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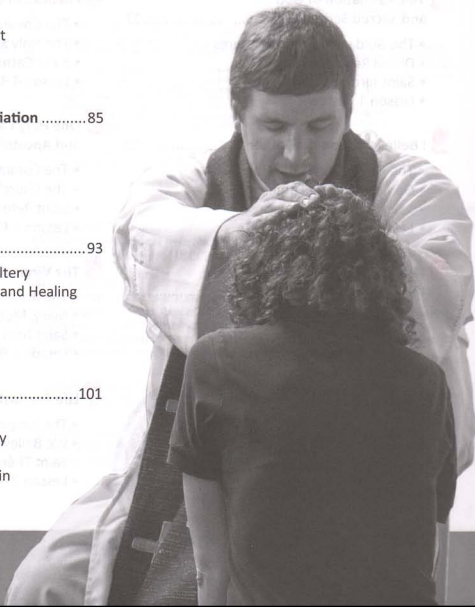
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Two-sided pullout poster features a timeline of Church history events from the birth of Jesus through the election of Pope Benedict XVI, placed in the context of world history events from the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem to the election of the first African-American U.S. president.



Lesson 2

I Believe in God the Father

A Prayer of Praise

O LORD, our Lord,
how awesome is your name above all the earth!
You have set your majesty above the heavens!
What are humans that you are mindful of them,
mere mortals that you should care for them?
—Psalm 8:2, 5

LESSON



Live It Out

God is our loving Father who looks after all our needs. How does a loving father care for his children? How do you live your life in a way that welcomes God as your loving Father?

CATECHIST BACKGROUND

From the beginning of salvation history, God revealed himself as paternal, rejoicing in the splendor of Creation and grieved by the sins of his children. It is with the Incarnation that he reveals himself truly to be the eternal Father, in relation to his only Son. With the sending of the Holy Spirit, God allows us to see him as he is: Three Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – in one God. (CCC, 238, 240, 370)

LEARNING GOALS

To understand that

- the Blessed Trinity is one God in Three Divine Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- God the Father is our loving Creator.
- in the Old Testament, God gradually revealed himself to his people in deeds and in words.

MATERIALS

Saintly Profiles Optional Activity

- Drawing paper
- Crayons and markers

✝ A PRAYER OF PRAISE

- Invite the young people to stand for the opening prayer.
- Begin with the Sign of the Cross. Explain that today's prayer comes from the Book of Psalms, and that it expresses praise for God.
- Invite the group to join together in praying aloud.

Live It Out

Help the young people prepare for the lesson with time for quiet reflection. Invite them to silently read "Live It Out" and respond to the reflection questions.



SACRED SCRIPTURE

Read aloud the introductory paragraph on page 26. Explain to the group that in this Gospel passage, Jesus is telling the disciples about the Holy Spirit, who will guide them always.

THE READING

Tell the young people that they will now hear a reading from the Gospel of John. Explain that this passage is one they would hear at Mass.

While acknowledging the uniqueness of the Liturgy, you may wish to have the Scripture read in a way resembling the Liturgy of the Word at Mass. Invite a volunteer to come forward to proclaim the reading, and to conclude by saying, "The Gospel of the Lord." To this, have the group respond, "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ."

Lead the group in discussing the Scripture. Ask:

- What name does Jesus use for the Holy Spirit? (*the Advocate*)
- Whose word does Jesus say he is teaching? (*the Father who sent him*)
- Jesus said, "Whoever loves me will keep my word." What are some challenges to keeping Jesus' word, and how can we overcome them? (*Possible answers: social pressures, temptations presented by the media, and apathy. We can overcome such challenges through prayer and by focusing on what truly brings us happiness.*)



If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always.

The Father Sends the Holy Spirit

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus makes repeated references to God the Father, who calls us to share in eternal glory with him. In the following Scripture reading, Jesus tells his disciples that he will ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to those who believe in him.



Trinity, Andrei Rublev, 1411
(tempera on panel, Moscow)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always. Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me.

"I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you."

—John 14:15–16, 23–25

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FYI – Parish Ministries

Lectors

Explain to the group that at Mass, the Gospel that they heard in today's lesson would be read by the priest celebrating Mass or by a deacon, if one is assisting the priest. However, the First and Second Readings are read by the lector. The lector must prayerfully prepare for proclaiming God's Word, so that all who hear it may be enlightened by it. Encourage the young people to use their talents to enrich their parish by volunteering to serve as a lectors or in another parish ministry.

START LIVING



When Jesus speaks to his disciples about the relationship they are to have with him and with God the Father, he tells them that God will be with those who follow his commandments and will provide to them all the help they need.

Describe one way that you try to live according to God's commandments, and one way that God helps you to do so.

Offer the young people suggestions such as "Respecting my parents and teachers" and "God can help me through prayer."

The guidance that God gives us to live according to his commandments often comes through people in our lives. Identify two people in your life who help you live as a follower of Jesus and at least one way that you can be more open to guidance from these people.

Person who helps me follow Jesus

Ways I can be more open to this person's guidance



Stop and Think

Choose a phrase from the Scripture reading that can guide you in how you live your life. What is its message for you?

Accept all reasonable responses.

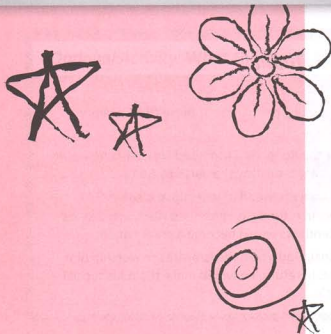
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START LIVING

Read aloud the introduction. Then direct the young people to silently read the first reflection and write their responses. Have them complete the chart in response to the next reflection. When everyone has finished, invite volunteers to share their responses.

Have the group read the instructions for **Stop and Think**. Invite volunteers to suggest possible phrases and to explain why these might inspire them to trust God.

You might consider having the young people create bumper stickers or note cards featuring their chosen phrase. Encourage them to display these in their lockers or in a prominent place at home to remind them of Jesus' message.





OUR CATHOLIC TRADITION

Read aloud the quote at the top of page 28. Engage the group in a brief discussion of what this statement means.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the first three paragraphs on page 28. Tell the young people that they will learn about God the Father, the First Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Reinforce what has been read with these questions:

- With which Old Testament people did God establish covenants? (*Adam and Eve, Noah, and Abraham*)
- Who taught us to look upon God as our loving Father? (*Jesus*)
- Who are the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity? (*God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit*)
- When did God first show his love for us? (*when he created the universe*)

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the last paragraph. Ask:

- What is the central mystery of our Christian faith? (*the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, one God in Three Divine Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*)



OUR CATHOLIC TRADITION

As the deer longs for streams of water,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
—Psalm 42:2



Creation of Adam, Michelangelo Buonarroti, c. 1510 (fresco, Sistine Chapel, Vatican City)

God, Our Loving Father

In the Old Testament, God gradually revealed himself to his people in deeds and in words, and through the **covenants** he made with our first parents, with Noah, and with Abraham and his descendants. In the New Testament we learn that it is in Jesus, his only Son, that God the Father establishes his covenant forever.

Through Noah, Abraham, and the law God gave to his people through Moses, the Jews of the Old Testament had come to believe in the one true God. But Jesus taught his followers more about God: that he is a loving Father, who looks after all our needs. Jesus also promised us that God would send the Holy Spirit to guide us to himself. The Holy Spirit guides the Church to do the work of Christ. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are Three Divine Persons in one God, the **Blessed Trinity**.

God the Father is the First Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is our loving Creator. He alone is the Creator of the universe, which he created freely and of his own will. Although the work of Creation is attributed to God the Father, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one, and are together the source of all Creation. God's love for us is everlasting, and was first shown to us when he created the world. He created us that we may live in communion with him, and he created the universe out of love for us, so that we may share in his goodness and glory.

As Catholics, we believe in one true God in Three Divine Persons. Although this mystery of the Blessed Trinity is beyond our ability to understand, it is the central mystery of our Christian faith.

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More About...

OLD TESTAMENT COVENANTS

Tell the young people about these Old Testament covenants:

- After the flood, God promised Noah that he would never again destroy the earth by flood.
- Abraham promised to worship and serve God alone. In return, God promised Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation.
- At Sinai, God asked the Israelites to worship him alone. In return, he would make them his special people.

CATECHISM Q&A

Q. Which of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity is recognized as the Creator?

A. God the Father is recognized as the Creator, yet the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one and indivisible, and are together the source of Creation. (See *Compendium*, Question 52; CCG, 316.)

Q. What is the central mystery of our Christian faith?

A. The central mystery of our faith is the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, one God in Three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (See *Compendium*, Question 44; CCG, 261.)



Calendar Connection The Nicene Creed

WHO The Fathers of the Church

WHAT The Nicene Creed, which expresses our belief in one God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We pray the Nicene Creed at Mass every Sunday.

WHERE Nicea, in modern-day Turkey

WHEN A.D. 325, at the Council of Nicea, and at the following three Church councils

WHY To develop a way of describing the mystery of the Trinity

KNOW and BELIEVE

God is our loving Father. He has a special love for every person, and a special plan for each of us. In what ways can you be more accepting of God's plan for you and more open to following his will?

Accept all reasonable responses.

KNOW IT!

covenant
in Scriptures, a sacred
agreement between God
and his people

Blessed Trinity
the one God in Three
Divine Persons: God the
Father, God the Son, and
God the Holy Spirit

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CATECHISM Q&A

Invite the young people to silently read the Catechism Q&A. Then ask them several questions to reinforce what they have read. Suggested questions:

- Which person of the Blessed Trinity is recognized as the Creator? (*God the Father*)
- What do we mean when we say that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are indivisible? (*that they are inseparable in who they are and what they do; they are Three Divine Persons in one God*)

Refer to the *Compendium* and *Catechism* for more information on the Q&A. Locate the question or paragraph numbers noted here.

Have the young people write their responses to **Know and Believe** in the space provided. Invite volunteers to share what they have written.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the **Calendar Connection** about the Nicene Creed. Have the group turn to page 199. You may wish to have a volunteer pray aloud the Nicene Creed.

Optional Activity: What the Creed Means

Have the young people turn to page 199 of the Catholic Prayers and Devotions section for the words of the Nicene Creed. Ask them to read the words of the prayer, then to write down the phrases that reflect our belief in the Blessed Trinity. Then have volunteers share what they have written for each Person of the Trinity.

KNOW IT!

Review with the young people the meaning of the key words they have learned.

SAINTLY PROFILES

Saint Thomas Aquinas

Read aloud the introduction. Then have volunteers read aloud the story of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Following the reading, ask the group the following questions:

- Where and when was Thomas Aquinas born? (*in Italy, in 1225*)
- Which religious order did he belong to? (*the Dominicans*)
- What is the title of Thomas Aquinas's greatest work? (*The Summa Theologiae, often referred to simply as the Summa. Explain that Aquinas intended this work as a compilation of all of the important theological teachings of the time.*)
- What did Saint Thomas Aquinas say was the relationship of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity? (*He explained that the Father sends the Son, who together with the Father generates an eternal Spirit—the Holy Spirit.*)

Direct the young people to read **All About Saint Thomas Aquinas**. Point out Saint Thomas's feast day, then invite volunteers to share an interesting fact they learned from this snapshot.

SAINTLY profiles



ALL ABOUT

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

- One of the great teachers of the Catholic Church
 - Asked by Pope Gregory X to participate in the Council of Lyon (1271–1276), but died on his way there
 - Depicted in art holding a book or a church with rays of light emanating from his chest
 - Symbols: Chalice, dove, and ox (because as a young student he was nicknamed "dumb ox")
 - Canonized in 1323
 - Named a Doctor of the Church in 1567
- FEAST DAY: January 28
PATRONAGE: Catholic education

The mystery of the Blessed Trinity is beyond our human understanding. However, Saint Thomas Aquinas, one of the Church's greatest thinkers, showed that through human reason we can grow in our knowledge of God and in our faith.

Saint Thomas Aquinas 1225–1274

Thomas Aquinas was born to a noble Italian family. At the age of five his family placed him in the care of the Benedictine monks at the monastery in Monte Cassino. Thomas showed exceptional intelligence from an early age, often asking his teachers, "Who is God?" When he was seventeen, Thomas joined the Dominican order of religious, despite his family's opposition. With the Dominicans, he began his studies at the University of Paris, where he studied theology and philosophy and later was a teacher.

Thomas Aquinas was a brilliant scholar, and his writings are a great contribution to our understanding about God. He viewed theology, or the study of God, as a science, drawn from the Scriptures and Church Tradition, and believed that both faith and logic were necessary for knowing God. In his greatest work, the *Summa Theologiae*, he wrote that God is eternal and is the cause of everything in the universe, and that through human reason, he can be known with certainty from his works.

Aquinas's writings also help us understand the Blessed Trinity. He wrote that God is perfectly described by the Three Persons of the Trinity, where the Father sends the Son, who together with the Father generates an eternal Spirit—the Holy Spirit.

Optional Activity: Making Trinity Posters

- Distribute drawing paper, crayons, and markers.
- Tell the young people that they will be creating a poster that represents the Trinity. Share with the group common symbols for the Blessed Trinity, such as a shamrock or the triquetra (see page 31).
- Direct the young people to draw their chosen symbol at the center of their page and to give their posters a title related to the Blessed Trinity.
- Invite them to write a short prayer at the bottom of their poster in which they address the Three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Saint Thomas Aquinas made a great contribution to the Church by his brilliant writings, especially the *Summa Theologiae*, which showed that belief in God can be supported by faith and reason. In our own way, each of us is called to work to build up the Church.

Describe two ways in which you can build up the Church by helping others grow in their faith.

Brainstorm with the group to identify possible responses. An example is by helping out at Mass in some way, such as by being an altar server or singing in the choir.



KNOW IT!



Triquetra

This is an early Christian symbol of the Blessed Trinity. The interwoven continuity of the symbol represents the unity of the Three Persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and its arc of equal length signify their equality.

LET US PRAY

The Act of Faith
O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in Three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe that your Divine Son became man and died for our sins, and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because you have revealed them, who are eternal truth and wisdom, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. In this faith I intend to live and die. Amen.

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MAKE IT HAPPEN

Read aloud the activity instructions, then instruct the young people to write their responses in the space provided. Invite volunteers to share one of the ways they can help others grow in faith and build up the Church.

Read aloud the **Know It!** text. Ask the group if they are familiar with the symbol, and to name places where they have seen it used.

† LET US PRAY

The Act of Faith

Tell the young people that they will be praying the Act of Faith, in which we profess the central mystery of our faith, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. Invite the young people to take time for silent reflection before the prayer. Ask them to call to mind people they know who need God's help to remain strong in their faith.

Have the young people stand and pray aloud the Act of Faith.

MUSIC CONNECTIONS

The following are some suggestions for Catholic music you may choose to use during prayer, or to play quietly while the young people complete the activities or lesson review.

- "Holy Spirit, Come Now," Jesse Manibusan, *Never Too Young* #189
- "I Am," Paul Melley, *Cross Generations* #247
- "Great One in Three," Paul Tate/Paul Berrell, *Voices as One*, Vol. 1 #30

Go to faithfusion.com for information on ordering or downloading these selections.

YOUR TURN

Reviewing the Lesson

This page provides a review of the key learning goals for this lesson.

- To assess the young people's understanding of what has been taught, direct them to complete the lesson review. Allow them to look back at the pages of the lesson to find answers they cannot complete on their own.
- When everyone has finished, review together the answers to part A.
- Invite volunteers to share their responses to the questions in part B.
- Review any content that was not clearly understood.

ACRE CONNECTION

The content in this lesson correlates to the following objectives in **Domain 1: God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**:

- God's activity in human history (ongoing revelation), covenant with the Jews, salvation
- To know and understand basic Catholic teaching about God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- Trinity: A community of Three Persons in one indivisible God and the central mystery of faith

Domain 6: Church History:

- End of persecution of Christians and legal acceptance of Church under Constantine; Nicene Creed; catechumenate

Words from "Catholic Faith Literacy": covenant, Trinity

YOUR TURN

Circle the letter of the correct answer.

1 The mystery of c is the central mystery of our Christian faith.

- a Scriptures c the Blessed Trinity
b the Holy Spirit d the Nicene Creed

2 In his greatest work, the *Summa Theologiae*, Saint d wrote that God is eternal, and that his existence can be proved by human reason.

- a Thomas More c Ignatius
b Jerome d Thomas Aquinas

3 Jesus taught us that God d.

- a is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity
b loves us only when we obey him
c is only the God of the Jews
d is a loving Father

4 A(n) b is a sacred agreement between God and his people.

- a oath c creed
b covenant d ceremony

5 The creed we recite at Mass each Sunday is called the a.

- a Nicene Creed c *Summa Theologiae*
b Apostles' Creed d Lord's Prayer

6 In the a, God gradually revealed himself to his people in words and in deeds.

- a Old Testament c *Summa Theologiae*
b New Testament d Gospels

Respond to the following.

How did God the Father show his love for us through Creation?

Accept all reasonable responses.

In what ways can you respond to God's love for you?

Accept all reasonable responses.

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ANSWER LOCATOR

A

1. pp. 28, 29

2. p. 30

3. p. 28

4. p. 29

5. p. 29

6. p. 28

B

See page 28.