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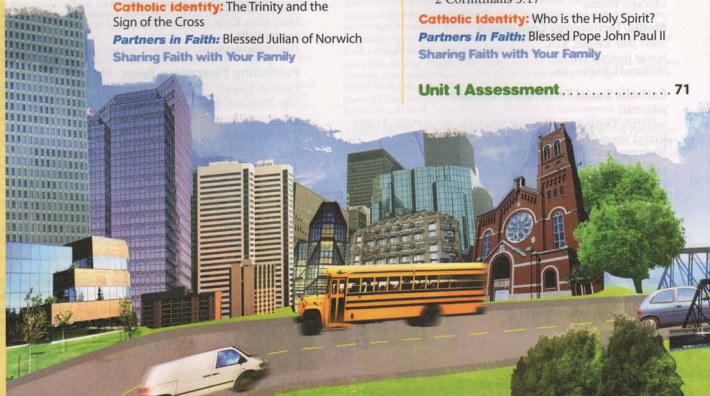
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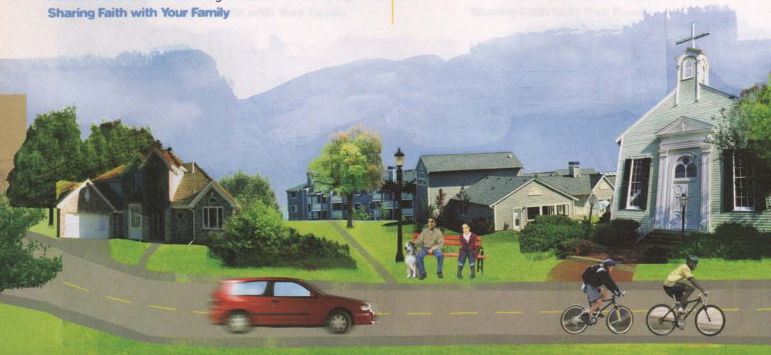
Genesis 1:28; 2:24; Matthew 19:6; Luke 6:13; 9:2;
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Unit 2

Who Is Jesus?



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Who or what helps me in
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Chapter 8 Jesus, the Promised Messiah

The Big Question:
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Chapter 9 The Coming of God's Kingdom

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The Big Question:
Why is life worth living?

The Promise of Salvation

“Our God is a God who saves.”

(Psalm 68:21)

+ **Leader:** Almighty God, you are always with us. Throughout our lives, we can call on you in times of need. And so we declare:

All: Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Reader 1: “In you, LORD, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your justice rescue and deliver me; listen to me and save me!”

(Psalm 71:1–2)

All: Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

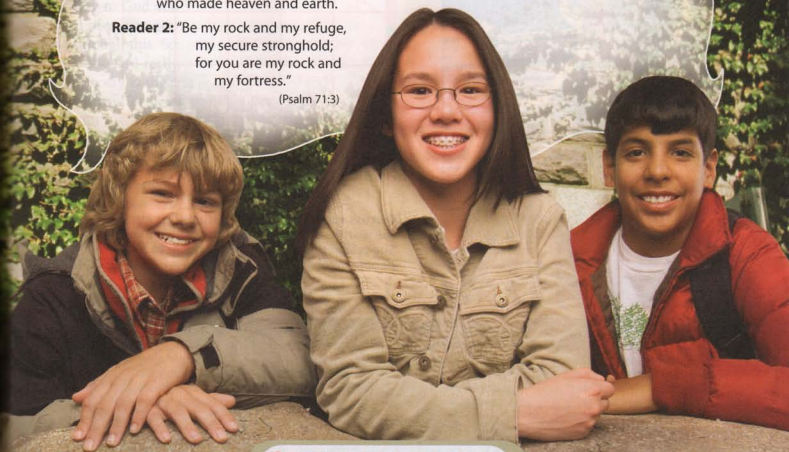
Reader 2: “Be my rock and my refuge, my secure stronghold; for you are my rock and my fortress.”

(Psalm 71:3)

All: Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Leader: O Lord, we often receive your help in our lives through helping and being helped by others. And we are responsible for helping ourselves, too. May we always remember these things, as we continue to trust in you.

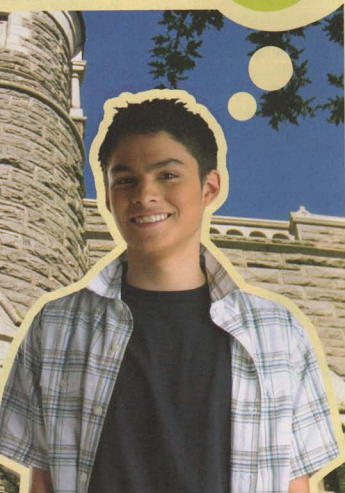
All: Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Amen.



Visit www.weliveourfaith.com to find appropriate music and songs.

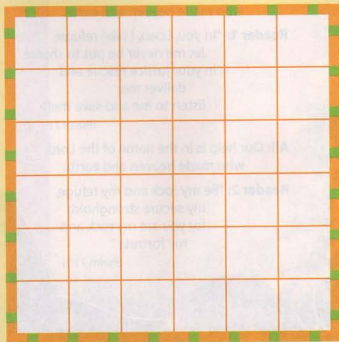
The Big Question:

Who or what helps me in difficult times?



Discover a signal for help. "SOS!" is known worldwide as a call for help. This is due in part to Samuel Morse, who developed Morse code in the 1800s. In Morse code, short electrical signals, or dots, and long electrical signals, or dashes, stand for letters and numbers. These signals were sent out to communicate messages. In Morse code, a message calling for help consisted of three dots, three dashes, and three dots (•••- - -•••), or the letters SOS. This signal could be broadcast very quickly, so it was used internationally.

With a partner, take turns writing an S or O in the grid below. Your goal is to get the letters SOS to appear in a row, horizontally or diagonally, during your turn. Each time you do this, score a point and take an additional turn. The person with the highest score wins!



Discuss some real-life "SOS" situations around the world—situations in which people need help. Suggest actions that might be taken to help the people involved.

In this chapter

we learn how original sin weakened our human nature and allowed ignorance, suffering, and death into the world, and how God promised help and salvation. Through this chapter, we hope



to understand that throughout human history God has reached out to help his people



to celebrate that God promised salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ, the Messiah



to respond to God's promise of salvation by helping and serving others.

“Hi. My name is Maura, and I’m an alcoholic. It has taken a lot for me to say that about myself. Getting through my first few meetings here was the hardest thing I’ve ever done. I remember thinking to myself: *I don’t need this. These people are nothing like me!* But I needed someone to help me. I just couldn’t stop drinking.

“So, I continued to come here and listen to your stories. Soon, I learned that your stories were a lot like my story. And all of you became the help I needed to get through the day. Now I have Maryann as my sponsor, and I’m really getting into the Twelve Steps. I actually admitted that I was powerless over alcohol. I am being honest with myself and others. I am also turning to God and to all of you to get me through this. So, I guess what I really want to say is this: Thank you for being here for me. I hope one day I can help another kid like me.”

With these words, Maura, fifteen years old, looked gratefully at the other Alcoholics Anonymous members sitting around her. She couldn’t believe that six months had already passed since her last drink.

The organization Alcoholics Anonymous began in 1935 with a friendship between two alcoholics, William Griffith Wilson and Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith. They met at a time when they were both struggling to stay sober. By sharing stories of their struggles and encouraging each other to depend on God, they helped each other to overcome their addiction one day at a time. Soon Wilson and Smith began meeting with other alcoholics to help them

to get sober, too. Wilson and Smith shared their spiritual guidelines, which included: admitting that they were powerless over alcohol, turning to God for help, examining their past behavior, making amends, telling the truth, and serving others. Eventually, these spiritual guidelines developed into what is known as the “Twelve Steps,” and their small gatherings grew into the larger organization known as Alcoholics Anonymous, or AA. Because AA protects its members’ anonymity, Wilson and Smith were known for years as simply “Bill W.” and “Dr. Bob.”

The group that Bill W. and Dr. Bob began now has two million members worldwide. Members meet to pray together, share their stories and struggles, and work on following the Twelve Steps. Through their friendships, members help each other to cope with the difficulties of addiction. Several other organizations have grown out of AA to help people who have other kinds of addictions.



“You are never strong enough that you don’t need help,” said César Chávez (1927–1993), an American activist, a labor organizer, and the founder of the National Farm Workers Association.

Activity When has a friendship helped you through a difficult situation? List some ways that you might help your friends when they are having trouble in their lives.

God reaches out to help humankind.

From the very beginning of creation, God wanted the lives of all of his creatures to be filled with love, peace, happiness, and goodness. God created human beings to be at one with him, each other, and all of creation. And indeed the first human beings lived in this original state of holiness for which God had created them.

But why, you might ask, isn't life today always filled with love, peace, happiness, and goodness? Why do we need so much help at times? Well, God granted human beings the dignity of acting on their own and cooperating in his plan of loving goodness. God gave human beings the gift of **free will**, the freedom and ability to choose what to do. And it was of their own free will that the first humans chose to disobey God. The first humans chose not to respect God's warnings, nor to trust his words. They selfishly did what they wanted rather than what God commanded. They committed sin. **Sin** is a thought, word, deed, or omission against God's law that harms us and our relationship with God and others. Through sin, the first humans severely damaged their friendship with God.

We can read about this "fall" from God's friendship in Chapter 3 of the Book of Genesis. Here we find a story that uses many symbols to teach us important



truths about sin and suffering. We read of the sin of the first human beings, who are called Adam and Eve in the story. The first sin committed by the first human beings is known as **original sin**. It weakened all of human nature and allowed ignorance, suffering, and death into the world. Because of original sin, human nature needed to be restored to its original relationship with God. God promised to give human beings the help that they needed. With the very symbolic words, "He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel"

(Genesis 3:15),

God promised that one day a descendant of the first humans would save humanity and crush the power of evil. Thus, God gave us the hope that sin and evil would one day be finally overcome. God gave us the hope of salvation.

Faith Words

free will
sin
original sin

Activity Write an uplifting motto that reminds people to have hope despite the sin and suffering in the world.

Evil and sin—why?

Sin is a terrible reality in human life. And, ultimately, the reason for the existence of evil is a mystery. Many saints and holy people in the Church have struggled to understand these truths. Here are some of their thoughts on the matter:

- Saint Augustine, a Christian philosopher in the early Church, wrote that he searched and searched for the reasons that evil existed, but found no solution. The only way to make sense of evil and sin was to think of them as part of the mystery of God's plan for humankind.
- Saint Leo the Great, one of the Church's earliest popes, wrote that even though the first sin damaged humankind's original state of goodness and happiness, we are promised an even better life by Jesus Christ, who saves us from sin.
- Saint Thomas Aquinas, a theologian of the Middle Ages, wrote that even though sin is a terrible reality, there is nothing to prevent us from becoming better and holier people, even after sin.
- Saint Catherine of Siena, a Doctor of the Church, wrote that by seeking God's forgiveness for sin and turning back to him we can live a more virtuous life.
- Saint Paul, who spread Christianity to many lands, wrote that wherever there is sin, there is an even greater amount of grace from Jesus Christ.

With faith we can recognize that "there is not a single aspect of the Christian message that is not in part an answer to the question of evil" (CCC, 309).

What are your thoughts on the matter?

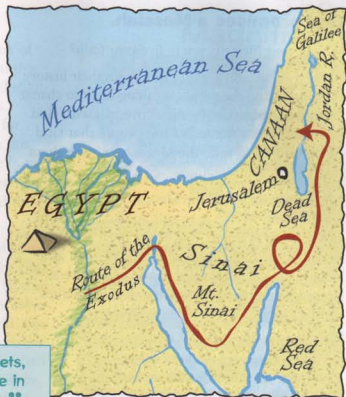
God offers his people the hope of salvation.

As the Book of Genesis continues, we learn about the terrible effects of original sin on humankind. In one story we even find out that Cain, one of the sons of Adam and Eve, killed his brother, Abel. Thus, murder, one of the worst effects of original sin, came into existence. But even after this, God did not turn away from humanity. God continued to watch over Cain, encouraging him to choose good over evil. And throughout the Old Testament, the same pattern emerges again and again—people struggle, even turn away from God, but God in his mercy always offers renewed hope.

We can see this pattern during the Exodus, when the Israelites wandered through the desert after leaving Egypt. They were hungry and thirsty. But when they cried out for help, God led them to food and drink. Eventually, with God's help, the people found Canaan, a land that God had promised to make their own.

“Through the prophets, God forms his people in the hope of salvation.”

(CCC, 64)



When the Israelites settled into Canaan and became a nation, they had trouble keeping peace in their land and keeping the commandments. But when they cried out to God for help, God remembered his covenant and helped them. God sent judges, wise rulers who were often military leaders, to help them. The judges reminded the Israelites to keep their faith in God and restored peace to the land. Then, when the Israelites asked for a king to lead them and to protect them from their enemies, God helped them to choose their kings and to protect their land from invading nations.

But when the Israelite kings began to turn away from God, their nation was conquered and divided. People were scattered far from their promised land, suffered many injustices, and even lost faith. However, God encouraged them to keep their covenant with him. He did this through the words of the prophets whom he sent to speak in his name. They urged people to keep their faith in God and to trust that God would restore their nation. As we read in the *Catechism*, “Through the prophets, God forms his people in the hope of salvation” (64).

Activity Use what you have learned on this page to explain how God helped his people during each of the stages below.

During the Exodus . . .

When the Israelites settled into Canaan . . .

When the Israelites asked for a king . . .

When the Israelite kings began to turn away from God . . .

God promises a Messiah.

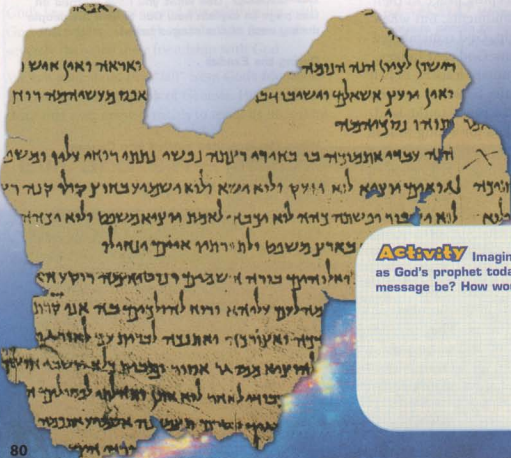
Who in your life calls you to live your faith?

As the Israelites struggled throughout their history, they listened to the prophets calling them to change their lives and to live by their covenant with God. These prophets reminded the people that God had promised to send the Messiah to bring them forgiveness and salvation.

The people expected the Messiah to be one who would bring victory over evil, injustice, and sin. In the Book of Isaiah, one of the great prophetic books of the Bible, we read of the Messiah as a mighty king. This king, it is said, would be a descendant of King David, one of the Israelites' greatest kings:

"His dominion is vast
and forever peaceful,
From David's throne, and over his kingdom"
(Isaiah 9:6).

Hebrew writings from a scroll of Isaiah found in a cave containing the scrolls of Qumran, near the Dead Sea



Throughout Scripture, and often even within the same prophetic book, we find many other images in prophecies about the Messiah:

- a suffering servant who, "like a lamb led to the slaughter," was "harshly treated" but "opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7)
- "a light for the nations" (Isaiah 42:6)
- the "Hope of Israel," a "savior in time of need" (Jeremiah 14:8)
- "a savior to defend and deliver" (Isaiah 19:20).

Yet every image led to the same hope: Through the Messiah, God would bring a reign of justice and peace. He would make a new covenant with his people and would be with them always, leading and guiding them to eternal happiness. So, though God's people were constantly struggling in a world damaged by sin and suffering, they continued to hope for the long-awaited salvation that God had promised—the coming of the Messiah.

Activity Imagine you are asked to speak as God's prophet today. What would your hopeful message be? How would you deliver it?

The promise of a Messiah comes to fulfillment.

One of the prophecies about the Messiah from the Book of Isaiah stated, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel," which means "God is with us." (See Isaiah 7:14.) In time this prophecy of God's plan for salvation was fulfilled. To prepare Mary for her role in this plan, God blessed her in a special way. He made her free from original sin and from all sin since the very moment she was conceived. This truth about Mary's sinlessness is called the **Immaculate Conception**.

In Luke's Gospel we read that God sent an angel to tell Mary of her role in God's plan. An **angel** is a creature created by God as a pure spirit, without a physical body. Angels serve God as messengers, helping him to accomplish his mission of salvation. The angel who came to Mary said to her: "Behold, you

"The child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God."

(Luke 1:35)

will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High . . . and of his kingdom there will be

no end" (Luke 1:31–33). The announcement to Mary that she would be the mother of the Son of God is called the **Annunciation**.

The name that Mary was to give to her child, *Jesus*, means "God saves" in Hebrew. And just as the prophecies had said, the child would be a descendant of King David, and would bring salvation to all people. But Mary, a young Jewish woman who was engaged to Joseph, a descendant of King David, did not understand how all of this could happen. She was not even married yet. So the angel explained, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Faith Words

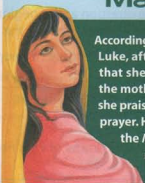
Immaculate Conception
angel
Annunciation

Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Mary, accepting God's plan, responded, "May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

The Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah were coming to fulfillment. The Messiah, Jesus Christ, our greatest hope, was coming to be among us and to save us from sin.

Activity Mary accepted God's plan of salvation. On a separate sheet of paper, write a prayer telling God that you accept the salvation that he offers.

The Magnificat



According to the Gospel of Luke, after Mary learned that she was going to be the mother of God's Son, she praised God in a special prayer. Her prayer is called the *Magnificat*, which means "praises." It is a prayer filled with hope and

praise for God's faithfulness to his promises. The *Magnificat* has become part of evening prayer in the *Liturgy of the Hours*, a collection of daily prayers that the Church prays throughout the year.

Here are the words of the *Magnificat*:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my savior.
For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness;
behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.

The Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him.

He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.

He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones
but lifted up the lowly.

The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty.

He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever" (Luke 1:46–55).

Praise God by making the *Magnificat* part of your evening prayers.

CATHOLIC IDENTITY

RESPONDING...

Recognizing Our Faith

Recall the question at the beginning of this chapter: *Who or what helps me in difficult times?* Answer this question from the perspective of:

- one of the Old Testament people mentioned in this chapter

- someone you know of who needs help getting through a difficult time

- yourself, now that you've completed this chapter.

Living Our Faith

In this chapter we learned how God helps his people and offers hope. This week make a decision to be an example of hope in your home, school, and neighborhood.

Venerable Matt Talbot



God can help us even when things seem hopeless. Matt Talbot was someone who knew this well. Born in 1856 in the slums of Dublin, Ireland, Matt was addicted to alcohol from the time he was twelve years old. When Matt began drinking, there were no alcoholic support groups

and most people looked upon alcoholics as immoral. Matt faced his addiction shamefully and alone. Finally, when he was twenty-eight, Matt went to a priest for help. The priest advised Matt to make a pledge to stop drinking. He also told Matt to think about Christ and his suffering on the cross. Matt

took this advice and began to live a simple life of prayer and fasting. He found happiness and peace in helping others who were in need.

Though Matt suffered physically and mentally in his efforts to stay sober, he kept his pledge. He continued to live a life of prayer, fasting, and generosity until his death in 1925. Matt's efforts to overcome his addiction with God's help is a powerful example for us.

Pray that God will give hope to all people who are facing problems.

Partners in FAITH



For additional ideas and activities, visit www.weliveourfaith.com.

Putting Faith to Work

Talk about what you have learned in this chapter:



We understand that throughout human history God has reached out to help his people.



We celebrate that God promised salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ, the Messiah.



We respond to God's promise of salvation by helping and serving others.

Decide on ways to live out what you have learned.

ENCOUNTERING GOD'S WORD



“Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.”

(Romans 12:12)

- ➔ **READ** the quotation from Scripture.
- ➔ **REFLECT** on these questions:
What does it mean to rejoice? to endure? to persevere? What are some examples of “affliction”—a condition of great suffering? What does this quote ask us to do when faced with it?
- ➔ **SHARE** your reflections with a partner.
- ➔ **DECIDE** on one person with whom you will share the hopeful message of this Scripture passage this week.

Write the letter that best defines each term.

1. _____ free will
 2. _____ original sin
 3. _____ angel
 4. _____ Immaculate Conception
- a. the announcement to Mary that she would be the mother of the Son of God
 - b. the freedom and ability to choose what to do
 - c. the first sin committed by the first human beings
 - d. a creature created by God as a pure spirit, without a physical body, who serves God and helps him to accomplish his mission of salvation
 - e. the truth that God made Mary free from original sin and from all sin since the very moment she was conceived

Short Answers

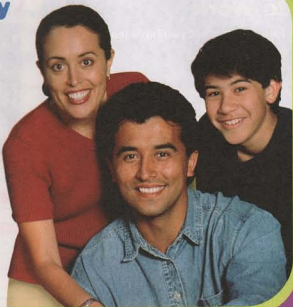
5. Throughout Scripture, we read of many images that were prophesied about the Messiah. What are two of them? _____
 6. What does the name *Jesus* mean in Hebrew? _____
 7. What story do we find in Chapter 3 of the Book of Genesis, and what important truths does it teach us? _____
 8. What hope does God give us? _____
- 9-10. **ESSAY:** What are examples of ways God has reached out to help his people?

Sharing Faith with Your Family

Discuss the following with your family:

- God reaches out to help humankind.
- God offers his people the hope of salvation.
- God promises a Messiah.
- The promise of a Messiah comes to fulfillment.

Write the name of each family member on a slip of paper. Have each family member draw a slip of paper from a bowl. Each day, do something for the person whose name you drew that will help to give him or her a greater sense of hope.



The Worship Connection

A prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours asks, "God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me." Pray these words when you need help.

More to Explore

In this chapter we learned that God helps his people and gives them hope. Use the Internet or a parish bulletin to research groups or organizations that offer help to those in need.

Catholic Social Teaching Checklist

Theme of Catholic Social Teaching:

Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person

How it relates to Chapter 7: All people have a right to food, shelter, clothing, religious freedom, and life itself. Just as God helps us, we have a responsibility to help and protect one another.

How can you do this?

At home:

At school/work:

In the parish:

In the community:

Check off each action after it has been completed.