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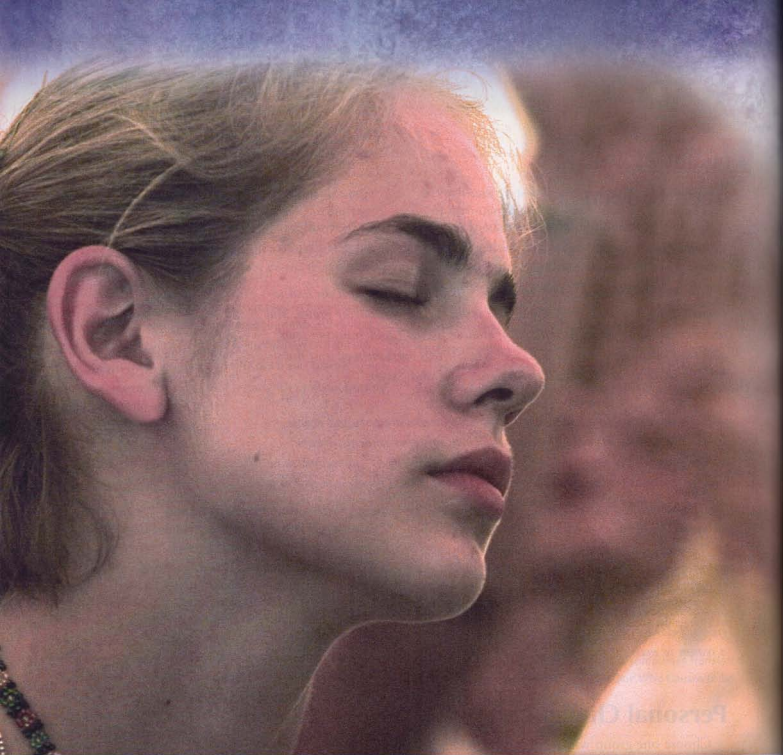
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"If any want to become [Jesus'] followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow [him]."

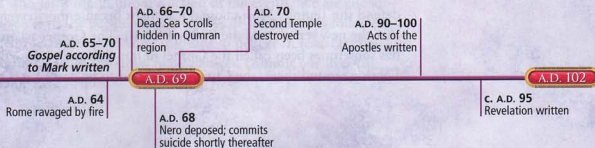
Mark 8:34

Mark 8:34

Chapter Goals

In this chapter, you will:

- learn about the background and the main themes of the Gospel according to Mark.
- learn about Jesus' public ministry and the call of the first disciples.
- explore the Messianic Mystery and learn how to overcome obstacles to discipleship.
- consider the Paschal mystery as the central mystery of our faith.
- learn about Padre Pio.



The Gospel According to Mark

We often use the word *believe* casually—such as when we say, “I believe our team is better than their team” or “Can you believe she likes that movie?” These examples obviously do not carry the same weight as a statement of belief or faith. Beliefs of faith are so strong that they shape who we are and what we will become. When our convictions lead us to public speech and actions, we become witnesses to what we believe.

The author of Mark emphasized that following Jesus is a choice we make. Focusing our minds and hearts on following Jesus leads to discipleship. A disciple lives out his or her faith commitment within the Church community. The Catholic Church is our faith community, the living Body of Christ.

The Church’s faith makes our faith possible, supporting and strengthening us in our belief.

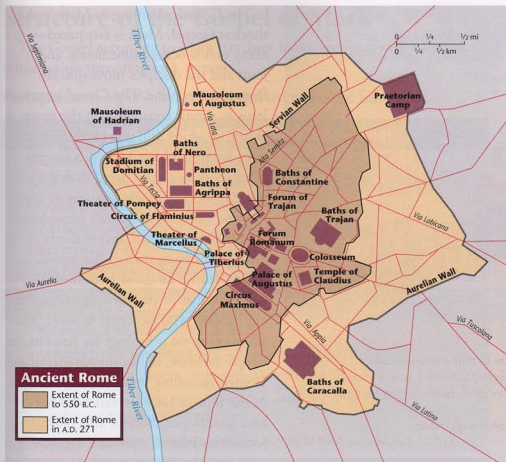
Overview of the Gospel

Authorship and Date For centuries, biblical scholars believed that the Gospel according to Mark was a shortened version of the Gospel according to Matthew. However, during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, scripture scholars offered strong evidence that the author of the Gospel according to Mark wrote this Gospel first, probably between A.D. 65 and A.D. 70.

Traditionally, biblical scholars thought John Mark, a companion of Paul mentioned in Acts 12:12, was the author of the Gospel according to Mark. While some still hold this belief, others believe Mark to be an unknown writer, probably a Gentile Christian who might have been a disciple of Saint Peter.

Audience and Location The author of the Gospel according to Mark wrote approximately thirty years after the death of Jesus and shortly before and during the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple. By that time, Peter, Paul, and James had already died. The early Christians living in Jerusalem were experiencing the brutality of Nero’s rule and living under the eye of Rome in an occupied territory.

Christians at that time had to decide whether to fight with the Jews to defend the Temple. Most chose not to fight because they fervently believed that the new temple was the Body of Christ. The Gospel according to Mark has sometimes been called the Gospel of nonviolence because despite the fighting around them, the Christians refused to be part of it. Other titles



Explore the Land

The City of Rome The Gospel according to Mark was written around A.D. 70 in Rome. This map shows what Rome—along with the major routes of transportation in and out of the city—looked like then. Rome was considered the center of the Western world and was capital of the Roman Empire. *Why do you think Mark chose to write his Gospel from Rome?*

for this Gospel include the Gospel of Conversion, the Gospel of the Cross, and the Gospel of “the Way.”

People in Mark’s community followed “the Way” of Jesus during a time when many others persecuted and martyred Christians. Written to an audience that included Gentile Christians, this Gospel contains few references to the Old Testament, something to be expected if an audience did not have knowledge of the Scriptures. The Gospel according to Mark has an urgent message to the community to model their lives after Jesus’. This commitment required disciples who were willing to serve others and to suffer for them. The author wrote that believing in Jesus wholeheartedly meant following in his footsteps.

Theological Perspectives and Themes From the beginning, the author presents the Gospel of Mark as an interactive story. We are drawn into the mystery of who Jesus is and into the action of the events. We are encouraged to see ourselves in the personalities and lives of Jesus and his followers. This Gospel helps us understand what it means to believe in Jesus. It challenges us to become part of the story, make choices, commit our lives to Jesus, and become his disciples.

Activity

Women in Mark’s Gospel

- 1. Read Mark 1:29–34.
- 2. Read Mark 5:21–24.
- 3. Read Mark 7:24–30.
- 4. Read Mark 10:13–16.
- 5. Read Mark 12:13–17.
- 6. Read Mark 12:41–43.
- 7. Read Mark 14:13–15.
- 8. Read Mark 16:7–9.



Interpret the Art

Crowds Following Jesus The author of Mark depicted Jesus as someone the crowds followed and struggled to be near. People often strived to simply touch the cloth of Jesus' cloak, believing they would be healed by so doing.

Where do you see reactions like this from crowds today?

The Gospel according to Mark is the shortest Gospel. Mark is fast-paced—many events occur immediately, and Jesus and the disciples move quickly from place to place. The Gospel portrays Jesus as almost constantly on the move, a person of action and power. Despite its short length and fast pace, this Gospel often provides clearer detail than the other synoptic Gospels. An aura of mystery and suffering surrounds Jesus. Mark focuses more on Jesus' saving deeds through suffering than on his words.

The central image of Jesus in this Gospel is that of an unrecognized, suffering Messiah who has come to serve. The author gives no genealogy for Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, unlike the authors of the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke. At the time of Jesus, servants did not have genealogies. Because this Gospel focuses on Jesus as a servant, a genealogy would not have been recorded.

One of the themes throughout this Gospel is the portrayal of Jesus' followers and his opponents. This Gospel begins with a clear distinction between Jesus' followers—the enthusiastic crowds, the disciples, and the people who are healed—and his opponents—the people with hardened hearts, the chief priests and scribes, and the political authorities. As the Gospel progresses, the distinction blurs. Some of Jesus' followers misunderstand or betray him because he does not meet their messianic expectations. Even some of his enemies, like the Roman centurion at the cross, later acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God.

The author of Mark filled the events recorded in the Gospel with conflict, tension, and challenge. Some people attempt to destroy Jesus, while others suffer along with him. In the end, Jesus suffers and dies to save all people. The Gospel according to Mark is a journey with Jesus from the beginning of his public ministry and ultimately to his Passion, death, and Resurrection.

Structure of the Gospel of Mark

The Gospel according to Mark has three major sections, with a short introduction preceding each section:

Prologue: teaching of John; baptism and temptation of Jesus

The Galilean Ministry (Mark 1:14—6:6a)

- Capernaum and the surrounding district (Mark 1:14–45)
- Conflict of Jesus and the Jews: five controversial discourses (Mark 2:1—3:6)
- Success of Jesus and further conflicts (Mark 3:7–35)
- The parables (Mark 4:1–34)
- Four miracles at the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:35—5:43)
- Conclusion of Galilean ministry; rejection at Nazareth (Mark 6:1–6a)

The Journeys of Jesus (Mark 6:6b—10:52)

- The mission of the Apostles (Mark 6:6b–29)
- Journey and return, feeding of the 5,000, controversy (Mark 6:30–44)
- Journey and return, miracles, controversy (Mark 7:24—8:12)
- Journey and return, cures, Peter's declaration, predictions of the Passion, Transfiguration (Mark 8:13—9:50)
- Journey to Jerusalem, controversy, instructions, cure of blind man (Mark 10:1–52)

Ministry in Jerusalem, Passion and Death, Resurrection (Mark 11:1—16:8)

- Messianic activity (Mark 11:1–26)
- Messianic teaching (Mark 11:27—12:44)
- Apocalypse (Mark 13:1–37)
- Jesus and His disciples (Mark 14:1–42)
- Jesus tried by the Jews (Mark 14:43–72)
- Jesus tried by Pilate and crucified (Mark 15:1–47)
- The risen Jesus (Mark 16:1–8)

Prominent Figures in the Gospel of Mark This Gospel features several people or groups.

Jesus: Jesus practiced what he asked of his followers: total commitment to the will of God the Father, who had sent him. As Jesus personifies this way of living, Mark reveals Jesus' relationship with his followers, the crowds, and the Jewish religious authorities.

Jewish and political authorities: The Jewish religious authorities included the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Sanhedrin, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. The political authorities were the Herodians, the supporters of King Herod and his political position. From the beginning, they questioned, accused, and rejected Jesus. Opponents from these two groups conspired against Jesus in Mark 3:6. He debated them and ultimately reduced them to silence. (See *Mark 12:34*.)



Women in Mark's Gospel

Mark's Gospel records women who had faith in Jesus and chose to serve and follow him. Read the scripture verses indicated below, and list the women who were disciples of Jesus. In small groups, discuss the importance of each of the women listed here:

- Mark 5:25–34
- Mark 7:24–30
- Mark 14:3–9
- Mark 15:40–41
- Mark 15:47
- Mark 16:1–7

Writing Techniques

When Jesus began his public ministry, he was on the move. He surprised many people. Jesus' identity was revealed through his public ministry.

Read the following passages to discover why people were, and are today, astounded, amazed, and in awe of him:

Mark 1:22

Mark 1:23–27

Mark 2:3–12

Mark 4:35–41

Mark 6:2

Mark 7:37

Mark 11:18

Followers: Jesus' followers were people whose final actions showed their desire to journey with him. The followers included his mother, Peter and the other Apostles, women, sinners, tax collectors, those who suffered, and many other unnamed disciples. Some of Jesus' followers continued to struggle with the real identity of Jesus and did not truly recognize and follow him until after his Resurrection.

Crowds: Crowds are mentioned thirty-eight times in this Gospel. The crowds initially responded with enthusiasm to Jesus' words and deeds but did not make a commitment to follow him.

Mark's Techniques The author of Mark used several writing techniques in formulating his Gospel. In several cases he framed one incident within another. For example in Mark 11:11 we read that Jesus is in Jerusalem and in the Temple, where he “looked around at everything.” Later in the same chapter, Jesus departs with his disciples to the village of Bethany. As Jesus leaves Bethany, he passes a fig tree that bore no fruit. And even though it is not the season for figs, Jesus places a curse on the tree saying, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again” (*Mark 11:14*). The story of Jesus cleansing the Temple area of the buyers and sellers is then found in verses 15 through 18. The fig tree, now withered, returns to the story in verses 20 and 21. The fig tree reminds the reader of the prophets of the Old Testament who previously used this image to designate Israel. Jesus' cursing of the fig tree represents



his judgment of barren Israel and the fate of Jerusalem for failing to receive his teaching. The story symbolizes the fate of the Jewish people and the Temple, which would come to the same end as the fig tree because they did not produce the fruit they were supposed to. The author prompts his readers to see the tension between the story used as a frame and the story inserted into the frame.

Another technique used in Mark is the **threefold pattern**. The Gospel contains

- three seed parables (See *Mark 4:3–32*.)
- three popular opinions about who Jesus really is (See *Mark 6:14–15*.)
- three popular opinions about Jesus (See *Mark 8:27–28*.)
- three failures of the disciples to stay awake in the garden (See *Mark 14:32–42*.)
- the three denials of Jesus by Peter (See *Mark 14:66–72*.)

On a larger scale, this threefold pattern seems to encompass the whole of the Gospel according to Mark, which contains three declarations of Jesus as the Son of God. These declarations are interspersed from beginning to end. (See *Mark 1:11*; *9:7*; and *15:39*.) The tension shows Jesus as the beloved Son of God and Jesus as the executed criminal.



The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

The Gospel of Mark includes events at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry that revolve around discovering his identity by answering the question, "Who is Jesus?" In these events, Mark presents the true nature of Jesus as the Messiah.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God Mark 1:1–8:26

The Gospel according to Mark opens by proclaiming, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (*Mark 1:1*). This statement immediately reveals Jesus' identity to the readers. The author applies the title Son of God to Jesus to convey the intimate and eternal relationship that exists between Jesus and God the Father. The remainder of the Gospel describes how this revelation unfolds.

The author of this Gospel also uses the term Son of Man to describe Jesus. In the Old Testament, this term refers to the prophet Ezekiel, who brought Israel a renewed life, a restored city, and a magnificent Temple. The Son of Man terminology continues in the prophecies of Daniel and reveals the Son of Man as a glorious, god-like figure. This figure's appearance is a judgment against the corrupt kingdoms of the world and vindicates Israel. In Jesus' time, the title Son of Man referred to the glorious manifestation of divine power.

The terms Son of God and Son of Man in Mark identify Jesus and the purpose of his mission. That Jesus is the divine Son of God is revealed through his mission and, ultimately, through his Resurrection.

The Baptist and the Baptized The baptism of Jesus is recorded in all four Gospels. In Mark, as in the other Gospel accounts, Jesus' baptism revealed who he is.

The Gospel according to Mark makes it clear that Jesus' mission began with his baptism. John the Baptist, the messenger sent before Jesus to prepare the way, baptized Jesus and pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. John was prophesied by Isaiah: "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight!'" (*Mark 1:3*).

When the voice of God pronounced Jesus as his beloved Son, Jesus' eternal preexistence was confirmed. Jesus is the only Son of the Father. He is God himself. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus indicated that from the beginning Jesus was one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus then led his public ministry by doing the will of God the Father and in union with the Holy Spirit.



Faith Activity

God's Presence Like

Jesus, you have faced times in your life when you began something new. Like Jesus, you have the assurance that God the Father and the Holy Spirit are always with you on your journey. Draw, write a poem, or write a song about one of these new beginnings in your life. How were you aware of God's presence during that time in your life? How did that time help you learn more about yourself and about God's plan for you?

This event closes with the arrest of John the Baptist. John's arrest is a warning that the struggle between good and evil prevails throughout the Gospel. The shadow of the cross follows Jesus until it becomes the symbol of his victory over evil.

The Catholic Church celebrates the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus on the last Sunday of the Christmas season. This celebration marks the end of the proclamation in the liturgy of the accounts surrounding the birth and early life of Jesus, and the beginning of his public life and ministry.



Discipleship: A Life Rooted in Jesus

Discipleship is a life rooted in Jesus—a life expressed in union with his Church. Caring for others and living in harmony with our fellow human beings is linked directly with our living, loving relationship with God. We become true disciples of Jesus by responding to his call and by living in a community of faith.

In his first ministerial act, Jesus called disciples to follow him and join in his mission. He continued to invite followers, and soon a small group had gathered to serve the kingdom of God on earth. Those followers also sought the fullness of the kingdom in eternity.

The Gospel according to Mark has three call narratives, which describe how Jesus summoned others to hear and respond to the word and the power of God.



Discipleship The following scripture passages specifically relate to being a disciple of Jesus. Look up the passages and express in writing how they connect to ideas of discipleship:

Mark 9:33–37

Mark 10:35–45

Mark 12:41–44

Mark 14:3–8



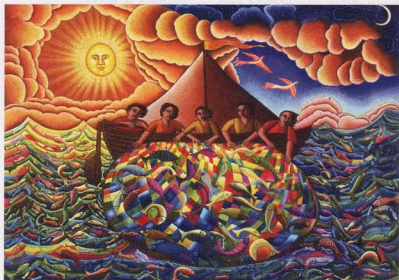


Faith Activity

Follow Me The first and third “call narratives” required Jesus’ followers to leave things behind.

1. What are the “nets,” “boats,” and “baggage” that people in today’s world need to leave behind to follow Jesus?
2. What are the things you need to leave behind to follow Jesus?

▼ The Great Catch by John August Swanson.



Jesus Calls and Commissions the Twelve As Jesus began his ministry, he recruited four ordinary people to help him proclaim the message of the kingdom of God. Jesus expected an immediate and total commitment to serve God. In similar ways, he invited others to follow him, too.



SCRIPTURE

“As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boats mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.”

Mark 1:16–20

After Jesus called the first disciples, he went up on a mountain. In Scripture, the mountain is a special place for meeting God. On the mountain, Jesus chose his twelve Apostles, from the Greek word *apostolos*, which means “one who is sent.” Although the Apostles were a diverse group of people, their relationship with Jesus bound them as a community. Jesus called them to be with him. Through spending time with Jesus, their minds, hearts, and attitudes were transformed so that they could go forth to preach the Gospel.



SCRIPTURE

“He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics.”

Mark 6:7–13

In this third call narrative, Jesus called his chosen Apostles and sent them on a journey. He sent them out “two by two” to minister together. When we follow Jesus and become part of his Church, we share the journey with others. Jesus asked his Apostles to trust in God and others to meet their needs. We too are called to trust totally in God for all we need. All three call narratives in the Gospel according to Mark remind us to put God first in our lives.

Confronting Evil Immediately after each call narrative, the power of evil shows itself in different forms: Jesus confronts evil in the form of a man with an unclean spirit after the call of the disciples. (See *Mark 1:21–28*.) Jesus and Beelzebul, a demon, have a confrontation after the commission of the Twelve. (See *Mark 3:20–30*.) The murder of John the Baptist is recounted after the mission of the Twelve. (See *Mark 6:14–29*.)

When we say “yes” to becoming disciples of Jesus, we are also asked to confront evil. The kingdom of God demands our response and requires our ongoing commitment. Our response and commitment must be strong, especially in the presence of evil or in the face of obstacles. These obstacles can come from the outside world, from our closest friends, or even from within us.

Invitation Being a disciple is an invitation to journey with Jesus and follow his example. As disciples, we respond to the call each of us receives from God and live our vocation in the Church community, in our families, in our schools, and in the world. Being a disciple requires a choice to accept God’s grace, to turn away from sin, and ask God’s forgiveness for our sins and mistakes. It also involves rejecting evil and standing up for what is good and right. Discipleship leads to a growth process of self-fulfillment, as we hear and respond to Jesus’ teachings and invite others to do the same. Being a disciple involves a life of prayer, action, and trust in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



Faith Sharing

Obstacles Even though we desire to follow Jesus, we can be distracted from our purpose along the way. Answer the following questions with your group and think about how God’s grace has prepared you for a life rooted in Jesus:

1. Consider a recent decision you made. On what did you base your decision?
2. Think of a time you made a poor choice or decision. What was the result?
3. What can you do to better respond to God’s word? How can you grow in God’s grace?



Following Jesus and Our Call to Discipleship The Gospel of Mark teaches us about the conditions and the consequences of choosing to follow Jesus and live in his community, the Church. As members of the Church, we are called by Jesus to proclaim by the way we live that we are followers of Jesus. Even though we, like the Apostles, are a diverse group, our relationship with Jesus and the grace of the Holy Spirit bind us together as a community. Through our personal lives at home, school, work, and even at leisure, we can fulfill the call to holiness we received at Baptism.

The Parable of the Sower offers us insight into how ready the soil of our life is for becoming a follower of Jesus. As he told a crowd of followers:



Faith Activity

Symbolism in Mark

After reading the “Parable of the Sower,” read the explanation of the parable in Mark 4:14–20. Create a chart naming each following symbol from the parable and give an explanation for each symbol:

- Sower
- Seed
- Birds
- Seed on the path
- Seed on the rocky ground
- Seed in the thorns
- Seed on the good soil



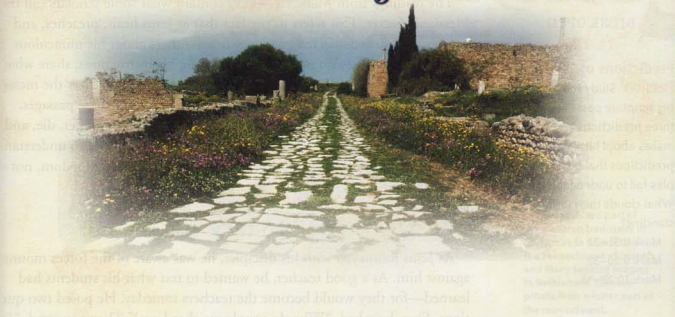
SCRIPTURE

“Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” And he said, ‘Let anyone with ears to hear listen!’”

Mark 4:3–9

In this parable, Jesus teaches us that the way we respond to the word of God illustrates the kind of person we are. Jesus also described the type of “soil” that hinders us from responding to God’s word. In spite of our imperfect soil, Jesus remains with us and can work through our imperfections. Jesus continually invites us to a life rooted in him.

TRAVELING IN THE TIME OF Jesus



In outlining the mission of the Apostles, Jesus listed several items they were not to take with them on their journeys. Each one was to take only his staff, his sandals, and a single tunic. During the time of Jesus, the items he ordered the Apostles to leave behind were considered necessities.

To travel on the dusty—and potentially dangerous—roads from city to city without money, food, a change of clothes, or any other travel materials was unwise and possibly harmful. The lack of those items likely precluded the Apostles from traveling any more than a day without stopping. In this manner, the Apostles preached of Jesus' work while also resting in a safe home. Jesus frequently stopped during his travels and used nature to provide for himself and his followers—such as in the feeding of the 5,000.

Read the parable of the Good Samaritan to learn more about the dangers of traveling in the time of Jesus. The Apostles placed their trust in Jesus and God the Father, whom they knew would provide for their needs.



Connect to the Past

Travel in the Time of Jesus The well-developed roads of the Roman Empire allowed trade and commerce to reach the farthest corners of the empire in short amounts of time. In the area surrounding and connected to the capital city of Rome, the roads were paved. However, in Galilee and Judea, the roads that led from city to city were unpaved. Pictured here are foot coverings from that era. *What items do you think you would need to make the journey that the early disciples did?*

The Misunderstood Messiah



BREAK OPEN the Word

Predictions of the Passion

Study the following scripture passages for three predictions Jesus makes about his Passion, predictions that his disciples fail to understand. What clouds their understanding?

Mark 8:31–33

Mark 9:30–32

Mark 10:32–45

The readings from Mark 1:1—8:33 contain what some scholars call the Messianic Secret. This refers to the fact that as Jesus heals, preaches, and teaches, he instructs his followers not to tell others about his miraculous works, but then they go out and, disregarding his instructions, share what they have witnessed. The Gospel according to Mark emphasizes the messianic mystery from 8:27 to Jesus' death in 15:37. Within these passages, we read about the paradox that as the Messiah, Jesus must suffer, die, and then be raised in glory—a mystery his followers were unable to understand because their Messiah was supposed to establish a glorious kingdom, not die and disappear.

The Messianic Mystery Mark 8:27–15:37

As Jesus journeyed with his disciples, he was aware of the forces mounting against him. As a good teacher, he wanted to test what his students had learned—for they would become the teachers someday. He posed two questions. First, he asked, “Who do people say that I am?” They answered, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets” (*Mark 8:27–28*). Then Jesus asked the crucial question, “But who do you say that I am?” (*Mark 8:29*) Although in his answer, Peter correctly hailed Jesus as the Messiah, he did not understand the nature of Jesus' messiahship. Peter and the disciples hoped for a hero-messiah, not a prophet-messiah. As Jesus began to prophecy his own death and Resurrection, Peter spoke up and rebuked Jesus. Jesus silenced Peter and compared him to Satan for worrying about human, rather than divine, concerns. (See *Mark 8:31–33*.)

Why did he do this? Throughout the Gospel of Mark, there are times when Jesus silences demons that recognize him. Peter acted like a demon because, although he recognized Jesus as the Messiah, he did not accept the necessity of Jesus' suffering and death. Peter and the disciples continued to misunderstand and even deny Jesus—especially as the journey became more difficult.



Faith Activity

Timeline of Your Life In Mark 8:33—10:52 Jesus is journeying from Galilee to Jerusalem. Similarly, our lives are a journey. Record the journey of your life on a timeline. Draw one timeline that represents major events in your life. Then draw another overlapping timeline that represents your relationship with God during each of those times.

Can you detect any patterns in what was happening in your life and where your relationship was with God?

THE SUFFERING SERVANT



Las Posadas are part of the Mexican traditions of Christmas in which there is a reenactment of Joseph and Mary seeking lodging in Bethlehem. This is a piñata from a latter part of the reenactment.

The mystery of God is revealed in the image of Jesus who is “the image of the unseen God” (*Colossians 1:15*). Jesus is the Son of God, the Father’s gift to us. He became flesh and dwelt among us. United with Jesus through the Holy Spirit and as members of the Church, we experience the liberating power of God’s grace.

We celebrate the life of Jesus in a special way during two great seasons in the Church—Christmas and Easter. Love of God is made incarnate in Jesus, and the Church celebrates the mysteries of life and death in the liturgy, just as death marks our own lives on earth. The reality of death does not leave us without hope, for by Jesus’ redeeming actions, death can lead to resurrection for each of us too.

The Old Testament frequently pictures God as a warrior. But in the prophecies of Isaiah, God saves not by strength or force, but by suffering—that of the Suffering Servant. Isaiah prophesied the coming of a suffering servant Messiah, using graphic imagery and very distinct language. Isaiah

tells the reader that the one who “by his bruises we are healed” will be “struck down by God, and afflicted,” “a man of suffering,” and “despised and rejected by others.” (See *Isaiah 53:3–5*.)

Even in the Infancy Narratives, suffering had already entered into the story of Jesus’ birth: there was no room for him in the inn. Mary and Joseph had to wrap him in bands of cloth and lay him in a manger—the feeding trough for animals. Herod the Great slaughtered innocent children to try to kill Jesus after his birth. Mary and Joseph fled with Jesus into exile in Egypt. At Jesus’ presentation in the Temple, Simeon said to Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed . . .”

Jesus is the suffering Messiah whose life—from the beginning—points to the cross. Jesus died so his true identity would be made known: “for the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many” (*Mark 10:45*).

The Transfiguration of Jesus

After the first prediction of the Passion, Jesus was transfigured before the disciples Peter, James, and John. For a moment Jesus disclosed his divine glory, confirming what Peter had said—that Jesus was the Messiah. During the **Transfiguration**, Jesus' disciples were told to “listen to him.”



SCRIPTURE

“Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ He did not know what to say, for they were

terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”

Mark 9:2–9



Interpret the Art

Transfiguration During the Transfiguration, Jesus' face shone like the sun and his clothes became bright white. The prophets Elijah and Moses appeared beside him and God the Father spoke to the present disciples.

Why were Moses and Elijah the figures who appeared?

Jesus also revealed to Peter, James, and John that he would have to endure the suffering of the cross to enter into glory. In the Transfiguration, Jesus' disciples witnessed the transformation of his appearance. They also saw the two great figures many of Jesus' followers thought he was. The two figures were Moses, the great liberator of Israel, who led the Israelites out of slavery and gave them the Torah; and Elijah, the powerful prophet of those who were poor and oppressed. The prophet who brought forth the Law and the prophet who announced the coming of the Messiah appeared with Jesus at the Transfiguration.

Jesus' Transfiguration strengthened the Apostles and their questioning faith as his Passion and death approached. Leading them up a mountain prepared them for the ascent to Calvary for his crucifixion. The cloud indicated the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the voice was that of God the Father. This event gave witness to the Trinity: the Father in the voice, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the cloud.

Just as the baptism of Jesus began his public life, the Transfiguration of Jesus began his Passion, death, and Resurrection. “Jesus' baptism proclaimed ‘the mystery of the first regeneration,’ namely, our Baptism; the Transfiguration ‘is the sacrament of the second regeneration’: our own Resurrection.”¹⁰ From