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Abraham Is Our Father in Faith

Faith Focus

Abraham made a covenant of faith with the one true God.

Reflecting on the Faith Experience

Take a few moments to reflect prayerfully before preparing the lesson.

Listening

Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you.

I will make of you a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
so that you will be a blessing.

Genesis 12:1–2

Reflecting

God's call comes to each of us throughout our lives in many different ways. Each call is an election and a promise: an election to a particular work in God's plan of salvation, and a promise of divine help and blessing if we have faith in God and respond trustingly. God awaits our response, for though God is the Lord, the events of history depend upon people's response to God's call.

Abraham is a model of fidelity to God's call. He unhesitatingly left his home, his friends, and his attachments to travel to an unknown land of strange people—all this in a generous response of faith in God and trust in God's word. With the same unstinting generosity, he was willing to offer the greatest sacrifice, the life of his only son, because he thought God asked it of him. God rewarded Abraham's faith and love in many ways, but especially by

renewing the covenant with him. God promised again that through his descendants "all nations would be blessed."

As Christians we also have received a special call—a call to holiness, to sanctity.

This is the will of God, your holiness.

1 Thessalonians 4:3

Through God's grace, received in Baptism, we have been made the new people of God and have entered into a covenant with him. We have been sanctified; however, we are called to give witness to that sanctification and bring it to perfection in our lives. Just as God encouraged Abraham to do his will, so God encourages us through words to Isaiah:

Fear not, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name:
you are mine.

When you pass through the water, I will be with you . . .

When you walk through fire . . .

the flames shall not consume you.

For I am the LORD, your God,
. . . your savior.

Isaiah 43:1–3

Am I now responding fully to a particular call from God?

Responding

Heavenly Father, give my students the grace to respond to your call as Abraham did.

Scripture for Further Reflection

Genesis 12, 17, 21–22 Abraham responded to God's call, leaving behind the security of his possessions and his homeland in order to experience the wonder of God's life-giving love. When Abraham thought that God wanted the sacrifice of his son, he responded with prompt obedience and loving generosity.

Leviticus 26:1–13 God promises to bless those who obey his law.

Preparing for the Faith Experience

Day One

Abraham, Father of All Believers

Day Two

A Test of Abraham's Faith

Day Three

Faith Expressed Through Prayer

Day Four

Faith Expressed Through Sacrifice

Day Five

Extending the Chapter

Scripture in This Chapter

Genesis 12, 15, 17, 22 Abraham responds to God's call.

Psalms 89:1–2, 15–16, 19, 28 God's faithfulness

James 2:14–24 Saint James speaks about faith.

Catholic Social Teaching

- Family and Community
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Life and Dignity

Church Documents

Catechism of the Catholic Church. The themes in this chapter correspond to the following paragraphs: 59–60, 144–146, 166, 762, 1080, 2100.

National Directory for Catechesis #51. Children should be taught respect for the continuing existence of God's Covenant with the Jewish people and their faithful response to God's call.

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church #39–#42 (Vatican II). God calls everyone to holiness of life and gives each person all that he or she needs to be able to answer that call with devotion and generosity.

The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible #28 (Pontifical Biblical Commission). In choosing Abraham, God revealed his plan for blessing all the people on earth.

Prayer at the Western Wall in Jerusalem by John Paul II. Since God chose Abraham to bring his name to the nations of the world, we should commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with Jews, the people of the Covenant.

Music in This Chapter

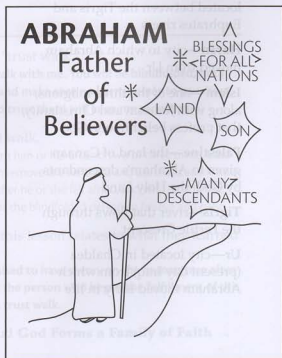
For a list of music suggested in this program, see page T481.

Enriching the Faith Experience

Use the activities at the end of the chapter to enrich a lesson or to replace an activity with one that better meets the needs of your class.

Bulletin Board

A suggestion for a bulletin-board design for this chapter is pictured.



LEARNING OUTCOMES

The students will be able to

- describe how God calls his people and how we should respond.
- retell the story of Abraham's call and God's covenant with him.
- explain that through Baptism we have entered into God's covenant.
- explain that Islam professes the faith of Abraham.

Words to Know

Abraham
covenant
sacrifice

See the Glossary for definitions.

Key Terms

Canaan—land located between Syria and Egypt that God promised to the descendants of Abraham

Chaldea—land through which Abraham journeyed when God told him to move from Ur to Haran

Chosen People—the descendants of Abraham

Euphrates—river that flows through the Fertile Crescent

Fertile Crescent—area of rich soil located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers

Haran—city to which Abraham moved from Ur

Islam—one of the three religions, along with Judaism and Christianity, that profess belief in one God

Palestine—the land of Canaan given to Abraham's descendants by God; the Holy Land

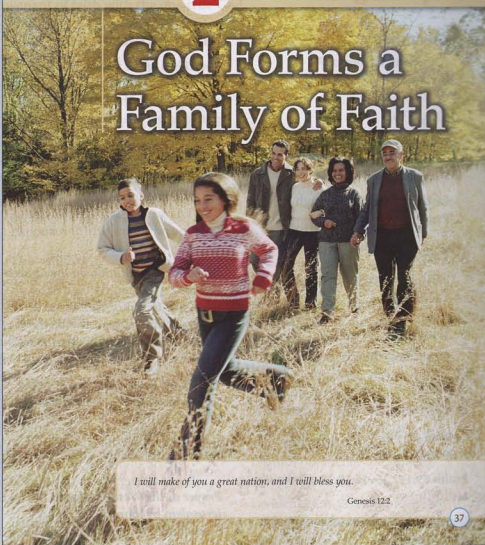
Tigris—river that flows through the Fertile Crescent

Ur—city located in Chaldea (present day Iraq) from which Abraham moved early in life

UNIT

2

God Forms a Family of Faith



I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you.

Genesis 12:2

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Materials

- BLM 18A–B (optional)
- Blindfold
- Journey logs
- Song for Sharing #5, such as “Yaweh, the Faithful One” from *Neither Silver nor Gold* or “Be Not Afraid” from *Earthen Vessels*

Before You Begin

- The Jewish faith has its origin in Abraham. God identified himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Through God's self-revelation, Abram the shepherd became Abraham, "Father of Many Nations."
- A covenant is a sacred relationship—a kinship—that God invites us to enter into. Unlike a modern-day contract, which is a legal agreement between equals, our covenant with God is an expression of our total dependency on him. However, the covenant is not a matter of God imposing his will upon us; rather, it is an act of grace. God alone is capable of perfect faithfulness to the covenant. We can remain faithful to the covenant only through God's help. Likewise, despite our unfaithfulness, God's mercy continually invites us to return to the relationship he has established and to live by the law of love, in order that we may reap the benefits of the covenant—eternal life.
- Explain to the students that because the events they will be studying took place about 4,000 years ago and in foreign countries, they may find the customs and ways of thinking strange. They may discover that they, however, identify with the Israelites, who struggled with many of the same questions we face today.
- You may wish to send home with the students copies of BLM 18A–B. These are parent pages about the study of Unit 2.

Getting Started

God Forms a Family of Faith

IN THIS UNIT, you will be learning about how God formed his family of faith, beginning with Abraham.



Abraham Is Our Father in Faith

Abraham was a man of great faith who trusted in God. When God called Abraham to leave his homeland, Abraham responded with a generous and obedient heart. Like Abraham, you are being called by God. You can give witness to your faith by responding as Abraham did: God established a covenant—a sacred agreement—with Abraham. As you learn about God's covenant with Abraham, think about your own baptismal covenant with God. Throughout this unit, you will explore ways of expressing your faith through prayer, sacrifice, and service to others.

Jacob Is Chosen by God

Isaac, Abraham's son, had two sons: Jacob and Esau. You will read about the story of Jacob. Just as Jacob received God's blessing, you received God's blessing at Baptism. Like Jacob, you have received a mission: to continue the life and work of Jesus wherever you go.



Jacob

The Israelites

Journey to Egypt

You will trace the events in the life of Jacob's son Joseph and learn how God brings about good in situations that seem hopeless. We call this God's providence. You will learn how God's providence helps us to be hopeful and encourages us to look beyond the difficulties of the present. You will also learn how Christians have come to see the people and events in the Old Testament as hints of salvation that we find in Jesus Christ.

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Centering

- Ask for a volunteer to take a "trust walk."

I would like someone to take a walk with me. You will be blindfolded, but I promise I will lead you carefully and make sure no harm comes to you. You will have to believe what I say and trust that I will keep my promises.

- Lead the volunteer on a trust walk.

Blindfold the student and gently turn him or her around two or three times. Lead the student around the room. Then remove the blindfold and ask the student how he or she felt during the walk, whether he or she felt afraid, and why or why not. Emphasize how important it was for the blindfolded person to believe and trust.

- Explain to the students how this lesson relates to what they learned about in the previous unit.

You have learned that God promised to have mercy on the human race after the first sin. Today you will meet the person who began the fulfillment of this promise. His entire life was like a trust walk.

- Invite volunteers to read aloud **God Forms a Family of Faith** on page 38.

Sharing

1. Have the students read independently and discuss **God's Call and Abram's Response** on page 39.

♦ **Read the first paragraph.** [Pause.]

Why do you think the ancient people worshiped the forces of nature? (Possible answers: Nature is powerful, as a god should be. The ancient people did not see how the forces of nature worked, so they thought these forces were controlled by unseen gods.)

♦ **Why didn't these people know the one true God?** (God wasn't yet fully revealed to them.)

♦ **Read the rest of the section. What did God ask Abram to do?** (leave his father's home and his country and travel to Canaan)

♦ **Until this time Abram didn't know much about God, who was just beginning to reveal himself.**

♦ **In those days moving was not easy. For Abram it meant traveling with his whole household, which included relatives, servants, and the families of those who traveled with him. It meant moving flocks of animals, household goods, clothes, and weapons. There were no moving vans, no maps, and no roads as we know them. Moving was difficult and dangerous. Also, Abram was no longer a young man. How old was Abram?** (seventy-five)

♦ **Why did Abram's move require faith?** (Possible answers: He didn't know the land to which God directed him or the people who lived there. The journey would be long a difficult.)

♦ **What would his spiritual journey lead him to?** (a deeper and clearer faith in the one true God)

CHAPTER

6

Abraham Is Our Father in Faith

God's Call and Abram's Response

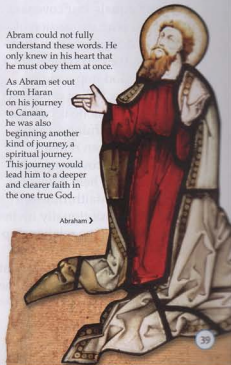
based on Genesis 12

Have you ever been in awe of the power of the sea, the beauty of sunlight, or the strength of the wind? Many centuries before the coming of Christ, people wondered about these things. Nature impressed them greatly. Each element was a mystery to them. Many people worshipped the forces of nature as their gods. They offered prayers and sacrifices to these gods. They did not know the one true God. Faith is a supernatural gift of God that helps people to believe in him.

In those times lived a man named Abram. God chose to reveal himself to the world through Abram. Early in his life, Abram had traveled with his family and relatives from Ur in Chaldea to Haran. There he settled as a shepherd. One day, when Abram was seventy-five years old, God called him to make a journey to the distant, unknown land of Canaan.

God said to Abram:

"Leave your country, your family, and your father's house for the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name so famous that it will be used as a blessing."



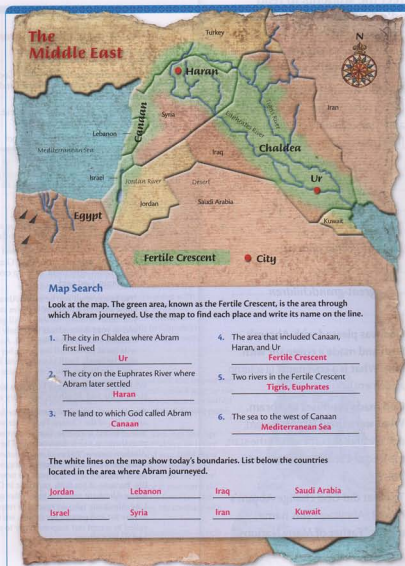
Abraham

39

2. Have the students complete the activity **Map Search** on page 40.

- ♦ **What area does the map show?** (the Middle East in the time of Abram)
- ♦ **What is the shaded area?** (the Fertile Crescent)
- ♦ **Why do you think it is called the Fertile Crescent?** (Guide the students to the following response: Fertile, because the soil there is rich and crops grow well; crescent, because of its shape—something like a quarter moon)
- ♦ **Why do you think this area is so fertile?** (Guide the students to the following response: The Tigris and Euphrates rivers flow through it.)
- ♦ **Find Ur, where Abram originally lived. From Ur, where did Abram move?** (Haran) **Locate it.**
- ♦ **Where did God ask Abram to go next?** (Canaan) **Abram probably settled somewhere between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.**
- ♦ **Which countries now exist in the area where Abraham traveled?** (Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait)

- ♦ **What events in the news are related to any of these areas?** (Answers will vary.)
- ♦ Use the following information to explain how this region of the world is predominantly Islamic:
- ♦ **Judaism, Christianity, and Islam consider Abraham to be an important person. Islam was established by the prophet Mohammed, who founded the first Islamic community around 610 A.D. in Mecca, which is now Saudi Arabia. In addition to professing the faith of Abraham and adoring the one God, Muslims revere Jesus as a prophet and honor his mother Mary; they prize the moral life; they worship God through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. There are five duties (often called pillars) by which Muslims live:**



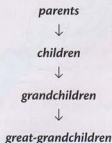
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1. faith in one God
2. formal prayer five times a day
3. giving alms to the poor
4. fasting during the month of Ramadan from daybreak to sunset
5. a pilgrimage to Mecca once in one's lifetime, if possible.

- ♦ Point out that Islam is a religion of peace and that people who claim to kill in the name of Islam distort the message of Islam for political reasons. Explain that throughout history, some Christians have also distorted the message of the Gospel in order to commit violence for political reasons.

3. Direct the students to read **God's Covenant with Abram** on page 41.

- Have the students underline each promise that God makes to Abram.
- What is meant by descendants?** (A person's children, their children, and their children's children) [Illustrate on the board.]



- God was pleased with Abram's faith and made a covenant with him. What is a covenant?** (a solemn agreement)
- God made promises to Abram. What were they?** (a great reward, descendants as numerous as the stars, the land of Canaan, a son named Isaac)
- To what did God change Abram's name?** (Abraham) **This name means "Father of Many Nations."**
- To what was Sarah's name changed?** (Sarah) **In ancient times, names not only identified a person, but they told what kind of individual that person was. A change in a name meant a change in the person.**
- In which important ceremonies might people change their names today?** (at confirmation, marriage, and religious profession) **Why do people change their names for these ceremonies?** (Possible answer: to signify that they are new people)
- As a sign of this covenant, Abram and all his male descendants were to be circumcised.** [If the students ask about circumcision, explain that it is the cutting of a fold of skin on the penis. This operation is done on all Jewish male infants in

God's Covenant with Abram

adapted from Genesis 15, 17

After Abram's arrival in Canaan, God continued to strengthen his trust and confidence. God said to him:

"Fear not, Abram! I am your shield; your reward will be very great."

Abram believed God, but he did not understand how all of God's promises could happen. He told God his problem:

"O Lord God, what good will your gifts be? You have given me no offspring, so one of my servants will be my heir."

God took Abram outside and said:

"Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can, just so shall your descendants be."

Abram again believed God, and God was pleased with Abram's faith. Then God made a very solemn agreement, called a **covenant**, with Abram. God said:

"No longer shall you be called Abram; your name shall be **Abraham**, for I am making you father of many nations. I will give to you and to your descendants the whole land of Canaan, and I will be their God. As for your wife Sarah, do not call her Sarai; her name shall be Sarah. I will bless her, and I will give you a son by her. You shall call him Isaac."

Within a year Sarah gave birth to a son, even though she and Abraham were very old.

Abraham was the first patriarch, or father and ruler, of the Chosen People. He was the man selected to receive God's promises and pass them on to his descendants. The name **Abraham** means "father of many nations." Abraham's and Sarah's name changes were signs that they were beginning a new way of life. Because of his faith and trust in God, we honor Abraham with the title **Father of Believers**. Like Abraham, who accepted his responsibility to care for and protect his family, we too are called to accept our responsibility to care for and protect others.



In God We Trust

We are believers. Because Abraham is truly our father in faith, we are called to express our faith as he did with prompt obedience and wholehearted generosity. We are also called to recognize that as a family of faith, we are all brothers and sisters. If we live this way, then we will be open to receiving the blessings that God has promised to those who love him. When we place our trust in God as Abraham did, we are living the First Commandment, which calls us to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him above all else.



Abraham Is Our Father in Faith CHAPTER 6 41

a religious ceremony. Today, it is also done on many non-Jewish male infants.]

- How did God begin to fulfill his covenant?** (Sarah and Abraham had a son, Isaac.)
- As the father and ruler of the Chosen People, Abraham has a special title. What is it?** (Patriarch)
- Isaac was the first of Abraham's descendants—those who descended from the family of Abraham.**
- Why is Abraham called the "Father of Believers"?** (because of his faith and trust in God)

4. Invite a volunteer to read **aloud In God We Trust** on page 41.

Family and Community

Which commandment calls us to believe in God and to place our trust in him alone? (the First Commandment)

5. Direct the students to read **Our Covenant with God** on page 42.

- ✦ **Just as Abraham made a journey of faith, so do we. When did we begin our faith journey?** (at Baptism)
- ✦ **Through our parents and godparents, what did we promise God at our Baptism?** (to renounce Satan, to believe in God, to live as Catholic Christians)
- ✦ **How do we renew our covenant with God and grow in our relationship with him?** (by praying, celebrating the sacraments, and giving witness to our faith in Christlike words and actions)
- ✦ **What are some examples of witnessing to your faith?** (Possible answers: doing good works, helping to spread Jesus' message)

6. Have the students work independently on the activity **Keeping the Covenant** on page 42.

Think how you can witness your faith today. Write something you will do to live out your covenant with God. The answer is between you and God.

7. As they work, play a recording of a song that expresses the relationship of Abraham and God.

Acting

1. Invite a volunteer to read aloud **A Moment with Jesus** on page 42. Allow time for the students to pray quietly before concluding the session.
2. Have the students enter the terms *patriarch*, *covenant*, *Abraham*, *Chosen People*, and *Canaan* into the vocabulary section of their journey logs.

Our Covenant with God

We are free to believe in God. We are also free not to believe in God. Faith is a gift given freely by God, which we can accept or reject. God made a covenant with us when we were baptized. He promises to give us eternal life if we believe in him and live according to those beliefs. In return, we promise to renounce Satan, to believe in God, and to live as Catholic Christians.



Baptism was the beginning of our journey of faith. We make this journey with God and with the whole Christian community. On the way, we live out our baptismal covenant with God and grow in our relationship with him and with one another. We do this whenever we pray, give witness to our faith in Christlike words and actions, or celebrate the sacraments.

A Moment with Jesus

In Baptism, you were given the gift of faith and entered into a new life with Christ. Take a moment to thank Jesus for the gift of your Baptism. Ask him to help you to remain faithful to God's law of love. Pray the words of the following psalm:

I will celebrate your love forever, LORD. Age after age my words shall proclaim your faithfulness; for I claim that love is built to last forever and your faithfulness founded firmly in the heavens. Happy the people who learn to acclaim you LORD, they will live in the light of your favor; they will rejoice in your name all day and exult in your righteousness. Once you said, "I will keep my love for him always. My covenant with him stands firm."

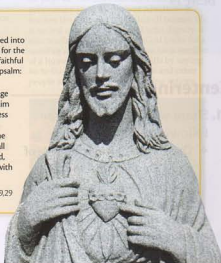
adapted from Psalm 89:3-275-16,19,29

42 UNIT 2 God Forms a Family of Faith

Keeping the Covenant

Write something you will do to live out your baptismal covenant with God. The Holy Spirit, who helps us believe, will assist you.





CHECKPOINT

- Were the learning outcomes achieved?
- Do the students show a desire to respond to their baptismal covenant and to witness their faith?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The students will be able to

- explain that God asks for the sacrifice of our wills.
- describe Abraham's faith and obedience in being willing to sacrifice his only son.
- evaluate their own ability to practice obedience.

Word to Know

sacrifice

See the Glossary for definition.

Materials

- bean bag
- BLM 19

Centering

1. Share with the students the following story:

- ♦ **Once, a man fell over the side of a cliff. On the way down, he managed to grab hold of a tree that was growing out of the side of the cliff. Dangling from the branch, he called out, "Help!" Finally he heard a reply, "This is God. I'll help you. Just let go."** The man paused a while and thought. Then he shouted, "Is there anyone else up there?"
- ♦ **Why didn't the man do as God told him?** (He didn't trust God.)

2. Ask the students to tell about times when they were asked to trust someone or to trust God in a difficult situation, and everything turned out all right.

- Puzzle on the board (for Sharing #5):

L _ _ _ _
 I _ _ _ _ _
 F _ _ _ _
 E _ _ _ _ _

Before You Begin

1. We see the idea of obedience repeated over and over in the Bible. For many of us, this can be a difficult virtue to understand because we tend to associate obedience with a robot-like submission to someone who issues random orders. The word *obedient* actually comes from a Latin word that means "to hear or to listen to." In the Old Testament,

God called his people to listen to his loving voice and to be faithful—obedient—to the Covenant. In the New Testament, Jesus' whole life was one of obedience to the will of his Father. Saint Paul tells us in his Letter to the Philippians, that Jesus "humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross." (2:8)

2. The skit *Abraham's Sacrifice* on page 44, which is to be read in Sharing #4, can be dramatized or mimed. Consider assigning roles before class and allowing time for the students to practice prior to the teaching of this lesson.

3. Recall Abraham's faith.

How was Abraham like the man in the story? (Possible answers: Abraham had to trust God as he obeyed God's call to journey to an unknown land. He had to trust God to keep God's promise to give him many descendants even though he and Sarah were too old to have children.) **Today you will study how God put Abraham's faith to a supreme test.**

4. Review the last session.

- ♦ Toss a bean bag to a student and ask him or her one of the following questions. Then have that student toss the beanbag to someone else to answer the next question. Continue until all questions have been answered.
- ♦ **What is a patriarch?** (the father or ruler of a Jewish tribe)

- ♦ **Who was the first person to whom God revealed himself as the one true God?** (Abram)
- ♦ **To what did God change Abram's name?** (Abraham)
- ♦ **What land did God promise Abram?** (Canaan)
- ♦ **How many descendants did God promise Abram?** (as many as the stars)
- ♦ **Who was Abraham's wife?** (Sarah)
- ♦ **Why was the promise of a son to Abraham so remarkable?** (he and Sarah were very old)
- ♦ **What do we call an agreement between God and a person or group?** (a covenant)
- ♦ **What virtue did Abraham especially show?** (faith)
- ♦ **Who was the son of Abraham and Sarah?** (Isaac)

Sharing

- Guide the students in reading **A Challenge to Abraham's Faith** on page 43.
 - Read the first three paragraphs independently. [Pause.] Why was Abraham's life difficult after he left Haran? (He had to adjust to a new land and a new people.)
 - How did the Canaanites worship their god? (They offered their firstborn child in sacrifice for abundant crops and herds and for blessings on their families.)
 - Read the rest of the section independently. [Pause.] Why would it be difficult for Abraham to sacrifice his son? (Possible answers: Isaac was the son of Abraham's old age. Abraham loved Isaac very much. If Isaac were killed, it would seem that God would not keep the promise to Abraham of many descendants.)
 - The main lesson of this chapter is that God looks for the sacrifice of our wills rather than for human sacrifice.
- Clarify the meaning of sacrifice of will.
 - Share with the students the following situations and ask: Did [name] sacrifice his or her will? How? If not, what should he or she have done? Invite the students to suggest other incidents.
 - Alexis received an invitation to a sleepover at Julie's house. Before Alexis had a chance to tell her parents about the invitation, they told her that they planned an evening out on the same night as the sleepover. Alexis knew that her parents would expect her to baby-sit her younger brothers, which meant she'd miss the sleepover. She was disappointed but knew how much her parents were looking forward to their night out. She quickly told them, "You won't have to worry about the boys and me. We'll be fine."

A Challenge to Abraham's Faith

based on Genesis 22

When Abraham accepted God's call to leave Haran for Canaan, he did not know what the future would hold. God had chosen him, and that was enough.

Abraham's journey to Canaan meant a new beginning. He had to leave his homeland and his friends. He had to adjust to a new land and a new people. It was a great risk. When he first went to Canaan, his knowledge of God was limited. In the years that followed, Abraham came to know God better. He expressed his faith in God and looked for ways to worship and serve him more generously.

Abraham saw how the Canaanites worshiped. They knew that life was mysterious and they believed that it had to be a gift from a powerful being. To honor this unknown source of life,



the Canaanites followed a practice in which they killed their firstborn children in a religious sacrifice. They did this in petition for abundant crops, for strong herds, and for blessings on their families.

When Isaac was born, Abraham might have wondered if God expected him to sacrifice his son the way the Canaanites sacrificed their children. Sacrificing Isaac seemed impossible for Abraham. He loved Isaac, the son of his old age. And if he sacrificed Isaac, how would God keep his promise of making him the father of many descendants? Even so, Abraham was ready to do anything for God.



A Story of Trust

The story of Abraham's trust in and love of God at this time in his life is told in the skit on page 44. The story has been told for many generations since the time of Abraham. It teaches the Chosen People that all human life is sacred and must be treated with dignity. It also teaches that the one true God looks for a sacrifice of our wills rather than for the sacrifice of a human. We sacrifice our wills by saying no to things that would harm us and other people and by saying yes to loving actions.



Abraham Is Our Father in Faith CHAPTER 6 43

- Tyler was stretched out on his bed, enjoying the most recent issue of his favorite sports magazine. After a few minutes, he heard his mother calling his name. He knew that she probably had an errand for him to do. He called back, "I'll be there in a minute, Mom," but he continued to read his magazine.
- Invite a volunteer to read aloud **A Story of Trust** on page 43. **Life and Dignity** What are some examples of ways that we might sacrifice our wills? (by saying no to things that would harm us and others; by saying yes to loving actions)

4. If you have not already done so, ask for volunteers to read each part of the skit **Abraham's Sacrifice** on page 44. Have volunteers read aloud or perform the skit for the class.

- ◆ **How do we know that God was only testing Abraham's faith?** (An angel stopped Abraham before he killed his son.)
- ◆ **What sacrifice had Abraham made even before he reached the mountaintop?** (The sacrifice of his own will.)
- ◆ **God rewarded Abraham for his obedience with a promise of blessings. Would someone read aloud the lines of the skit that contain these blessings?**
- ◆ **At Mass, in the Eucharistic Prayer, we pray that God will accept our offerings as he accepted "the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith."**
- ◆ **In what ways was Isaac like Jesus?** (Possible answers: He was to be sacrificed on a mountain; he carried the wood for his sacrifice; he accepted the will of his father.)
- ◆ **Why was Abraham rewarded?** (because of his faith)
- ◆ **How was Isaac a patriarch?** (God's promises were passed on through Isaac and his descendants.)

5. Direct the students to complete the puzzle on the board:

This puzzle can be filled in with words that describe Abraham's virtues. Invite volunteers to write the answers in the puzzle. (Answers: love, sacrifice, faith, obedience)

times when they were asked to trust someone or to trust God in a difficult situation, and everything turned out all right.

Abraham's Sacrifice

based on Genesis 22

Characters God Isaac Abraham Angel Narrator

Narrator: Abraham had lived for many years in friendship with God. One day God called him.

God: Abraham, Abraham, where are you?

Abraham: Here I am, Lord.

God: Abraham, take your son Isaac and go to the land of Moriah. When you arrive, go to the mountain I point out to you and offer Isaac to me as a burnt-offering sacrifice.

Narrator: Although Abraham was saddened by God's command, he rose early the next morning. He saddled his donkey and went out with Isaac and two servants. On the third day of travel, Abraham saw the appointed place in the distance and spoke to his servants.

Abraham: Stay here with the donkey while Isaac and I go to the mountaintop to worship.

Narrator: Isaac carried the wood on his back. Abraham carried the flint and knife as they set off.

Isaac: Father, we have the knife, flint, and wood, but where is the sheep for the sacrifice?

Abraham: God will provide the sheep for the sacrifice, Isaac.



Jacques Tissot, Isaac Bears the Wood for his Sacrifice.

Narrator: When they reached the top of the mountain, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. He then tied up his son and put him on top of the wood. Just as Abraham reached out and took the knife to kill Isaac, an angel of God called out:

Angel: Abraham, stop! Do not harm Isaac, for now I know you fear God. You have not refused him your son.

Narrator: With great relief Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a nearby bush. Abraham knew that God did not want him to sacrifice Isaac. He took the ram and offered it in place of his son. Abraham had responded to God's command with faith, because of his generous obedience, the Lord made this promise to him.

God: I swear by myself—it is Yahweh who speaks—because you have done this, because you have not refused me your only son, I will shower blessings on you. I will make your descendants as many as the stars in the heavens and the sands of the seashore. In them all nations of the earth shall find blessing—all this because you obeyed my command.

Narrator: By not allowing Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, God taught his Chosen People that he did not want human sacrifice. He also showed that those who believe and trust in him are rewarded with abundant blessings. Abraham's faith in God was shown in his trust. God had led him to a new land, chosen him to be the father of his people, and given him a son. Abraham knew that God loved him, and he trusted in God's goodness. God rewarded Abraham's faith and trust with a renewal of his promises.

Isaac would later marry Rebekah and have two sons. To them he would pass on the promises of God that he had received from Abraham.


Eventually a descendant of Abraham would be the Savior of the world. Through him all nations would be blessed.

44 UNIT 2 God Forms a Family of Faith

Acting

1. **BLM 19** Direct the students to use BLM 19 **How Am I Like My Father Abraham?** as an examination of conscience.

Tell the students to answer truthfully. Encourage them to consider ways they might improve.

2.  End by inviting the students to pray the Our Father, emphasizing the words "thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven."

CHECKPOINT

- Were the learning outcomes achieved?
- Do the students realize how great Abraham's faith was?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The students will be able to

- review key concepts from the chapter.
- identify prayer as a primary way to express faith.
- work cooperatively in small groups.

Key Terms

communal prayer—praying with a group or community using the same prayer

private prayer—praying by one's self in various forms or types of prayer

Materials

- BLM 20
- Large paper stars, one for each student
- String and paper clips or tape (optional)
- Prayer song for Acting #2, such as “Find Us Ready” from *Spirit and Song*, Vol. 3

Before you Begin

Abraham's response to God was one of perfect faith, a faith shown through true worship and prompt obedience. Guide the students to understand that because we believe in God, we try to communicate with God through prayer.

CHAPTER
6

Summary

We Remember

What does true faith in God lead to?

True faith in God leads to complete trust in his goodness and prompt obedience to his call.

What did God promise Abraham?

God promised Abraham land and many descendants. He promised that all nations would be blessed through him.

What does it mean to sacrifice our wills?

It means that we say no to things that would harm us or other people and say yes to loving actions.

Words to Know

Abraham covenant sacrifice



Things to Do at Home

- Share with your family the story of Abraham. Search about him can be found in Genesis 13:1–13 and Genesis 18:20–33. What do you learn about Abraham from these accounts?
 - Work with your family to list qualities that make a good and loyal friend. Talk about which of these qualities Abraham showed in his relationship with God. Discuss which qualities you show toward your friends and family.
 - Abraham was a man of faith who responded to God's call with generosity and prompt obedience. Ask your family members to tell
- about times when they each were called upon to practice great faith.
- Make a covenant with a member of your family. Each of you should agree to do a certain favor for the other. After a few days, check to see how well each person has kept his or her part. How is your covenant similar to the covenant between God and Abram? How is it different?
 - Write the story of Abraham and Isaac as seen through Sarah's eyes. Share your story with your family.

Visit www.christianlife.org/family for more family resources.

45

Centering

- Guide students to make a connection to the last session by allowing time for them to complete the Summary and the Review activities, pages 45–46. Help students understand how these activities relate to the discussion during the previous session.
- Distribute the stars and have the students write on them a prayer Abraham might have said.
Abraham had no prayer formulas or printed prayers. He prayed from his heart. On one side of the star, write a few lines that Abraham might have said when he spoke to God.
- Invite volunteers to share their prayers.
Today you will see how we express our faith through prayer, a form of worship.

Sharing

- Divide the class into small groups.
Appoint leaders or have each group select its own. Assign each group a meeting area.
- BLM 20** Pass out copies of **BLM 20 Expressing Faith through Prayer**.
Have small groups do the following:
 - Independently read the first column.
 - Cooperatively answer questions 1 to 8.
 - Discuss questions 9 and 10. Be prepared to present a summary of this discussion to the class.
 - Be able to explain the terms at the bottom of the page.
- As a class, brainstorm a few principles for the groups to observe in order to make their work time profitable.
Write these on the board. Direct the groups to take their places and begin.
- Have the class reassemble.
Have volunteers from each group answer the questions. The answers should include the following:
 - By giving attention to God; offering all that we have; trusting God's goodness; listening to God's inspirations of grace
 - Praying by ourselves; morning prayer, night prayer, prayer at other times
 - Praying in a group; public worship, as at Mass; celebrating the sacraments
 - When we celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation
 - The Creed
 - By saying "Amen" to "Body of Christ"
 - The Sacrament of Confirmation
 - When we are sincere and honest in our prayer
 - Answers will vary. Possible answers: to show my faith in God, to ask God's help, to gain strength to carry out God's will
 - Agree. The body needs air to live. The soul needs prayer because through prayer we grow in grace, which is the life of the soul.

CHAPTER 6 Review

The Man of Faith Use the clues below to write the missing letters in the puzzle.

Across

- We enter into a covenant with God when we are _____.
- Abraham was willing to _____ his son to God.
- A solemn agreement in which people make a promise is called a _____.
- Abraham was the first and greatest _____ of the Chosen People.

Down

- _____ was the wife of Abraham.
- _____ was Abraham's son, who carried on the covenant with God.
- We honor Abraham as the Father of _____.
- God called Abraham to _____ and promised this land to his descendants.



Promises, Promises List four promises that God made to Abraham.

1. Abraham would be the father of many nations and have descendants as numerous as the stars or the sands on the shore.

2. He and Sarah would have a son.

3. All the nations would be blessed through him.

4. He would be given a land (Canaan). God would always be with him.

Bonus Name two ways in which Isaac was like Jesus.

1. Isaac was his father's only son. He was called to be sacrificed.

2. He carried the wood on which he was to be sacrificed. He humbly submitted to his father.

David Teniers the Younger, Abraham giving thanks for having spared his son Isaac, 1653.

46



- Work with the class to evaluate how well the groups observed the principles and standards that were established for cooperative group work.

Acting

- Direct the students to write their own prayers on the other side of the stars. The stars can be hung from the ceiling or arranged on the bulletin board to spell the word **FAITH**.
- Have the students sing or listen to a prayer song.
- At the end of class, have the students tear out and take home pages 45–46.

CHECKPOINT

- Were the learning outcomes achieved?
- Do the students understand the importance of prayer?
- Can the students identify different ways to pray and why each way is important?
- Do the students seem more determined to pray as a sign of faith?

Day Four Faith Expressed Through Sacrifice

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The students will be able to

- explain that faith is expressed by sacrifice and service.
- identify opportunities for sacrifice and service.
- demonstrate an understanding of the key concepts in this chapter.

Materials

- Bibles
- BLM 21
- BLM 22, Chapter 6 Quiz
- CD player or similar inexpensive electronic music device with dead batteries or no batteries (optional)
- Witness song for Sharing #5, such as “Speak, Lord” from *Child of God*

Centering

Illustrate the necessity of a power source to make something work effectively.

- ♦ **Suppose you receive as a gift a new electronic music device, such as a CD player or an MP3 player.** [If one is available, demonstrate with a CD player or other inexpensive example.] **You try to listen to your favorite music—and nothing happens. What’s wrong?** (Possible answers: There aren’t any batteries in it or the batteries are dead. It needs to be plugged in or charged.)

- Song for Acting #3, such as “Here I Am Lord” from *Here I Am, Lord*
- Journey logs

Before You Begin

1. St. James tells us that faith without good works is dead. The questions “what makes us holy?” and “can I make myself holy through good works?” have long been debated. This debate was at the heart of the Protestant Reformation. However, in 1999, in a Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, Catholics and Lutherans came to agreement on the following understanding of *justification* (that which makes us holy): “Together we confess: by grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our

part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping us and calling us to good works.” To be *justified* is to be saved, vindicated, and made righteous through God’s grace. St. James’ point is well taken—faith and good works cannot be separated.

2. In this lesson the students read the letter of St. James and try to apply his message about faith and good works. They conclude the lesson with a witness service and prayer for the strength to truly live their faith.
3. When planning today’s lesson, keep in mind that Day Four is when the students take the quiz for this chapter. Reserve time at the end of class for this assessment. The quiz can also be administered on Day Five.

- ♦ **What has to be done before it will work properly?** (Put new batteries in; plug it in or charge it.)
- ♦ **Our faith is like that music player. It needs a source of power to make it effective. In our last lesson, we discussed one source of power. Do you remember what it was? (prayer) Today we will consider another source of power that keeps our faith working.**

Sharing

- Have the students read in their Bibles what the apostle James had to say about faith (James 2:14-24).
 - ✦ It isn't enough to express our faith through prayer and worship. We must live it. St. James the Apostle wrote a letter to the early Christian communities about this. Find James 2:14-24 and silently read what he had to say. [Pause] What would you say the main idea of James's letter is? (Faith without good works is dead.)
 - ✦ James tells the early Christians, and us, that faith is expressed not only by believing but also by doing. Everything we do, if it is done with the intention of pleasing God, can be an act of obeying. We can express our faith by obeying God's command to love one another as God has loved us. That command means that God expects us to be willing to sacrifice our own plans and ideas, to sacrifice our very selves if necessary, to bring God's love and goodness to others.
- Discuss James's reference to Abraham's sacrifice.
 - ✦ What does James say about Abraham and his sacrifice? (Faith and deeds were working together; faith became perfect by his action.)
 - ✦ As with Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac, the opportunity to sacrifice may be a test of our faith—a challenge to prove that we really mean what we say in our prayers.
- Recall that Jesus gives the most perfect example of sacrifice.
 - ✦ Sacrifice is another way to express our faith—to help us live it. Who gave the best example of sacrifice? (Jesus Christ)

God's help, to gain strength to carry out God's will.

- Agree: The body needs us to live. The soul needs power because through power we grow in grace, which is the life of the soul.

- ✦ Jesus was always ready to do his Father's will—at any time and in any place: at Bethlehem, Nazareth, the Last Supper, in the Garden of Gethsemane, on Calvary. In fact, he told us he was born to do his Father's will. The sacrifices God expects of us each day are usually small ones and may go unnoticed by others, but they seem large to us because we are giving up our own wills. Let's consider some of the opportunities we have to make sacrifices.

4. **BLM 21** Distribute copies of **BLM 21 Expressing Faith Through Sacrifice and Service.**


Have the students read aloud each situation. Ask volunteers to tell what the person should do if he or she really wants to live the faith. Some situations may be role-played.

- Hold a brief "witness" service. Ask the students to think of a time when they gave witness to their faith in ways similar to those discussed. Have them write an account of it in their journey logs. Ask for volunteers to share their experiences and to tell how they felt after they had given witness. Conduct the witness service in the following manner or adapt it specifically to your situation:
 - Play "Speak, Lord" or a similar song selected by the students.
 - Invite student "witnesses" to share their experiences.
 - Pray together the Act of Faith.
- BLM 22** Distribute and administer **BLM 22, Chapter 6 Quiz.** Use this opportunity to assess the students' understanding of the main concepts of the chapter. If there is not sufficient time for the students to complete the quiz, consider moving it to Day Five.

2. Have the students sing or listen to a prayer song.

3. At the end of class, have the students lay out and take home pages 45-46.

Acting

- Recall the words of St. James: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?" (2:14).
-  Lead the students in reflective prayer. Think about the words of James and what they should mean to you—today. [Pause] Let's ask God for the strength and courage to live our faith. [Pause for silent prayer.]
- Have the students listen to a recording of "Here I Am, Lord" from *Lord of Light* or a similar song.

CHECKPOINT



- Were the learning outcomes achieved?
- How do the students react to situations that call for sacrifice?

Can the students identify different ways to pray and why each way is important?

- Do the students weigh more on themselves to pray as a sign of faith?


Day Five Extending the Chapter

Use the following activities to create an additional lesson for Day Five, to enrich a lesson, or to replace an activity with one that better meets the needs of your class.

1. If you haven't already done so, remind the students to take home pages 45–46 to share what they have learned with their families.
2. Incorporate any unused BLMs from the week's chapter.
3. Consider the time of the liturgical year and use the appropriate Special Seasons and Lessons. SSLs begin on page T335.
4. Visit www.christourlife.org to find additional activities for Extending the Chapter.
5. Use activities from Enriching the Faith Experience.
6. Guide the students in a prayerful discussion of Sunday's Scripture readings. Visit www.christourlife.org for more information.

Chapter 6 Enriching the Faith Experience

Use the following activities to enrich a lesson or to replace an activity with one that better meets the needs of your class.

1. **Web BLM** Use Web BLM Chapter 6-A **Getting Better Acquainted with Your Forefather** (available at ChristOurLife.org) to extend the students' knowledge of Abraham.
2. **Web BLM** Review the story of Abraham through the choral poem on the Web BLM Chapter 6-B **Our Father Abraham** (available at ChristOurLife.org).
3. Have the students find in the Bible the following verses to learn what Jesus said about faith. Have them write a summary of each verse in their journey logs.
Matthew 6:30 Matthew 14:31
Matthew 7:11 Matthew 16:16
Matthew 8:26 Matthew 21:21
Matthew 9:22 John 3:36
Matthew 9:29 John 14:12
4. Direct the students to write a news article or present a news report on the travels of Abram. Assign them to work independently or in two teams, to write either about Abram's leaving Haran in the *Haran Herald* or about his arrival in Canaan in the *Canaan Chronicle*. Students should include some basic facts in both presentations but from different points of view.
5. Have the students create an acrostic for the story of Abraham and Isaac, using the word *sacrifice*. Instruct them to write the puzzle on one side of a sheet of paper and the answers on the other side. Allow time for the students to exchange puzzles and work them out.
6. Direct the students to write journal entries describing the sacrifice of Isaac before, during, and after the event. They can write as Abraham, Sarah, or Isaac.
7. Have each student choose a saint that he or she does not know much about. Allow time for the students to research their saints and to write short reports about how their saints lived their faith and sacrificed their wills. Invite students to present their reports to the class.
8.  Have the students work together in groups to make a list of people (professions) who have responsibility to care for and protect the needs of others. Have them report to the class and make a list on the board. Remind the students that Abraham accepted the responsibility of caring for and protecting his family. Then brainstorm as a class ways that the students are showing or can show responsibility for caring for others.
*** Rights and Responsibilities**