

# CONTENTS

---

Introduction.....	4
<b>1.</b> Revelation, Scriptures, and Tradition.....	12
<b>2.</b> God the Father.....	22
<b>3.</b> The Holy Trinity.....	32
<b>4.</b> Creation.....	42
<b>5.</b> The Human Person.....	52
<b>6.</b> God's Plan for Salvation.....	62
<b>7.</b> Faith: Responding to God.....	72
<b>8.</b> Acknowledgments.....	83

# Chapter 2

## God the Father

---

### Overview

In this chapter the students will recognize that the Blessed Trinity—one God in three divine Persons—will ever remain a mystery beyond our ability to understand. They will explore the ways in which God has revealed himself to us throughout history, especially by sending his Son into the world, and will reflect on ways God is a loving Father to us, much as Jesus taught us to view him and address him.

Whoever does not love God, for God is love.

—1 John 4:8

### Learning Goals

Enable the students to

- experience God as a mystery that is beyond our ability to understand
- recognize that God has revealed himself to us as Truth and Love
- learn that as the First Person of the Blessed Trinity, God is our Creator and Father

### Preparing for the Chapter

#### Background Reading

- *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers*, chapter 2
- CCC, numbers 198–213, 232–237 (God the Father)
- Exodus 13:20–22, Numbers 9:15–18, 1 Kings 8:12, Matthew 17:5, Isaiah 66:13

#### Background for the Teacher

##### Our Father's Business

In *Webster's Dictionary*, one of the definitions of *father* is “to be the creator, founder, or author of; originate.” Did you ever think of God as an author? An author is someone who creates something new, who writes a new book, a new play, a new script, a new poem. How is God an author of something new?

When Jesus called God “*our Father*,” he was acknowledging God’s authorship of our world, our selves, and our lives. The life of Jesus and our own lives are evidence of God’s authorship and God’s *originality*. Because God is our Father, we originated in him. We were generated, fathered, by him. In creating us, God authored something new! We ourselves are the newness of his creative love!

You might recall that family members usually bear a “family resemblance” to one another, even across generations. How often have we scrutinized family pictures and wondered, “Isn’t this Great-Grandmom? And doesn’t our little Jenny look just like her?”

As children of God, we were made in his image. As children of God, we bear a “family resemblance” to God. As sons and daughters of God, we are brothers and sisters to Jesus. The family resemblance is not in looks but by grace—the gracious gift of Christ who died and rose for us, who brought us with him to the Father. As Jesus told us, “Whoever does what God wants is my brother, my sister, my mother” (Mark 3:35).

As sons and daughters of God, we were born to carry on “the family business.” To the twelve-year-old Jesus, this was nothing new. Of the parents who were looking for him in Jerusalem, he asked, “Didn’t you know that I had to be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49). This can also be translated, “I must be about my Father’s work” or “about my Father’s business.” And what is that business? That business is the establishing of God’s Kingdom on earth. That business is love. As God’s sons and daughters, we were born to share the essence of his being—the newness of his love—with others.

**Catechism references:** 240, 242, 268–272

### Teacher’s Prayer

God our Father, like a loving parent you watch over me and guide me. You give me strength when I am weak and encouragement to strive to use the many gifts you give. Lead me as I work to instill in my students an understanding of your love and your power. Give me the wisdom to enrich their faith and to help them form a lifelong relationship with you. Amen.

### Teacher’s Reflection

How do I and the way I live my life reflect the authorship and *originality* of God?

## Preparing for the Activities

### Materials

“Additional Activity: Celebrating Gifts from God”

- a box for each student
- colored construction paper, scissors, glue, tape
- crayons and markers
- wrapping paper, ribbon, gift tags

“Social Justice”

- poster paper and markers

“Media Connections” (*optional*)

- the film *Evan Almighty* (2007, 90 minutes, rated A-II and PG)
- the song, “You Are Near,” by Dan Schutte (Oregon Catholic Press)
- various musical settings of the Our Father



## Opening Prayer

1. **Invite** the students to gather in the prayer corner. Direct them to quiet themselves for prayer.
2. **Light** a candle, and lead the students in making the Sign of the Cross.
3. **Pray** the following:
  - God our Father, we gather to ask for your guidance. Remind us that you are always near, ready to guide us with your loving hands. Amen.
4. **Direct** the students to silently pray to God as their Father, asking for his guidance in their lives.  
**Close** with the Sign of the Cross.



## Preview Activity

1. Briefly **explain** that the topic for this chapter will be God the Father.
2. **Distribute** copies of activity master 2A, “Who Is God?”
3. **Direct** the students to respond to the first reflection question and write their prayers. **Call on** volunteers to share their responses to the question. Then **have** the students respond to the second reflection, and **invite** volunteers to share their reactions to the Scripture quote.

## Introducing Chapter 2

1. **Have** the students turn to page 24 in their handbooks.
2. **Call attention** to the Key Words list on page 32. Tell the students to listen for the meaning of these words as they read them in the chapter.
3. **Ask** a volunteer to read aloud the two paragraphs on pages 24 and 25. **Invite** volunteers to describe whether the image of God described in the text matches their own image of what God “looks” like.

## Who Is God?

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the first three paragraphs of the “Who Is God?” section on pages 25 and 26.
2. **Point out** that we know God because he has revealed himself to us, first making himself known to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all the prophets.
3. **Invite** volunteers to explain in their own words the meaning of *Yahweh* and why it is an appropriate name for God. (*Yahweh is the Hebrew name for God, which simply means “I am.” It is appropriate because of God’s greatness, the great mystery of who he is that we are not able to understand; and because it expresses the infiniteness of God.*)
4. **Call on** a volunteer to read aloud the next paragraph and the text from Psalm 139 on pages 26 and 27. Engage the students in a discussion about this psalm by asking the following questions:
  - What is the author of this psalm expressing about God? (*that God knows each of us personally and completely*)



- What are some lines of the psalm that express that God is ever-present and has known us all through time? What do these words mean to you? (*Answers will vary. Allow the students to identify phrases or verses that are especially meaningful for them and to interpret what these words mean to them.*)

## Fun Fact

1. **Read aloud** the “Fun Fact” sidebar on page 26.
2. **Make** the following points about why a cloud is a suitable symbol for God:
  - In the Bible, God is often experienced in the form of a cloud. Like a cloud, God is difficult to see when he is right in front of you.
  - Nonetheless, God the Father makes himself known to us through his Spirit and through his Son, Jesus Christ.
  - God is infinitely mysterious, yet close and intimately known to us.

## Live It!

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the “Live It!” sidebar on page 27.
2. **Allow** the students to express why they believe it is important to base relationships on trust and honesty, and to share experiences with relationships built on trust and honesty and ones in which those qualities were missing.
3. **Discuss** with the group the ultimate outcome in each type of relationship. **Direct** the discussion away from any sharing that is of a personal nature.

## The Trinity

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the text of “The Trinity” on page 28.
2. **Engage** the students in a discussion after sharing with them the following points:
  - God the Father is the First Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is our loving Creator, who created the universe freely and of his own will, out of love for us.
  - Saint Paul described faith this way: “to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see” (Hebrews 11:1). This speaks to our belief in God and in the Blessed Trinity, and reflects the reality that the mystery of God is beyond our ability to understand, but that we accept it through faith.

## The Father

1. **Invite** volunteers to take turns reading aloud the section “The Father,” on pages 28–31.
2. **Explain** that although God is ultimately a mystery, he has revealed himself to us.
3. **Ask** a volunteer to describe a person she or he likes, naming the characteristics that make the person so likeable (e.g., the person is nice, smart, helpful). Then **ask** the volunteer how she or he knows these characteristics to be true of this person (e.g., the person helps her or him with homework).

4. **Explain** that this is how we can know about God too. We can describe who God is, the characteristics of God, by looking at what he has done.
5. **Invite** the students to share what God has done throughout history. **Ask** them to write on the board what these actions say about who God is. For example, if a student says that God created the world, then he or she should write “Creator” on the board. You may wish to help the students along by identifying the following events from the Scriptures: He sent Jesus into the world for our salvation, he saved the Israelites from slavery, he gave us the Ten Commandments as rules for how we should live.
6. **Conclude** this exercise with the following points:
  - God the Father most fully revealed himself through his Son, Jesus Christ.
  - Jesus told us to call God “Our Father” because he wanted us to have a close relationship with God, a loving and trusting relationship like that between a father and child.

### Extending the Lesson

7. **Ask** the students to open their Bibles to Matthew 6:5–15. **Explain** that the first verses of this passage will put the Our Father into the context of Jesus’ teaching on prayer. **Ask** a volunteer to read verses 5 through 9, up through the word *pray*. Then **ask** the group to pray together the Our Father by reading verses 9 through 13. **Ask** another volunteer to finish the passage by reading verses 14 and 15.
8. **Explain** that the Our Father is also called the Lord’s Prayer because it is Jesus’ own prayer to God the Father. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls the Lord’s Prayer “truly the summary of the whole gospel”<sup>1</sup> (CCC, no. 2761, quoting the Church Father Tertullian). **Ask** the students to find Jesus’ teachings reflected in the Our Father (*God is our Father whose name is holy and powerful, the coming of the Kingdom, doing God’s will, asking God for our needs, asking forgiveness and being willing to forgive others, deliverance from all evil*). The *Catechism* devotes an entire section of its teaching on prayer to the Lord’s Prayer, beginning at number 2759.



### Activity

1. **Distribute** copies of activity master 2B. Direct the students to complete the “God the Father” activity.
2. When everyone has finished, **invite** volunteers to share their responses. (*Responses to the first question should include that one’s relationship with God should be based on love and trust, as well as dependence on God. Steps for growing closer to God might include greater Mass attendance, receiving the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance and Reconciliation more frequently, praying more, taking time each day to be mindful of God’s presence in the world and in our lives.*)

## Did You Know?

1. **Read aloud** the “Did You Know?” sidebar on page 28 about “Abba” as a name for God.
2. **Share** with students that the Aramaic word *Abba* is believed to be similar in meaning to the word *daddy*. This familiar address for God as Father further shows us the kind of relationship Jesus encourages us to have with God, looking upon him as a gentle and loving Father who reaches out to us with care and affection.

## Additional Activity

### Celebrating Gifts from God

**Explain** to the students that one thing fathers like to do is to give gifts. Sometimes the gifts are small, and sometimes they are large gifts that the fathers have had to plan for and sacrifice for. Ask the students for examples of small gifts fathers might give (*something small they might see in a store that the children might like*) and larger gifts (*a family vacation*). God is our Father, and he has given us many gifts. Today we will celebrate those gifts of God.

1. **Gather** together: a box for each student (medium size), wrapping paper and ribbon, and gift tags. Also gather construction paper in various colors, glue, tape, scissors, crayons, and markers.
2. **Give** each student a box. Brainstorm ideas about gifts God has given us, both small and large. **Write** these on the board. Gifts might include: the sun, the moon, the stars, the world, our families, animals, trees, flowers, the smile of a friend, etc. Think of as many small and large gifts as you can.
3. **Write** the name of the students on individual pieces of paper. Put the names in a basket or box and ask each student to draw one. This is the name of the person for whom the student will make a gift.
4. **Ask** the group to look at the list, and make a three-dimensional (length, height, and width) paper sculpture of one of these gifts. It must fit into the box. If possible, it should be one that the person might especially appreciate. If a student has another idea in addition to the ones on the board, that is fine.
5. **Ask** the students to separate as much as possible, and not to look at what others are making. When they finish making the gifts, they may wrap their gifts and put the name of the person on a gift tag.
6. Just before the closing prayer, **have** a gift exchange. Each one giving a gift says, “(Name), this is a gift from God your Father.” The other person replies, “Thank you, (name). And thank you, God!” Take time to open each gift and admire it.

## Think About It!

1. **Read aloud** the “Think About It!” sidebar on page 29, stopping after the second question.
2. **Invite** volunteers to respond to these questions. **Lead** the discussion so the students acknowledge that their parents are an ever-present source of protection and support for them.

3. **Ask** the remaining questions and invite volunteers to respond to each. **Conclude** by reminding the students that because God is almighty and all-loving, his presence in our lives is constant, and we can always turn to him for help in times of difficulty, as well as to express praise and gratitude in times of joy, and always.

See “Additional Activity: Celebrating Gifts from God” for an activity to accompany this sidebar.

## Pray It! Liturgy Connection

1. **Direct** the students to silently read the “Pray It! Liturgy Connection” sidebar on page 30.
2. **Encourage** the students to listen at Mass for times when the assembly or the priest address God as Father. Tell them to listen for the following and other addresses to God:
  - “Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God,”
  - “You are indeed Holy, O Lord, and all you have created rightly give you praise,”See the FYI box below for more about ways we praise and address God as Father in the Mass, particularly in the Lord’s Prayer.

### FYI: Praising God the Father

Point out to your students that the Protestant version of the Lord’s Prayer usually includes what is called a doxology (words of praise) at the end: “For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.” This doxology is an ancient Jewish doxology and was found in some versions of Matthew’s Gospel. Eventually it found its way into Protestant worship. A similar doxology was introduced into our Eucharistic Prayer after Vatican II. After the Our Father, the priest prays:

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,  
graciously grant peace in our days,  
that, by the help of your mercy,  
we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress,  
as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

The assembly continues;

“For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.”

## God Is Truth and Love

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the section “God Is Truth and Love” on pages 31 and 32.
2. **Engage** the students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
  - What do we mean when we say “God is Truth?” (*God is Truth because we can trust that all he tells us is true and all his promises will be fulfilled.*)



- In what ways can we know that God is Love? (through Creation, in which God created us for eternal happiness with him; by sending his Son into the world for our salvation; because he is always ready to forgive us when we sin)

## Looking Back

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the “Looking Back” sidebar on page 31.
2. **Point out** that it is through sending his only Son for our salvation that God’s love and goodness was most clearly revealed. Thus the events recorded in the New Testament do show a depth to God’s loving and forgiving nature that had not been evident before.

## Activity

1. **Direct** the students’ attention to the second activity on activity master 2B, “Looking Back.”
2. **Have** the students work independently to read the directions and respond to the reflection questions. When everyone has finished, call on volunteers to share their responses. (Possible responses for the first reflection include God’s rescuing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt; fulfilling his promise to Abraham and giving him many descendants; and, most important, the events of Jesus’ life: his Incarnation, his suffering and death for our sins, and his Resurrection. Responses to the second reflection statement can include any goodness that exists in the world, either in the natural world or in the goodness and love shown by people.)



## Closing Activity

1. **Conclude** the chapter by having the students complete “The Mystery of God” sentence-completion crossword puzzle on activity master 2C.
2. **Distribute** copies of the activity master. **Direct** the students to complete the sentences and the crossword puzzle.
3. When everyone has finished, **review** the correct answers to the fill-in-the-blank statements.



## Closing Prayer

1. **Gather** the students into a circle. Ask them to turn to the “Pray It!” sidebar on page 25. When all are ready, **invite** a volunteer to read the prayer aloud.
2. **Invite** everyone to join together in praying the Lord’s Prayer.
3. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.



## Social Justice

### Equality of All God's Children

The foundation of all social justice is the equality all human beings. This idea seems simple, yet it has been a concept remarkably difficult for human beings to put into practice. In our own American history, we recall that the founding fathers wrote: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights" (*Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776*). Yet, the "self-evidence" of equality and unalienable rights did not prevent some of these very founding fathers from holding slaves. The "self-evidence" of that inequality would not be apparent to American society for another century.

The equality of all human beings does not rest solely on "self-evidence." It rests on God's loving fatherhood, God's love for each of his children. Our equality—no matter the color of our skin, the capacity of our brains, the amount of our possessions—is based on these facts: God made each of us; he is our Father, we are his children; and we are all brothers and sisters. Even when we do not obey God's laws, he does not disown us. As Jesus taught: You have heard ...

Love your friends, hate your enemies." But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become the children of your Father in heaven. For he makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do evil. Why should God reward you if you love only the people who love you? . . . And if you speak only to your friends, have you done anything out of the ordinary? Even the pagans do that! You must be perfect ---just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48)

Ask the students to proclaim the teachings of Jesus. Distribute poster paper and markers. Ask the students to design and make a poster with the theme "God is our Father and we are all brothers and sisters." They might like to include some part of the Scripture quote from Matthew 5:43-48. Display the posters in an appropriate area in the parish church, school, or hall.

## 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 2 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 Connections

- In the movie *Evan Almighty* (2007, 95 minutes, rated A-II and PG), Academy Award–winning actor Morgan Freeman portrays God. This film offers young people a chance to explore the deeper questions about our Creator in an inviting and entertaining manner.

**Note:** For movies with a U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops rating of A-II, show only preselected scenes. Obtain parental permission for the participants who are under age thirteen to view an A-II rated movie, and use your best judgment regarding the appropriateness of the film and the advisability of viewing relevant excerpts.

- The song “You Are Near” by Dan Schutte (Oregon Catholic Press) is a contemporary musical setting of Psalm 139, partially printed in the text. You might like to play it at the end of the “Who Is God?” section.
- The Lord’s Prayer has been set to music in various styles. Gather as many of these musical settings as you can. You might be able to put them all on one CD. Use these musical settings in connection with the opening or closing prayer in the coming weeks.