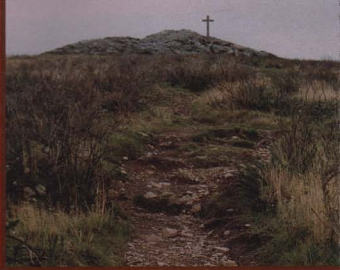
Although Matthew points out that Joseph was a carpenter, Mark is the only one who suggests that Jesus himself was a carpenter. (Mark 6:3) Throughout the history of Christianity, many people have assumed that Jesus worked as a carpenter before he began traveling and teaching. Even today we might see a bumper sticker that says "My boss is a Jewish carpenter." This would have been a safe assumption because in Jesus' time, a son learned a trade from his father and went into the family business. Although Jesus probably did learn some tricks of the trade from his foster father, Joseph, he made his living as a rabbi, a Jewish teacher. In fact, this profession was closer to God the Father's business.

## footnote

The image of the lion is used in the Bible to symbolize strength and courage. A similar image, the winged lion described in Ezekiel 1:10, is used to represent the Gospel of Mark. Mark's Gospel account begins with John the Baptist "crying out" in the wilderness that "one mightier" than he is coming. (Mark 1:3,7) It is said that John the Baptist's voice resembled that of a roaring lion like those found in the Judean wilderness, so the symbol of a lion is used for this Gospel.



# Take Up Your Cross



## JESUS, MODEL OF PRAYER

Though he was the Son of God, Jesus learned to pray according to his human heart. From his mother he learned the formulas of prayer. He learned to pray the words and rhythms of the prayers of his family and neighbors in the synagogue at Nazareth and in the Temple at Jerusalem. As Son of God he has another source of prayer, his intimate relationship with the Father. His life is an example of how to pray as children of the Father. He teaches us to speak with God in the same way that he does.

Jesus also speaks with the Father for us. Jesus, the Word made flesh, shares in his human prayer all that we experience as humans ourselves. His whole life—his words and works—is his prayer made visible for all to see.

**We can learn a lot** about what being a disciple is like from reading Mark's Gospel. We get to see the disciples discovering, one step at a time, who Jesus is and what following him means for them. In the process, we are invited to reflect on what it means for us to be a disciple of Jesus today. Let's listen to something Jesus told his first disciples.

**He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it."**

**Mark 8:34–35**

Let's spend a few moments in silence to reflect on Jesus' message to his disciples and to us.

In your imagination, join the crowd that gathers around Jesus and his disciples. What are the first things you think of when you hear him talk about denying yourself, taking up your cross, and losing your life for his sake and the sake of the Gospel?

Take a moment and share your thoughts with Jesus.

As you look around, you notice that some people are leaving. Maybe Jesus' words sound too harsh to them. For some reason, you decide to stay. Others do too. Through Jesus' words, you begin to understand a little more that a disciple is someone who follows Jesus to the cross. There are all kinds of crosses. No two are alike. Some crosses arise from the suffering caused by broken relationships. Others take the form of a physical or mental limitation or perhaps come from too much responsibility. What particular crosses are you carrying at this time?

When you are ready, share them with Jesus.

Now Jesus shares how grateful he is to you for the courage you show in carrying your cross and for your willingness to be his disciple. He wants you to know that your actions do not go unnoticed. Jesus reminds you that he's always with you, helping you carry your cross. Spend a moment resting quietly in Jesus' presence. Then thank him for this time together.

Knowing that following Jesus is about making God's kingdom visible on earth, let's close by praying together the Lord's Prayer.



## What's WHAT?

■ Main points from this chapter are listed below. Complete each sentence. Refer to the articles and sidebars for help.

- In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is revealed as

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- Jesus is one person who is both

---

- Mark's Gospel is about

---

- Events surrounding Jesus' birth and the miraculous things he did in his lifetime made some early Christians think

---

- The Gospel of Mark highlights

---

- In Mark's Gospel, he devotes all of his attention to

---

## Say WHAT?

disciple • Son of God

## So WHAT?

■ How does being a disciple of Jesus make a difference in your life?

---

---

## Now WHAT?

■ Identify how you can express your belief in Jesus Christ to someone this week.

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## Here's WHAT the Catholic Church Teaches

God has imprinted his own image and likeness on us as human beings and has given us the gift of an incomparable dignity. In the Incarnation God the Son has taken on our humanity by uniting divine nature with human nature in one person—the Word of God. Because of the Incarnation, the guiding principle of Catholic social teaching is the dignity of the human person.

The dignity of the human person is also one of the four “golden threads” of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* according to the bishops of the United States. The other three are the mystery of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Paschal Mystery of Jesus' passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension.

In their pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All*, the U.S. bishops insisted that every economic decision and institution must be judged in light of whether it protects or destroys the dignity of the human person. “We believe the person is sacred—the clearest reflection of God among us. Human dignity comes from God, not from nationality, race, sex, economic status, or any human accomplishment. We judge any economic system by what it does *for* and *to* people and by how it permits all to *participate* in it. The economy should serve people, not the other way around.”



# Paired Interview



Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Your partner's name \_\_\_\_\_

Title of article read by your partner \_\_\_\_\_

## Q&A

Ask your partner the following questions about the article he or she read and record his or her answers in the space provided.

1. Explain what your article was about in a few sentences.

2. What is one quote (sentence) from your article that you would put on a poster to inspire the group? Why?

3. What are some specific things your article helped you to learn or realize about the Catholic faith?

4. Based on your article, name some specific things we, as Catholics, need to know, do, or believe in order to live as followers of Jesus.

# Happily

## EVER AFTER

**H**ave you ever noticed how many stories begin with the words “once upon a time”? Often these stories describe imaginary kingdoms and heroes who face great adventures and overcome incredible odds. The last line of these stories always seems to be “and they all lived happily ever after.” Can you name some stories from fairy tales, books, or movies that describe different kinds of kingdoms?



### IT OUT

If you had the opportunity to establish your own imaginative kingdom where everyone would live “happily ever after,” what would it be like?

name:

national pastime:

climate:

types of leaders:

geography:

unique characteristic:





# A Different Kingdom

**T**here are countries today where royal families—kings, queens, princes, and princesses—are the rulers. In most cases their power to rule is limited by laws that give the real political power to a government elected by the people. King Herod, however, was a ruler who had complete authority to do as he wanted. He was a man whose contempt for life extended to his murder of a wife and of a number of his children. The Gospel of Matthew describes how he ordered the deaths of all the male infants in the area in an attempt to murder the infant Jesus.

Like many of his fellow kings, Herod had no respect for ordinary people. He forced them to work on his building projects for little pay. Then he taxed their earnings without mercy. You had to be rich to live a good life in Herod's kingdom, but even then you could be killed if he lost his temper with you.

King Herod's son, Herod Antipas, controlled the region of Galilee where John the Baptist and Jesus preached. Herod Antipas arrested John the Baptist

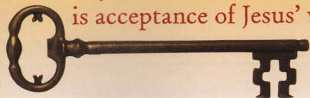
and eventually had him beheaded. John was executed because he criticized Herod Antipas. It is in this kind of political environment, where rulers had total control over the lives of the people, that Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God.

## EVERYONE

The kingdom Jesus proclaimed was a kingdom with a difference. Jesus called people to accept a loving God as their ruler and to follow God's direction in their lives. The key to the Kingdom of God is acceptance of Jesus' word. If you believe what Jesus teaches, you are on your way to entering the Kingdom of God.

Jesus invited everyone into the Kingdom of God. He did this by addressing himself first to the people of

The key to the Kingdom of God is acceptance of Jesus' word.





Israel and then to people of all nations. He invited people into the kingdom through signs that showed the nearness of the kingdom. Most importantly, the coming of the kingdom would be accomplished through his suffering, death, and Resurrection.

### THE POOR AND LOWLY

The Old Testament shows that throughout the history of God's relationship with his people, he has had a special concern for the poor. The Old Testament prophets constantly reminded the wealthy of their obligation to help the poor. It is no surprise that when Jesus proclaimed the kingdom, he gave special emphasis to God's continuing concern for the poor.

In proclaiming God's special concern for the poor, Jesus is highlighting two points. He is calling all who serve God's kingdom to recognize that they have an obligation to do what they can to see that the needs of the poor are met. He is also calling all people to recognize that no matter how much wealth we may have, we all stand in need before God.

Jesus also made it a point to invite sinners to enter the kingdom. At the time when Jesus was preaching, tax collectors were seen as sinners because they cooperated with the Roman authorities. Because of their involvement with the occupying foreign government, they were shunned by society. Instead of leaving them in social exile, Jesus invited them in. He challenged them to change their lives and promised God's help for them. Jesus compassion for sinners reminds us that God is reaching out to us no matter what we have done in our lives.

### PARABLE

Jesus spent plenty of time teaching his disciples about belonging to the kingdom, mostly by telling stories, or parables. He would use ordinary objects and ideas to help people understand what it meant to belong to the kingdom. One common object he used was a mustard seed. (Mark 4:30–32) The point of the parable of the mustard seed was that the Kingdom of God is like that smallest of seeds which, once it is sown in the ground, grows into one of the largest plants whose branches are strong enough to hold birds as they feed. Through this parable Jesus is teaching that the small, kind deeds we do in everyday life are quiet examples that further the Kingdom of God. We don't have to be emperors or lead armies to victory. The kingdom shelters everyone and grows surprisingly beyond its small beginnings.

**The image of a shepherd** was often used to describe the kings of the Old Testament because the kings were to care for God's people with the same responsibility as a shepherd would care for his flock. God supported the king so that the people would have their needs taken care of.

Jesus is often shown as a shepherd because of his care for God's people. Jesus acts like a concerned shepherd in one story related by Mark. Mark 6:34–44 tells the story of the people who have come to hear Jesus. It is the end of the day, and the crowd must head for home. In these times there were no fast food places to go for dinner, and many people would be quite hungry before they got home. They were like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus had his disciples tell the people to sit down. Then Jesus took loaves of bread, broke them, and gave them to his disciples to distribute. The amount of food Jesus had available did not seem like much. In fact, it was only a few loaves of bread and some fish. But, as the baskets of food were passed around, the food didn't diminish. In time all the people were fed, and there were enough leftovers to fill 12 baskets. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who proclaims the Kingdom of God, cares for every need.



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# Enter the Kingdom



## UNITING PRAYER AND WORKS

The virtues of faith, hope, and charity draw us to live in relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They also draw us into prayer. These virtues come from God and draw us to him, making it possible for us to live as his children. Through our faith we believe in God and all that he has revealed to us. Through our hope we desire the Kingdom of God and eternal life as our only true happiness. And through our charity we love God above all things and love our neighbor as ourselves. Charity is the fullness of the Christian life. It unites us with God, who is love, and moves us to make ourselves neighbors to even those far away, loving them as Jesus does. Faith, hope, and charity bind us more closely not only to God but to our neighbors, making prayer and our Christian life inseparable. Uniting prayer to good works we can pray without ceasing.

**Leader:** We often receive messages from society telling us that we should be self-sufficient. These messages can make us think that asking for help is a sign of weakness. Throughout his life Jesus made it clear that in order to enter the kingdom, we have to recognize our need for God. We need God the same way children need parents. Without God's help we could never enter the kingdom. The theological virtues of faith, hope, and love help us to live our daily lives the way God wants us to.

**Leader:** If you want to enter the kingdom, you have to be a person of faith.

## art • i • fact

*La Trinidad*

is a 19th century Mexican retablo on heavy gauge tin.

The word *retablo* means "behind the altar". It refers to the paintings of various saints hanging behind the altars of many Mexican churches.

**All:** O God, we freely give ourselves to you. Help us to nurture the gift of faith you have given us by trusting in your Word, by listening to what the Church teaches, and by putting our faith into action.

**Leader:** If you want to enter the kingdom, you have to be a person of hope.

**All:** O God, without the gift of hope, our lives would have no meaning. Help us to share our hope with others and always to look forward to the lasting joy and happiness of living with you forever.

**Leader:** If you want to enter the kingdom, you have to be a person of love.

**All:** O God, when we look at your Son, Jesus, we learn what it means to love others. Help us to love you above all things, and to show your love to all we meet.

**Leader:** Let's join together and pray:

**All:** Loving God, we want to enter your kingdom. We know our need for you and count on your help. The virtues of faith, hope, and love are your gifts to us. May we grow in our relationship with you as we practice them in our daily lives. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.



## What's WHAT?

■ Look over the main points below. What is one additional important insight you would add to this list? Write it on the lines below.

- The values of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus contradicted those of the political kingdoms of his times.
- Jesus invited everyone into the Kingdom of God, with special emphasis on the poor and sinners.
- Jesus is often shown as a shepherd because of his care for God's people.
- To enter the kingdom, we need to recognize that we depend on God just as children depend on adults.
- We respond to Jesus' invitation to grow close to him through the practice of the virtues of faith, hope, and love.

- \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Say WHAT?

*Kingdom of God • parable • social justice*

## So WHAT?

■ Virtues are the habits and practices that lead us in the direction of doing good. *Think about it. Pray about it.*

## Now WHAT?

■ What is one thing you will do this week at home to respond to God's invitation to grow closer to him?

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## Here's WHAT the Catholic Church Teaches

The Church's strong emphasis on **social justice** keeps us faithful to the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God announced by Christ not only affirms that the world is good as created by God, but helps us to repair the damage caused by human sin. Through Baptism we are restored in our relationship with God. With the help of God's grace, we are able to continue the work of Jesus.

The Kingdom of God becomes more clear when we work to assure justice for the poor; release the oppressed, console the sorrowful, and actively seek a new social order in which concrete steps are taken so that the needs of people who are poor are addressed.



# Making Connections



1. Read the article assigned to your group.
2. Note the main points from your article in the appropriate column below.
3. Join your group with a group who read the other article.
4. Record the main points in the appropriate column below.
5. Work together to complete the "Connect" section to show how the two articles connect.



## NOTES FROM ARTICLE 1

A DIFFERENT KINGDOM

Main Points

## Connect

How do these two  
articles connect?



## NOTES FROM ARTICLE 2

A CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

Connection

Main Points