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Chapter 9

Jesus Christ, True God and True Man

Overview

In this chapter the students will explore the Scriptures and Church teachings to discover more about who Jesus is, with special emphasis on Jesus' being fully God and fully man. They will learn that by sharing our human nature, Jesus can be our Savior, mediator, teacher, and friend. They will have the opportunity to complete an activity in which they can reflect on events that take place at Christmastime and how they might modify some of these events to keep Christ in Christmas.

He always had the nature of God, but . . . of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant.

—Philippians
2:6–7

Learning Goals

Enable the students to

- learn that Jesus is fully God and fully man
- understand that we learn about who Jesus is through the Scriptures, Church Tradition, and participation in the sacraments
- recognize that as mediator between God and us, Jesus restores our relationship with his loving Father and approaches the Father on our behalf

Preparing for the Chapter

Background Reading

- *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers*, chapter 9
- CCC, numbers 422–483 (Jesus)
- John 1:1–5, 14; Matthew 1:1; Matthew 2:1; Matthew 1:18–23; Mark 9:7; Luke 3:21; John 8:58; John 10:30; Philippians 2:6–7

Background for the Teacher

I Have Called You Friends

A wise religious sister once told a group of novices (newcomers to religious life): “The day you truly realize that Jesus Christ is *real* and that a personal relationship with him is *possible* for you will be the happiest day of your life.”

How can it be possible for us human beings to have a personal relationship with God? It is possible because, in Jesus Christ, God chose to become man. Laying aside his divinity, God chose to accept our humanity. Saint Paul compared this choice to that of a rich man deciding

to become poor: "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; rich as he was, he made himself poor for your sake, in order to make you rich by means of his poverty" (2 Corinthians 8:9). This choice of our poverty meant choosing a human body, human feelings, and even human weakness (except sin). In this "coming down to our level," Jesus offered us, fully and completely, divine love and friendship. "I call you friends," said Jesus (John 15:15).

Jesus is the divine and human friend who knows all about us, to the very core, and loves us anyway. Jesus is the divine and human friend, the One who understands loneliness, suffering, pain, joy, fulfillment, and just plain ordinary human life, because he himself has lived it. Sitting at the right hand of the Father, he intercedes for us still. The Letter to the Hebrews calls Jesus a "High Priest" who is mindful of the needs of his people: "Our High Priest is not one who cannot feel sympathy for our weaknesses. On the contrary, we have a High Priest who was tempted in every way that we are, but did not sin. Let us have confidence, then, and approach God's throne, where there is grace. There we will receive mercy and find grace to help us just when we need it." (Hebrews 4:15–16). Yes, let us do that!

Catechism references: 65–67, 430–435, 436–440, 456–483, 667, 771, 846

Teacher's Prayer

Lord, although the mystery of the Incarnation is beyond my ability to comprehend, open my heart to the truth of who you are and to your message and your love. Give me courage and strength to share that truth. Amen.

Teacher's Reflection

How can you deepen your unique friendship with Jesus?

Preparing for the Activities

Materials

- an audio recording of a Christmas song
- a tape or CD player

"Media Connection" (optional)

- an audio recording of the song "Who Do You Say?" by the Paul Colman Trio, on the album *One* (Essential Records, 2003)



Opening with Prayer

1. **Invite** the students to gather in the prayer corner. Direct them to quiet themselves for prayer.
2. **Light** a candle, make the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God."
3. **Invite** a volunteer to read John 1:1–5.
4. **Pray** the following:
 - ▶ Creator God, we stand before you today with open hearts and minds, seeking to know more about your Son, Jesus. Through the Scriptures, Church Tradition, and personal relationship, help us to truly know you, Lord. Amen.

Close with the Sign of the Cross.

Preview Activity

1. **Distribute** copies of activity master 9A, "Jesus Christ: True God and True Man."
2. **Read aloud** the directions to the first part of the activity and **invite** the students to write their responses.
3. **Direct** the students to quietly read and respond to the next reflection question. When everyone has finished, **invite** volunteers to share their responses.

Introducing Chapter 9

1. **Have** the students turn to page 96 in their handbooks. **Tell** them that in this chapter they will learn more about who Jesus is and will explore the mystery of the Son of God becoming man.
2. **Call attention** to the Key Words list on page 104. Tell the students to listen for the meaning of these words as they read them in the chapter.
3. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the chapter introduction on pages 96 and 97. **Ask**:
 - ▶ What is the mystery of the Incarnation? (*Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the second Person of the Trinity, became man yet remained truly God.*)
 - ▶ How does Jesus' becoming man help us draw closer to him? (*By becoming man, Jesus makes it possible for us to know him, trust him, and follow him.*)

Who Is Jesus Christ?

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the first three paragraphs of "Who Is Jesus Christ?" on pages 98 and 99. **Ask**:
 - ▶ What are some similarities between the way we get to know Jesus and the way we get to know people around us? What are some differences? (*Similarities include by spending time together, by talking to them and sharing thoughts. A key difference is that because Jesus is not physically present with us, we also have to rely on what has been written about him to learn more about him.*)

- ▶ What are the two main sources through which we can learn about Jesus? (*Scripture and Tradition*)
 - ▶ What do these sources tell us about Jesus? (*that he is both truly God and truly man*)
2. **Emphasize** that Jesus is fully human and fully divine, and that by taking on our human nature, he did not lose his divinity.
 3. **Have** two volunteers read the remaining paragraphs of “Who Is Jesus Christ?” on pages 99–101.
 4. **Tell** the students that because Jesus was truly human, like us, he experienced human emotions. **Invite** volunteers to name times when Jesus may have experienced sorrow. (*Possible responses: when Lazarus died, when Judas betrayed him, when he was alone in the garden in Gethsemane*)
 5. **Ask:**
 - ▶ What are some ways that Jesus revealed his divinity to his disciples? (*through the miracles he performed, by forgiving sins, by telling his disciples that he is one with God*)
 6. **Summarize** the following points in your own words:
 - ▶ Jesus is a divine Person with two natures. He is fully man and fully God. As fully God, Jesus is the second Person of the Trinity and is eternal. As fully human, Jesus took on flesh and became like us in all things but sin.
 - ▶ The truth that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human is called the Incarnation.

Extending the Lesson

7. **Read aloud** to the students the account of Jesus’ Baptism in Matthew 3:13–17.
8. **Call attention** to the description of the way in which the heavens opened up and the words of God were heard by those who were present: “This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased” (Matthew 3:17). **Explain** that these words and the events of Jesus’ Baptism can help us see that he is in an eternal relationship with God the Father.



Live It!

1. **Direct** the young people to silently read the “Live It!” sidebar on page 99.
2. **Have** them briefly write about two things they can do to grow closer to Jesus. **Explain** that they should give specific examples, such as by reading the Scriptures daily.
3. When everyone has finished, **invite** volunteers to share what they have written. **Share** with the students your own examples as well.



Did You Know?

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the “Did You Know?” sidebar on page 100.
2. **Engage** the students in a discussion of why it was not easy for the Jewish people to accept that Jesus was God. **Ask** volunteers to share how they might have responded to Jesus’ claim that he was God had they been present at the time of his teaching.

Pray It! Liturgy Connection

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the “Liturgy Connection” sidebar on page 101.
2. **Encourage** the students to listen at the coming Sunday’s Mass for the times when the priest prays, “We ask this through Christ, our Lord,” to which we respond, “Amen.”

What the Incarnation Means for Us

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud paragraphs 1 and 2 on pages 102 and 103. **Ask:**
 - What does the word *Messiah* mean? (“*anointed one*”)
 - During Old Testament times, what was expected of the Messiah promised by God? (*that he would save the people of Israel*)
2. **Point out** to the students that the name Jesus means “God saves” and that as the Messiah, Jesus saves us from Original Sin and enables us to have eternal life with God.
3. **Read aloud** the next two paragraphs. Invite a volunteer to explain in his or her own words the meaning of *mediator* and to give an example of what a mediator might do. (*A mediator is someone who reconciles differences between two people or two parties.*)
4. **Ask:**
 - How is Jesus a mediator between us and God? (*His sacrifice on the cross and in the Mass restores our relationship with God. Jesus also reveals God’s love to us and makes it easier for us to speak to God as our Father.*)
5. **Invite** volunteers to read aloud the remaining paragraphs of “What the Incarnation Means for Us” on pages 104–107.
6. **Explain** that because he took on a human nature like us, Jesus can be a model for us to imitate. We can learn from his words and his example. Jesus’ human nature also helps us know that he knows the challenges we face in living as his followers, and that he can relate to our human needs and emotions.



Activity

1. To help the students reflect on the many roles Jesus plays in their lives, **have them complete** the first activity on activity master 9B.
2. **Distribute** copies of activity master 9B. Read aloud the directions to “Jesus: Friend and Savior.”
3. **Direct** the students to complete the activity independently. When everyone has finished, invite volunteers to share their responses.

Additional Activity

Keeping Christ in Christmas

1. **Gather** the following items: an audio recording of a Christmas song and a tape or CD player.
2. **Start** the Christmas song and then brainstorm with the class a list of things that happen at Christmastime. Include both sacred and secular traditions and happenings (for example, Midnight Mass and last-minute shopping). **Record** the students' ideas on the board.
3. **Ask** the students to consider each event on the list and whether Jesus would fit in, feel comfortable, or be welcome. **Write** a "J" beside each event during which Jesus would fit in.
4. **Consider** with the students the remaining items on the list, discussing whether the event could be modified to be more welcoming of Jesus. **Write** the modifications of the event on the board next to the event, and add a "J" next to them as well. For example, exchanging gifts with family could be modified to purchasing and giving gifts to families in need.
5. **Challenge** the students to reflect on their own practices at Christmastime, and to modify their plans to keep Christ in Christmas.

Fun Fact

1. **Invite** the students to silently read the "Fun Fact" sidebar on page 102.
2. **Share** with them other examples from the Gospels of how people are identified by an attribute rather than a last name. Examples include Joseph of Arimathea; James, the Son of Zebedee (one of the Twelve Apostles); or even Simon the leper, at whose house Jesus dined (see Mark 14:3).

Looking Back

1. **Invite** the students to silently read the "Looking Back" sidebar on page 103 in their handbooks.
2. **Explain** that the Gospels can help us learn more about Jesus' divine nature, and that the Gospel of John in particular emphasizes Jesus' divinity.
3. **Refer** to the "For More Information" box on the next page to **share** more with the students about the Council of Nicaea.

For More Information

The Council of Nicaea

Explain to the students that in the early Church, the controversy about Jesus' oneness with God and his equality with God became the source of much division, so that the emperor Constantine called for a Church synod in AD 325, the Council of Nicaea. The focus of the Council was to affirm the divinity of Christ. It was at the Council of Nicaea that the Nicene Creed, which we pray at Mass each Sunday, was formulated.

Think About It!

1. **Direct** the students to read the "Think About It!" sidebar on page 105.
2. **Invite** volunteers to respond to the questions. **Share** with the class your own responses. Examples of Jesus' teachings about peace include the teaching about the Final Judgment (see Matthew 25:31–46) and his response to Peter to forgive those who sin against him not seven times, but seventy times seven (see Matthew 18:21–23).

People of Faith

1. Before reading the text about Saint Joseph on pages 106 and 107, **engage** the students in a discussion about who Saint Joseph was. **Invite** volunteers to share what they know about this saint. **Be sure** students recognize that we honor Saint Joseph as Jesus' *earthly* father.
2. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the "People of Faith" text.



Activity

1. **Help** the students reflect on how Saint Joseph's obedience to God can be an example to them by having them complete the "People of Faith" activity on activity master 9B.
2. You may wish to **read aloud** the suggested Scripture passage from the Gospel of Matthew.
3. **Direct** the students to complete the activity. Invite volunteers to share their responses.



Closing Activity

1. **Distribute** copies of activity master 9C, "Sharing the Good News of the Incarnation."
2. **Read aloud** the introduction and invite the students to write their letters. Invite volunteers to share what they have written. You may wish to call on additional volunteers to share one or two details they included in their letters.

Closing Prayer



1. **Invite** the students to open their handbooks to page 97. When all are ready, **ask** a volunteer to read the prayer in the “Pray It!” sidebar.
2. **Conclude** with the following:
 - Jesus, we thank you for revealing yourself to us. As we discover more about who you are, we discover who we are. We love you and are grateful for your eternal love for us. Amen.

Close with the Sign of the Cross.

Chapter Test

1. The chapter test will help the students recall what they have learned. The test covers the key points of the chapter.
2. **Distribute** copies of the chapter 9 test from the *Catholic Connections for Middle Schoolers Test Book*.
3. **Explain** to the students that completing the test exercises will help them remember the content of the chapter they have just completed. **Direct** them to work quietly to complete the test.
4. **Collect** and **grade** the test. Alternatively, you may wish to **review** the answers to the test as a group. **Review** with the students any items that were generally misunderstood. **Refer** to the answer key at the back of the test book for the correct answers as well as a list of the pages on which the answers can be found.

Media Connection

To reinforce the “Who Is Jesus?” theme, you may wish to use the song “Who Do You Say?” by the Paul Colman Trio, on the album *One* (Essential Records, 2003), at an appropriate time in this lesson.