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Chapter 2

Who Is Jesus?

INTRODUCTION

Jesus comes to reveal a God who is a loving Father, devoid of any wrath, always wanting to save us. Jesus comes to reveal a God who is Son—flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone. Jesus comes to reveal a God who is Holy Spirit, who breathes life into each and every person, no matter where, no matter when. Jesus comes to give us a jolt of understanding that God is and always has been a God of love who has—and continues—to draw us unremittingly into love. Jesus is the proof that God is not far away from us, not unconcerned about us, not outside of us. This chapter introduces the students to this Jesus.

The chapter begins by involving the students in an exercise that helps them articulate what they believe about Jesus as well as ask questions they have about him. The students go on to discuss the difference Jesus has made in their lives and in the world. They discover that faith in Jesus is both a divine gift and a human decision that colors all our perceptions and affects all our actions. Investigating the name and titles of Jesus helps the students garner new insights into his person and purpose. They learn that faith in Jesus means sharing the faith of the Church, and they grow in their appreciation that Jesus is both true God and true man.

While our faith tells us that Jesus is true God and true man, history tells us that Jesus is, indeed, a historical figure. The students learn that the Bible—in particular the Gospels—are “witnesses” (testaments) to the life of Jesus. The students also discuss the historicity of Jesus by examining the writings of secular historians. Together, these sources offer positive support for faith.

The chapter then leads students to explore the infancy and “hidden life” of Jesus as they are outlined in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. Students reflect on his birth and the crucial role Mary played in the Incarnation. They learn about his incorporation into the Chosen People (presentation in the Temple), his discovery of his mission (finding in the Temple), and his growth and nurturance in a loving family. Students then discover that the baptism of Jesus by John marked the beginning of his public life. Finally, they recognize how he overcame a triumvirate of temptations and thereby taught us to love God with all our heart, mind, and strength.

Next, the students look to the crux of the message of Jesus—the Kingdom of God (present and yet to come). They discover that the coming of God’s Kingdom signals the ultimate sovereignty of God and the ultimate freedom of humankind. They discover that the parables and miracles of Jesus are signs of the Kingdom. They see in his Transfiguration a glimpse of the glory of the Kingdom to come. Then, the chapter moves on to help the students understand and appreciate God, whom Jesus comes to reveal. This is God who is Father, Son, and Spirit—the God who is Holy Trinity.

Open any Gospel at random, and you are more likely than not to find Jesus addressing God as Father. Nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus refer to himself as the point of our pilgrimage. Rather, he calls himself the Way—the way to the Father. As Son, Jesus himself makes the Father his goal and challenges us to walk in his footsteps and to call God “Father.” Jesus is a man possessed—possessed by

the Spirit of love who is the agent of unity between himself and the Father. Jesus reveals that this same Spirit possesses us, uniting us and granting us peace.

The chapter introduces the students to this divine relationship by describing the dogma of the Holy Trinity, the central mystery of the Christian faith. The students begin by discussing the meaning of mystery. They discover that the Trinity's great mystery is that of relationship, a relationship we are invited to share. The chapter goes on to a discussion of the theology of the Trinity, distinguishing between the Immanent Trinity (God's inner life) and the Salvific/Economic Trinity (God's actions on our behalf). Finally, the chapter summarizes the threefold mission of the Trinity—creation, salvation, sanctification—and challenges the students to discover how we share not only in that triune relationship but also that triune mission.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

To help the students:

- Recognize who Jesus is.
- Discover the meaning of faith and of faith in Jesus.
- Understand the meaning of the Incarnation and appreciate Jesus as true God and true man.
- Explore the life of Jesus.
- Examine the meaning and importance of the Kingdom of God.
- Begin to appreciate the mystery of the Holy Trinity.
- Discuss the theology of the Trinity.
- Discover how they share in the life and mission of the Holy Trinity.

ADVANCE PREPARATIONS

For Lesson 1

- Sheets of drawing paper, rulers, and pens or pencils
- Copies of Chapter 2, Handout 1, "One Solitary Life" (p. 75 of this text)
- Bibles
- Copies of business cards
- Sheets of legal-sized paper and colored markers

For Lesson 2

- Bibles
- Recording of the hymn "Virgin Most Pure"* and player
- Copies of Chapter 2, Handout 2, "Infancy Narrative Points of Agreement" (p. 76 of this text)
- Recording of the Basque carol "Angel Gabriel"*

**Note: Both songs can be found on the CD (also cassette tape) Tapestry of Carols by Maddy Prior with the Carnival Band (probably one of the best Christmas albums available)*

For Lesson 3

- Bibles
- Try to obtain copies or slides of the following art pieces: "Christ in the Carpenter's Shop" by Georges de Latour (Louvre, Paris) and "Christ in the House of His Parents" ("The Carpenter's Shop") by Sir John Everett Millais (The Tate Museum). Note: You may be able to find pictures online.
- Copies of Chapter 2, Handout 3, "The Kingdom of God" (p. 77 of this text)

For Lesson 4

- Bibles
- Copies of Chapter 2, Handout 4, "Without the Holy Spirit . . ." (p. 78 of this text)

For the Chapter Review Lesson

- Easter Candle

For the Chapter 2 Test Lesson

- Copies of the Chapter 2 Test (pp. 73–74 of this text or online at www.avemariapress.com)

CHAPTER 2 HANDOUTS

- Handout 1, "One Solitary Life" (p. 75 of this text)—The students discover the great difference the life of Jesus has made.
- Handout 2, "Infancy Narrative Points of Agreement" (p. 76 of this text)—The students compare the Gospel accounts of the birth and infancy of Jesus.
- Handout 3, "The Kingdom of God" (p. 77 of this text)—The students investigate the meaning and importance of the Kingdom of God.
- Handout 4, "Without the Holy Spirit . . ." (p. 78 of this text)—The students appreciate our need for the Holy Spirit.

LESSON 1: ALL BECAUSE OF JESUS / "I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD"

(PAGES 61–66)

Objectives

The students will:

- Investigate their knowledge about, understanding of, and relationship with Jesus.
- Discover the difference Jesus makes in our life.
- Recognize that faith is a divine gift and a human act.
- Learn about the titles of Jesus and create their own title for him.
- Appreciate that the faith of a Christian is the faith of the Church.
- Begin to understand that Jesus is both true God and true man.

Opening the Lesson

1. Have students use a ruler and pen or pencil to divide a sheet of paper into fourths. Have them number each section (1, 2, 3, and 4).
 - In section 1, ask the students to list three things they believe about Jesus.
 - In section 2, ask them to complete this sentence with only one word: "For me, Jesus is . . ."
 - In section 3, have them finish this sentence: "If my relationship with Jesus was the basis for a TV show, it would be called . . ."
 - In section 4, direct them to finish this sentence: "The biggest question I have about Jesus that I don't have an answer for is . . ."
2. Call on different students to share their responses to the first sentence. List them on the board, flipchart, overhead projector, etc. After calling on a number of students, ask if anyone wants to add to the list.
3. Have students offer their responses to the second sentence. Note differences and similarities.
4. Invite students to share responses to the third sentence. Have the students explain their choices.
5. Finally, have students write their names on their papers and hand them in. Explain that they will be dealing with the questions they listed in section 4 throughout this chapter.

Teaching Approaches

1. Distribute copies of Chapter 2, Handout 1, "One Solitary Life." Have different students read sections of the text aloud.
2. Call attention to the question on the handout—"What's What Because of the One Solitary Life of Jesus?" Read the directions aloud and give the students time to write. To help the students along, tell them to consider the question from a different point of view and ask themselves, "What would life be like today if Jesus had *not* come?"

3. Have students share their lists and discuss the differences in everyday life that the life of Jesus has made. Look for responses like the following:
 - The life of Jesus was so pivotal that history is organized into the time *before* his coming (BC) and the time *after* his coming (AD).
 - The life of Jesus is the object of more songs, books, poems, paintings, sculpture, and poetry than any other person or event in history.
 - The life of Jesus inspired a book that has been a bestseller for over 2,000 years.
 - Thousands of places of worship, orphanages, hospitals, colleges, and social service agencies are named in memory and in honor of him.
 - His name is an all-too-common swear word.
4. Conclude the discussion by inviting students to name one difference that knowing Jesus has made in their own lives.
5. Assign the Write or Discuss topic on page 63 as a personal essay, and have students write one to two pages on the differences between learning about and really knowing Jesus.
6. Call on one of the students to read aloud Genesis 15:4–21. If necessary, point out that this reading describes the Abrahamic covenant. Then have a different student read Luke 2:8–16.
7. Emphasize that both Scripture passages refer to an act of faith: the Genesis story to the faith of Abram/Abraham who chose to leave his homeland to become the father of God's people. The Gospel passage from Luke speaks of the faith of Mary, who chose to become the mother of God's Son.
8. Point out the following sentence in the text: "While we can only believe in this Good News through the help of God's grace, *faith remains an authentically human act*" (emphasis added). Write the equation "**Faith = Human Act**" on the board. Discuss and invite further input from students on this spiritual equation.
9. Remind students that saying, "I Believe in Jesus Christ . . ." is not an opinion but a genuine human decision. It is a decision that decides everything important in our lives and gives purpose to our day-to-day living.
10. Re-emphasize this point by having the students discuss what would be different in their lives if they did *not* believe in Jesus?

Titles of Jesus (pages 64–66)

11. Call on different students to name and explain the names/titles of Jesus that are outlined in the text:
 - Jesus—"God saves"
 - Christ—Anointed One, Messiah
 - Son of God—someone with an intimate relationship with God
 - Lord—from *Kyrios*, a title indicating divinity, rather than a person of rank (e.g., lord of the manor)

- Go on to have students offer other titles of Jesus as found in the Bible. Look for examples of the following: High Priest (Heb 3:1), Light of the World (Jn 9:5), Rabbi/Teacher (Jn 1:38), Emmanuel (Mt 1:23), King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev 19:16), Logos/Word (Jn 1:1), Savior (Lk 1:47), Alpha and Omega—the beginning and ending of all things (Rev 21:6), Son of Man/Judge (Mt 25:31), Lamb of God (Jn 1:29), Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11), Bread of Life (Jn 6:35), and King of the Jews (Mt 2:2 and 27:11). List them on the board.
- Divide the class into small groups of three or four. Hand out sample business cards. Tell students to note the person's title on the cards. Provide legal-size paper, markers, and other art materials. Direct group members to choose one of the titles for Jesus listed on the board—or better, *to devise their own title for him*—and then to create a “business card” for him. Have students create a large-size card on the legal sheet. They may add artwork, a logo, or symbol if they wish. Invite them to include an address, phone number(s), and e-mail address as well. Encourage them to be creative but respectful. Afterward, have each group present and explain their cards to the class. Display the completed “business cards” for Jesus in the classroom.
- Have half the class answer on paper the two section Review Questions on page 66. In the meantime, have the second half write a one-page essay answering the Write or Discuss topic about which title for Jesus helps them to personally connect with him.

Section Review Question Answers

- Faith is essentially a human act because even though we can't believe without God's grace, we have to choose freely to cooperate with that grace.
- Christ* means “messiah” or “anointed one.” *Son of God* means what it says as applied to Jesus. *Lord* means the same as the Greek word used in the place of God's holy name—“*Kyrios*” (God). Jesus means “God saves.”

Homework

- Have students read the next two sections of the chapter—“Faith in Jesus Christ” on pages 67–71 and “Life of Christ” on pages 74–88.

LESSON 2: FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

(PAGES 67-71)

Objectives

The students will:

- Learn about and reflect on faith—personal faith and the faith of the Church.
- Recognize that Jesus is both human and divine.
- Identify statements in the creed that point to Christ's divinity.

Opening the Lesson

1. Write the following on the board: **Faith Begins Here**. Beneath the phrase, display a photo of a baptismal font. Stress that Baptism reminds us that our faith in Jesus is not simply a "Jesus and me" thing. It is a community thing, a people thing. We are baptized into *the faith of the Church*, and the faith of the Church comes first. It is the faith we grow into. Jesus is not just "my personal Lord and Savior." He's "*ours*."
2. Emphasize to the students that this is why no one can call himself or herself a believer in Christ—a Christian—on his or on her own. Being a Christian is not a solo act. You can be lots of things apart from the Church, but you can't be a Christian on your own.

Teaching Approaches

True God and True Man (pages 67-71)

1. Introduce this section by telling students that in Jesus, we learn that God and human beings are meant for each other just as lovers are meant for each other. However, we don't learn this from what Jesus says or even from what he does. We learn it from who he is—true God and true man.
2. Write the following—or display a copy of the following—on the board:
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father. Through Him all things were made.
3. Point out how these words stress that Jesus and the Father are the same, and that Jesus has existed with the Father from all eternity. The phrase "begotten not made" tells us that Jesus is not part of the created world. Even though Jesus comes from the father, he is not one of the Father's creations. Rather, he is one *with* the Father. This is what Incarnation means: God become a human being. God cared enough to send us the very best—himself.
4. Call attention to the passage from John 1:1-3 on page 68 of the text. Ask one of the students to read it aloud. Invite the students to recall the word of St. Augustine that they read in Chapter 1 regarding our desire to be one with God: ". . . you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." Ask rhetorically, "How can our hearts rest in a God whose face no one has ever seen?" Tell the students that God had to speak in a language we can understand and embrace.

God did just that. God spoke to human beings through a human being, through Jesus, the true man who was truly God himself—God’s word (*logos*) in the flesh.

5. Assign the four section Review Questions on page 71 to the students who did not answer the questions at the previous review. Have the second half of the class write a one-page essay answering the Write or Discuss topic about whether it’s more difficult to accept the humanity or the divinity of Jesus.

Section Review Question Answers

1. Faith is the human response to God’s self-revelation, which, with the help of the Holy Spirit, enables us to commit ourselves to God as whole persons.
2. Because the faith of the Church comes before the faith of the individual Christian, that communal faith results in religion. Religion helps to bind us in relationship to God.
3. John’s Gospel addresses seven signs of Jesus’ divinity. Each of these, John contends, reveals Jesus as *the* great sign of the Father. John also shows Jesus in command of the various situations that confront him.
4. The Nicene Creed states that although Jesus was true man, he was “begotten” of the Father, not *created* by the Father. In other words, the Son existed *always* in relationship to the Father. The creed also affirms that Jesus was true God and that he shared in God’s creative action from the beginning of time.

Homework

1. Have students turn to the section “Getting to Know Jesus” at the end of this chapter on page 98. Direct students to work on this project over the next few days. Explain that it will be due when you meet to review this chapter.
2. Randomly choose two or three student responses submitted for “The biggest question I have about Jesus that I don’t have an answer for is . . .” Write them on the board (or flipchart, overhead projector, or PowerPoint®) and have students copy them into their own journals. Direct students to try to find answers to the questions by referring to the Bible, by looking online, by drawing from their own experience, or by consulting other books or people—parents, friends, classmates, etc.

LESSON 3: LIFE OF CHRIST

(PAGES 74–88)

Objectives

The students will:

- Discuss and explore the meaning of the Incarnation.
- Discover that the Gospels are faith testimonies.
- Examine the reports of nonbelievers concerning the historical Jesus.
- Read and investigate Matthew's and Luke's infancy narratives.
- Appreciate Mary's crucial role in the Incarnation.
- Better appreciate the infancy and "hidden" parts of the story of Jesus' life.
- Recognize the meaning of Jesus' baptism and temptation.
- Investigate the meaning and importance of the Kingdom of God, the miracles of Jesus, and his Transfiguration.

Opening the Lesson

1. Refer to the homework assignment to find answers to the question—*"The biggest question I have about Jesus that I don't have an answer for is . . ."* Ask eight to ten students where they got their answers to this question—from the Bible, some other written material, from a person—pastor, family member, friend. Be ready with your own answers and offer corrections if needed. (Note: Plan to spend two class periods on the material in this lesson plan.)
2. Introduce this session by writing the following on the board: **"God became a human being because God knew we could never love what we couldn't put our arms around."** Explain that this is how G. K. Chesterton, the prolific English author and convert to Catholicism, described the Incarnation. Invite the students to discuss whether this is a good description of God's becoming a human being.

Teaching Approaches

1. Read aloud the first sentence in this section: "The entire Bible is a testimony to the life and the meaning of Jesus." Give special emphasis to the word "testimony" and point out that neither the Bible nor the Gospels is a biography of Jesus. Scriptural passages are a testimony, a *witness* as to who he is. The Gospels are not works of fact or fiction. They are works of faith.
2. Remind students that even people with no faith background at all reported on Jesus. Write the name **"Flavius Josephus"** on the board. Tell the students that he was a Jewish priest who was "adopted" by the Roman emperor and thus received his Roman name, "Flavius." Josephus wrote a lengthy history of the Jews. While discussing the period in which the Jews of Judea were governed by the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate, Josephus included the following account:

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth

gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease. He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.

Flavius Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, 18.3.3 §63

(Based on the translation of Louis H. Feldman, The Loeb Classical Library)

3. Have three students volunteer to research for on-the-spot presentations on the three other non-believing historians who wrote about Jesus: Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, and Tacitus. Give these students three or four days to prepare short talks about the life and work of these historians. Encourage “questions from the audience” for each on-the-spot presenter. As a follow-up, engage the whole class in a discussion about why it’s important that we have non-scriptural references to Jesus.

Events in the Life of Jesus (pages 76–88)

The Incarnation (pages 76–78)

4. Tell students that only two Gospels include accounts of the birth of Jesus—the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. Explain that Matthew wrote for a Jewish audience that was familiar with Old Testament prophecy. Matthew wanted to assure his audience that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Matthew’s infancy narrative includes the mention of five fulfilled prophecies.
5. Take a moment to speak about Mary’s role in the Incarnation. Point out how the Virgin Birth assures both the divinity and humanity of Jesus. Explain that to secure that unity, God graced Mary so that she could be totally responsive to God and totally faithful to the divine will. God sought Mary’s consent, and her yes joins the Creator in the works of completing and fulfilling God’s creation and God’s promise to creation (see Gn 2:15).
6. If you were able to get a recording of the Basque carol “The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came,” play it now for the students.
7. Divide the class into three or four small groups. Tell students that each group is to create its own song, carol, or even rap about the birth/infancy of Jesus. Explain that they may parody any existing song melody—Christmas or otherwise—or they may compose their own melody. Have students begin by choosing a specific audience they would like to inform about the Incarnation of Jesus (e.g., foreigners, the elderly, little children, teens, etc.). They can choose to follow either Luke’s or Matthew’s account, or they may combine elements of both to create their musical number.
8. Give the groups time to create and practice their musical pieces. Afterward, have them present their work to the entire class or, even better, to another class. (Note: If need be, you can even stretch the presentations into a third class session.)

Infancy of Jesus (pages 78–80)

- Continue discussing the infancy narratives and tell the class that Luke wrote for an audience of Greek Christians who were less concerned about the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy than was Matthew's audience. Luke focused on the work of the Spirit. And while Matthew seemed to focus on the patrilineal lineage of Jesus (the male ancestors of Jesus from Abraham to Joseph), Luke focused on Christ's feminine parent—Mary's assent to the Annunciation, her visit to her cousin Elizabeth, and the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.
- Allow time for students to read both infancy narratives: Matthew 1:1–2:23 and Luke 1:26–56; 2:1–40. The differences should be clear. Afterward, point out that the Christmas story we learn and pass on mixes the two narratives. For example, many Christmas cards or grade school Christmas pageants show the magi (who are mentioned only in Matthew) and shepherds (mentioned only in Luke) together near the manger.
- If you were able to get a recording of the hymn "A Virgin Most Pure," play it now for the students. Let the students report on how the song tells the Christmas story by combining Matthew's and Luke's accounts.
- Distribute copies of Chapter 2, Handout 2, "Infancy Narrative Points of Agreement." Go through the points of agreement with the class, calling on different students to read aloud the "agreeing" Bible passages.
- Ask the students to offer examples of surnames (last names) that reflect:
 - A location: country or hometown—e.g., James Galway, Michael York, el Greco.
 - A profession: Carpenter, Plumber, Miller, Taylor.
 - A parent: Johnson (John's son), Thompson, Davidson, Peterson.
 - Point out that the Bible uses all three of these examples to refer to Jesus: Jesus of Nazareth; Jesus the carpenter; Jesus, son of Joseph.
- Draw the following Hebrew word on the board:



Explain that this is the name "Jesus" in Hebrew. Remind the students that this was the name announced by the angel and that it means "God saves."

- Ask the students why the parents of Jesus "presented" him in the Temple. (*To consecrate their firstborn to God in thanks for sparing Israel's firstborn at the first Passover.*)
- Call on a student to read aloud Luke 2:25–35. Afterward, ask: How does Simeon's prophecy speak to the meaning of the name of Jesus? (*Simeon prophesied that Jesus would suffer and die to save his people.*)

The Hidden Life of Jesus (pages 80–81)

17. Two excellent paintings help “illustrate” Jesus’ hidden life: “Christ in the Carpenter’s Shop” by Georges de Latour (Louvre, Paris) and “Christ in the House of His Parents” (“The Carpenter’s Shop”) by Sir John Everett Millais (The Tate Museum). If you are able to obtain copies or slides, show them to students. Explain that the artists presented these religious scenes with European models and didn’t concern themselves with portraying historically accurate settings.
18. Briefly summarize the key points in this text section. Emphasize that like every one of us, Jesus had to grow and mature physically, mentally, and spiritually. Like every one of us, he had to undergo a series of dyings and risings. For example, when he was twelve, Jesus “died” to childhood, and it was not an easy passage. For three days—away from his parents—he struggled with great questions, till at last he emerged, knowing that God was his Father and that he had to be about his Father’s work.

The Baptism of Jesus (pages 82–83)

19. Call on different students to describe the baptism of Jesus. (Note: You may wish to remind the students that, in Chapter 1, they discovered how the baptism of Jesus revealed the work of the Trinity.) Afterward, ask: “If Jesus did not have to undergo a baptism for the forgiveness of sin, why did he do so? (*To announce to us that he had come to accomplish the Father’s work of salvation as God’s Spirit-led Suffering Servant.*)

Temptations of Jesus (page 83)

20. Ask the students to recall the *shema*, which they read about in Chapter 1. Refer them to Deuteronomy 6:4–5 in their bibles. Point out that each of the temptations of Jesus is a temptation to sin against the *shema*. Likewise, each reply from Jesus comes from Deuteronomy.
 - a. Present the first temptation:
 - Ask a student to read Luke 4:1–4.
 - Explain that the first temptation is to the quick fix, the easy answer, the instant gratification. It’s Veruca Salt screaming at Willie Wonka, “I want it NOW!” The response of Jesus tells us to have patience, to reject the easy fix, and to discover how to rely on God.
 - Have students respond in their journals to the following:
 - In what ways do I seek instant gratification?
 - In what areas of my life do I need to learn patience and self-control?
 - b. Present the second temptation:
 - Ask a student to read Luke 4:5–8.
 - Tell the class that the second temptation is to power and wealth and rejects our loving God.
 - Have the students respond in their journals to the following:
 - In what ways do I lord it over others? put others down?
 - c. Present the third temptation:
 - Ask a third student to read Luke 4:9–12.

- Help the students see that the third temptation is to fame or to glory. Jesus responds to the devil with humility.
- Have the students respond in their journals to the following:
 - What temptations to fame come my way via TV, videos, advertising?
 - How does the way I spend my money—on clothes, make-up, or whatever—lead me to succumb to this temptation?
- d. Finally, have the students respond in their journals to this question: “To which temptation do you *give in* the most?” Tell students that their answer will give them a starting point for their own dying to sin and rising to a new way of living.

Ushering in the Kingdom of God (pages 84–85)

21. Distribute copies of Chapter 2, Handout 3, “The Kingdom of God.” Read the introductory paragraphs with the students. Then allow time for the students to match the Scripture passages to the elements of God’s Kingdom and to write their analogies about God’s Kingdom. Share matching responses (correct matches are: 1. E; 2. F; 3. A; 4. D; 5. C; 6. B) and analogies.
22. Before moving on, write the following description of the Kingdom of God on the board and have the students record it in their journals:

The Kingdom of God designates the advancement of God’s loving power into all areas of life where it has not been recognized previously.

The Miracles of Jesus (pages 85–87)

23. Tell students that Jesus didn’t just tell parables or preach the Good News. He worked miracles to manifest the Kingdom. These miracles not only show that he comes from the Father, but they also invite people to believe in him as the Son of God.
24. List the different types of miracles on the board and have the students offer examples of each: **healing; nature; exorcism; and raisings from the dead.** Note how miracles are *revelatory*. The miracles of Jesus reveal:
 - the power of God
 - Jesus’ relationship with the Father
 - Jesus’ power over evil
 - Jesus’ power over death
 - Jesus’ power to forgive sins
25. Stress to the class that the contemporaries of Jesus did not view his miraculous acts with a scientific eye but with a theological one. The miracles Jesus worked demonstrated God’s intervention into human and material reality. These events were not simply a wonder-worker’s manipulation of reality.

The Transfiguration of Jesus (pages 87–88)

26. Direct the students to read one of the synoptic Gospel accounts of the Transfiguration (Mk 9:2–8; Mt 17:1–8; or Lk 9:28–36). Go on to summarize this text section, explaining that the Transfiguration revealed some important things (list on the board):
- **Jesus is divine**
 - **Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets**
 - **Jesus will go to Jerusalem to die**
 - **Jesus will rise**
 - **We, too, will rise when Christ “will give a new form to this lowly body of ours and remake it according to the pattern of his glorified body” (Philippians 3:21)**
27. Have students go through the nine section Review Questions on page 88 and look back at the text if they are unsure about how they would answer them. For a change, don't require students to write out the answers. Instead, have students choose either Write or Discuss topic on page 88 for a one- to two-page written assignment.

Section Review Question Answers

1. The purpose of the Gospels is to present the Good News and the public ministry of Jesus.
2. Non-biblical historical sources that substantiate the existence of Jesus include the writings of Josephus, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, and Tacitus, Roman authors and historians of the era.
3. The Immaculate Conception is a doctrine stating that God preserved Mary the mother of Jesus from the stain of Original Sin.
4. Jesus was born in Bethlehem to fulfill the prophecy that the Messiah would be born in the City of David, which was Bethlehem.
5. The magi were non-Jewish astrologers from Persia, Babylon, or the Arabian deserts. Simeon and Anna were prophets who had longed for the Messiah and who encountered Jesus when he was presented in the Temple. Herod was a puppet leader of Israel at the time of the birth of Jesus. He was fearful that the infant Messiah would usurp his crown. Herod ordered the slaughter of baby boys.
6. The event covered is the finding of Jesus in the Temple.
7. At his baptism, it was revealed that Jesus was the Son of God who had come to accomplish the Father's work of salvation with the aid of the Holy Spirit.
8. There are four types of miracles found in the Gospels: healing, nature miracles, exorcisms, and raisings from the dead.
9. At his Transfiguration, Jesus revealed that being the Messiah meant he would have to suffer and die.

Homework

1. Remind the students to continue working on the section “Getting to Know Jesus” assignment at the end of this chapter (page 98).

2. Once again, randomly choose two or three of the students' responses to "The biggest question I have about Jesus that I don't have an answer for is . . ." Write them on the board and have the students copy them in their journals.
3. Direct the students to look for answers by referring to the Bible, the Internet, their own experience, or by consulting books or people—parents, friends, etc.
4. Have students read the next chapter section, "Jesus Reveals the Holy Trinity," on pages 89–94 in preparation for the next several class sessions.

LESSON 4: JESUS REVEALS THE HOLY TRINITY

(PAGES 89–94)

Objectives

The students will:

- List qualities of an ideal father.
- Appreciate God as Father.
- Discuss the meaning of spirit.
- Acknowledge and appreciate the “why” of the Holy Spirit.
- Investigate the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

Opening the Lesson

1. Begin this session by writing on the board the question you assigned as homework in the last session: *“The biggest question I have about Jesus that I don’t have an answer for is . . .”* Call on volunteers to offer their responses—completed questions and answers. Be sure the students tell where they got their answers—from the Bible, some other written material, from a person—pastor, family member, friend.
2. Invite students to brainstorm about the qualities of an ideal father. List them on the board. Invite students to share an occasion when they felt particularly close to their fathers, grandfathers, or another man who was like a father to them. Be ready to share an example from your own life to get the sharing started.

Teaching Approaches

1. Invite students to respond to the following questions:
 - What are some words that describe God? (*Answers will vary but should include the term “father.”*)
 - What particular image did Jesus favor in describing God? (*Father.*)
2. Go on to use questions like the following to discuss God as a Father:
 - What kind of “Father” is God? (*Answers will vary but should express attributes such as caring, loving, forgiving, reconciling, compassionate, etc.*)
 - Why is it appropriate to call God “Father”? (*It expresses God’s parental care for us; it reminds us that we are all sisters and brothers; it is the way Jesus taught us to address God.*)
3. Write the word “**spirit**” on the board. Ask students to offer definitions or qualities of spirit. Jumpstart the discussion by having them think of someone they know who “has spirit”—school spirit, team spirit, etc. Point out that while “spirit” is something subtle and hard to pin down, it is also a magnet. We are attracted to people of spirit. They are a breath of fresh air. They brighten our lives. Their example inspires us. Emphasize to the class that wherever there is movement and maturation, wherever there is effort and enterprise, there is spirit. List student ideas on the board.

- Point out the passage from John's Gospel (Jn 20:22–23) on page 91 and read it aloud. Explain that the risen Jesus was about to leave the Apostles and return to the Father. As Jesus commissioned the Apostles to take up his reconciling mission and ministry, he promised his eternal presence. That presence was—and remains—the Holy Spirit.
- Students often have little difficulty in recognizing God as a Father and Creator, and Jesus as God's Son and our Redeemer. But they often find it difficult to recognize "why" the Holy Spirit exists. To help them recognize who the Holy Spirit is, distribute copies of Chapter 2, Handout 4, "Without the Holy Spirit . . ." Go through each statement with the students, helping them understand why each is true. Invite them to write the reasons or "whys" in the spaces provided.
 - God would be far from us. *The Spirit is God immanent, God with and within us. Without the indwelling Spirit, God would be "out there," not "in here."*
 - Jesus would be but a figure of history, and his Gospel would not be Good News. *The Spirit connects Jesus to the Father and extends the presence of Jesus among us. Without the Spirit, Jesus would be just some historical figure whose life we could, at best, imitate or, at worst, simply ignore. The message of Jesus would be just another philosophy—not the living Word alive among us.*
 - The Church community would be nothing more than a social club, never the Body of Christ. *The Holy Spirit makes us Christians and directs the Church to serve as compassionate servants like Jesus.*
 - Prayer would be talking to ourselves. *It is the Holy Spirit who intercedes to God for us (Rom 6:26).*
 - Our worship would smack of magic. *We have no authority to conjure God. Christ is present in our worship only through the power of the Holy Spirit.*
 - Living the Christian life would be a burden, not a joy. *Only the Holy Spirit can make the "yoke" and "burden" Jesus offers us "easy" and "light." Without the Spirit, the teachings of Jesus are too confining and his cross is too heavy to bear.*
- Give the students a moment to write their answer to the question on the bottom of the handout. Afterward, invite sharing.

Theology of the Holy Trinity (pages 91–94)

- Ask one of the students to read aloud this section's opening paragraph. Have the student reader go back to read the second sentence twice, giving special emphasis to the word "mystery." ("This central mystery of the Christian faith is known as the Holy Trinity.")
- Solicit words and phrases to describe the word "mystery." List them on the board and gradually show that a *mystery* is not the same thing as a *problem*. A problem is like an obstacle in our way—something we can go around, remove, or solve. A problem keeps us out. A mystery, however, draws us in. The more we know about a problem, the smaller it becomes. The more we know about a mystery, the bigger it becomes. For example, in the early 1960s, President Kennedy challenged Americans to solve the problem of getting to the moon in order to delve deeper into the mystery

of space. Once we reached the moon, the problem was solved, but the mystery of the cosmos only deepened.

9. Go through the three dogmas related to the Holy Trinity as outlined in the text on page 92. Repeat that the Holy Trinity is not some sort of complex problem to be solved. It is a mystery and, therefore, much more profound. It is something knowable but also inexhaustible. Help students to recognize that while we can know the mystery of the Trinity because God revealed it to us, we can never completely understand or explain it. Tell the students that this is not a cop-out. There are many similar mysteries in life—beauty, love, faithfulness—which we know are true and real but which we can never fully understand.
10. Before moving on to the explanations of the Trinity as immanent and salvific/economic, stress to the students that the Holy Trinity is not simply a dogma. It is a reality—the reality, which is also *the* relationship. The Trinitarian God does not dwell in some inaccessible heaven but in a true and deepening relationship. The Father gives us Jesus, who, in turn, reveals the Father and releases the Spirit. The reality of the Trinity reveals God's inner life to us as three Persons in love—three Persons in one God, who is love.
11. Summarize the material in this section. Write the term “**Immanent Trinity**” on the board. Explain that this explanation of the Trinity reveals three important truths about God's inner life. List the following on the board and ask the students to record them in their journals:
 - **There is only one God.**
 - **There are three distinct Persons in one God (Father, Son, and Spirit).**
 - **The divine Persons have distinct relationships with one another (Father = source; Son = Logos; Spirit = love between the Father and Son)**
12. To help the students better grasp the meaning of the Immanent Trinity, you might offer them the image of the sun, its rays, and its heat. The Father is the sun, the Son its rays, and the Holy Spirit its heat. Point out that there is no sun without its rays or heat. None of the elements *precedes* any of the other elements.
13. Go on to write the term “**Salvific/Economic Trinity**” on the board. Beneath that heading, list the ways we know the Trinity through the way God acts:
 - **In creation**
 - **In the Word becoming flesh in Jesus and his saving acts on our behalf**
 - **In the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to inspire us, sustain us, and make us holy**
14. Have students form three small groups. Assign each group to one of the Three Persons in the Trinity. Tell group members they have five minutes to come up with a list of actions associated with their Divine Person. Afterward, have the groups share the actions they came up with. Finally, use questions like the following to discuss ways we share in the Trinity's action as creator, redeemer, and sanctifier:
 - How do we create new things, physically, emotionally, or spiritually?

- How do we save or “redeem” another person when we extend forgiveness or help someone right a wrong?
 - How do we inspire people to love better, to be more courageous or generous?
15. Call attention to the quote on page 94 about Jesus and the Father dwelling in those who keep the word of God. Say to the students, “Here Jesus is telling you that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in you. Even when you think you’re alone, you are not alone. You are never alone.”
 16. Have students turn to John 17:20–21 in their Bibles and read that passage aloud. Explain to students that God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—longs for them to enter into the relationship, into the unity and intimate love that the members of the Trinity share with each other. They want us to be as close to them as they are to one another.
 17. Invite students to spend a few minutes in silence contemplating the presence of the Holy Trinity in them. Conclude by leading the students in the simple but powerful prayer to the Holy Trinity—the “Glory Be.”
 18. Print the four section Review Questions and the Write or Discuss questions on index cards and ask for volunteers to answer them. If the answers that these students give seem incomplete or “fuzzy,” ask those students to hand on the cards to other students to continue the answer.

Section Review Question Answers

1. *Abba* (“Daddy”) was the name Jesus used for God. This name was unique and surprising for the people of Christ’s day because it revealed that God was not just a mighty lord, but a loving parent.
2. Jesus first promised to send the Holy Spirit at the Last Supper.
3. The Church believes the following about the Trinity: (1) The Trinity is one: one God in three Persons; (2) the three Persons of the Trinity are distinct from one another: the Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Holy Spirit; (3) the Three Persons are related to one another, meaning that they have one nature or substance.
4. The Salvific Trinity and Economic Trinity are one and the same and refer to our understanding of the Trinity by what God does and how God acts in our lives. We also can approach the Trinity as the Immanent Trinity, that is, by seeking to understand how God exists in God.

Homework

1. Draw attention to this chapter’s section “Apologetics: Catholic FAQs” on pages 64, 74, 81, and 93. Tell students to finish writing their responses to these questions that they will go over together in their next session.
2. Remind students that the “Getting to Know Jesus” activity on page 98 is due at their next session.
3. Tell students to come with any unanswered questions they still may have about this chapter’s material.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW LESSON

Objectives

The students will:

- Review the chapter.
- Study for the Chapter 2 test.
- Join in prayer together.

Opening the Lesson

1. Have the students be ready with their completed “Getting to Know Jesus” project (see pages 98–99). Invite students to share what Jesus might be *pleased* with regarding their lives and relationships. Collect this material and assure students that you will observe complete confidentiality regarding anything they have shared. Ask students to respect the right to privacy and confidentiality of all other students.
2. Display downloaded material from the See You at the Pole website (www.syatp.com). Ask students what they think about the comment made by Marissa Simmons, a seventeen-year-old Catholic attending a public high school (“I think it’s appropriate that you live your religion in school too”). Do students think it is appropriate to live their religion in other, secular settings, too?

Teaching Approaches

Run It Up the Flagpole (pages 96–97)

1. Call attention to the questions that follow the See You at the Pole story in the text. Invite volunteers to respond to each one. Remind students of the brief reflection they shared at their last session when they contemplated the presence of the Holy Trinity within them. Suggest that a daily time for prayer to the Trinity is a great way to remind themselves of God’s presence with and within them.

Apologetics: Catholic FAQs (pages 64, 74, 81, and 93)

2. Go through each of the questions, calling on different students to offer their responses. Check all answers against those given at “Catholic FAQs” at www.avemariapress.com: Religious Education. Make necessary corrections and clear up any confusion on the students’ part. Finally, tell students either to record the correct answers in their journals or to download them from the website to use as study aids for the chapter test.
3. Give students time to ask any remaining questions they may have about the material covered in Chapter 2. Invite other students to offer answers. Likewise, if any questions remain from those the students wrote about in this chapter’s first session, address them now.
4. Play some meditative music while allotting time for the students to do some quiet individual review and study of the chapter.

Prayer (page 99)

5. Gather students around a lit Easter Candle for prayer. Remind them that of all the faith-filled people in Scripture, one stands out—the lowly peasant girl who bore a child out of wedlock, was homeless, a refugee, and a mother and teacher to none other than the Son of God. Tell the students that more than any other disciple, Mary had faith in her Son—faith that led her as far as the foot of the cross. There, Jesus acknowledged her faith by giving her to us as our mother, too. Therefore, in faith, we turn to Mary in prayer.
6. Invite students to voice their own prayers directed to Mary as an intercessor. For instance, they might pray, “Mary, Mother of the Son of God, help me to follow in your Son’s footsteps”; “Blessed Mother Mary, please ask God to show me how I can best use my talents today”; “O Virgin Mary, you must have been very afraid of the challenge of becoming the mother of the Redeemer. Help me to remember your courage when I am afraid,” etc.
7. Pray the *Memorare* aloud with the students. It appears on page 99.

Homework

1. Study for the Chapter 2 Test.

One Solitary Life*

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village, where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty. Then, for three years, he became an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book, never held an office, never went to college, never visited a big city, never traveled more than two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things usually associated with greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends abandoned him. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. Falsely convicted, he was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave, through the pity of a friend.

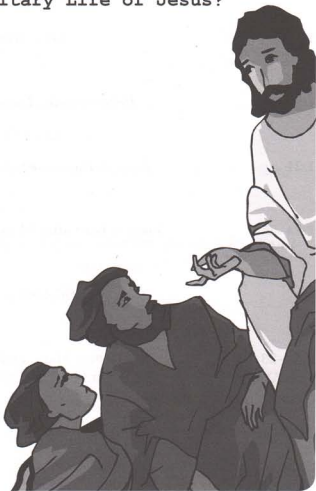
Twenty centuries have come and gone. Today, he is the central figure of the human race and the leader of humankind's progress. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected life on earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life.

**Adapted from a sermon by Dr James Allan Francis in The Real Jesus and Other Sermons, © 1926 by the Judson Press of Philadelphia (titled "Arise, Sir Knight!").*

What's What Because of the One Solitary Life of Jesus?

List five things the life of Jesus has affected or changed.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



Infancy Narrative Points of Agreement

Matthew	Agreement	Luke
2:1	The nativity of Jesus is related to the reign of Herod.	1:5
1:18-25	Joseph is not the biological father of Jesus.	1:34
1:18, 20	Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit.	1:35
1:18	Mary is a virgin mother.	1:27, 34; 2:5
1:20-21	An angel announces the birth of Jesus.	1:28-30
1:16, 20	Joseph comes from the House of David.	1:27; 2:4
1:1	Jesus is called a son of David.	1:32
1:21	Prior to birth, Jesus receives his name from God.	1:31
1:21	Jesus is the one who will save and become the Savior.	2:11
1:24-25	Jesus is born after Mary and Joseph start living together.	2:4-7
2:1	Bethlehem is the birthplace of Jesus.	2:4-7
2:22-23	Jesus, Mary, and Joseph settle in Nazareth.	2:39, 51

The Kingdom of God

Jesus preached in a world where most ordinary people felt they were powerless in the face of the many forces that threatened human life and freedom. The political powers of the age had stamped out justice. Most diseases went unchecked. Superstitions abounded. Nature itself posed constant powerful threats to livelihood and well-being.

Against this background, Jesus came to announce something completely different: the Kingdom of God. The coming of God's Kingdom signals the ultimate sovereignty of God and the ultimate freedom of humankind. God's Kingdom is not destructive—not power *over*, but power *for*. It is reconciling, binding people not to superstition but to one another, to the goodness of creation, and to God. The Kingdom of God does not so much destroy the evil power of the world as it reconciles the whole of creation to itself and to its Creator.

Look up the passages below.

Match them to what they reveal about the Kingdom of God.

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| A. Luke 15:7 | D. Matthew 13 |
| B. Matthew 16:18–20 | E. Matthew 22:1–10 |
| C. John 12:31 | F. Luke 4:18 |

1. ____ The Kingdom of God is for everyone.
2. ____ The Kingdom of God belongs to the poor and lowly.
3. ____ Sinners are welcome in the Kingdom.
4. ____ Jesus' invitation to the Kingdom comes in the form of parables.
5. ____ The coming of God's Kingdom means the defeat of Satan.
6. ____ Certain authority—the keys to the Kingdom—was given by Jesus to his Twelve Apostles, particularly Peter.

What analogy would you use to explain the Kingdom of God to: homeless people? new immigrants? the elderly? kindergartners? politicians? people your own age?

Write your analogies on the back of this sheet. Begin each one with "The Kingdom of God is like..."

Without the Holy Spirit . . .

. . . God would be far from us.

. . . Jesus would be but a figure of history, and his Gospel would not be Good News.

. . . the Church community would be nothing more than a social club, never the Body of Christ.

. . . prayer would be talking to ourselves.

. . . our worship would smack of magic.

. . . living the Christian life would a burden, not a joy.



What is one time you can recall experiencing the presence of the Spirit in your life?