

**LET'S DIVE INTO**  
**CONNECT!**

BRINGING FAITH TO LIFE

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# Welcome to *Connect! Bringing Faith to Life*

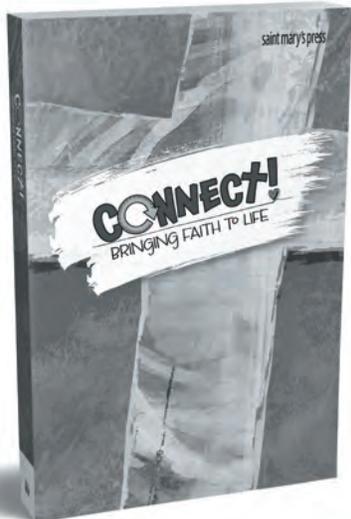
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This three-year program invites sixth, seventh, and eighth graders to explore the Catholic faith and make important connections to their lives.

Each year of the program engages the participants in an exploration of all four pillars of faith (The Creed, Liturgy and Sacraments, Christian Morality and Justice, and Prayer) as well as the Bible. The lessons based on the different pillars of faith make up most of the program and cover the fifty chapters in the *Connect!* book.

Additional chapters in year 2 and year 3 offer life-issue lessons that explore a variety of topics pertinent to the lives of middle schoolers and that reflect the application of faith concepts explored in earlier chapters.

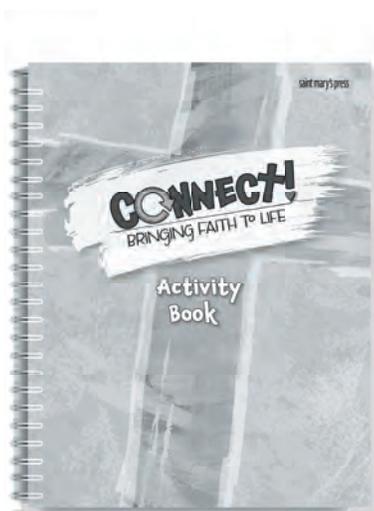
# Program Components



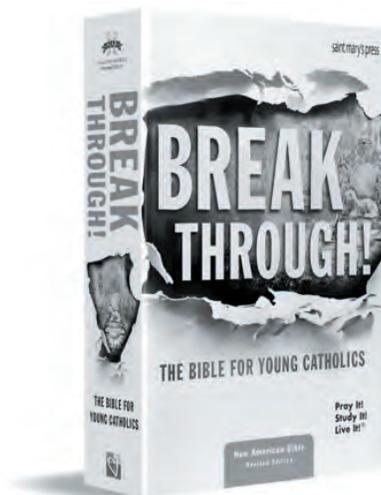
Connect! Book



Catechist Guides



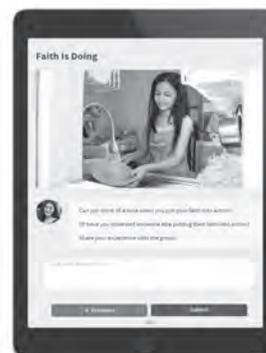
Activity Book



Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics, NABRE



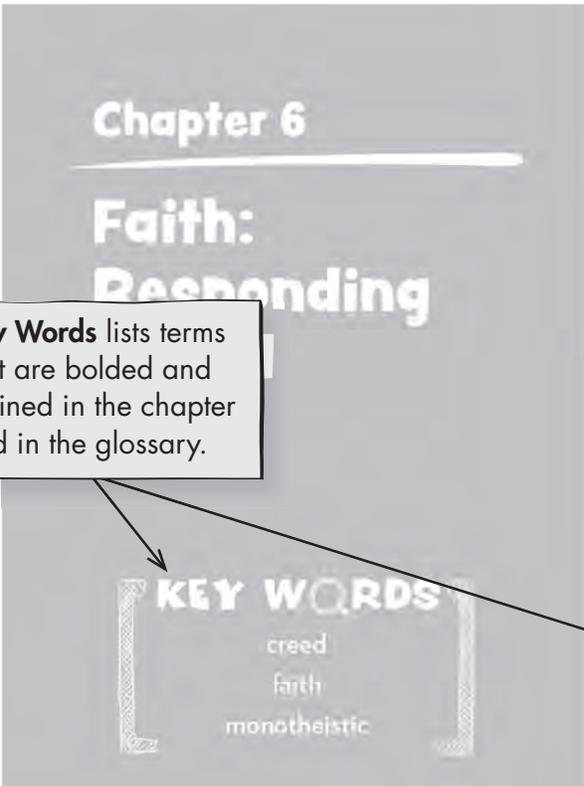
Online Resources



eLearning Lessons

# Overview of Components

## Connect! Book



**Key Words** lists terms that are bolded and defined in the chapter and in the glossary.

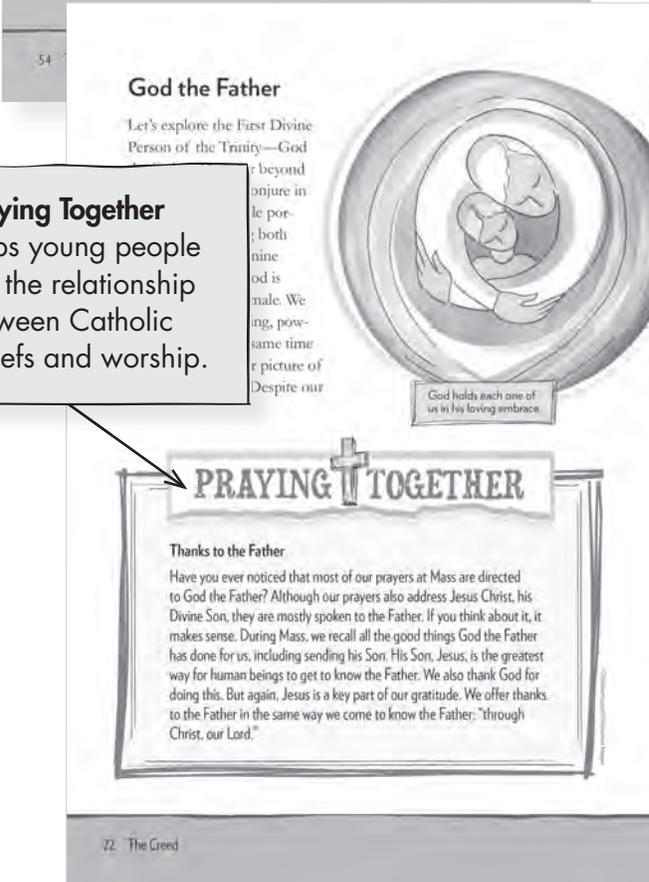
Often people say you need to have faith. They might say, "Keep the faith" or "Have faith in God." Has anyone ever asked if you have faith in God? Have you ever considered what your response would be? Maybe your first thought was, "Yes, of course I do!" Maybe this is the first time you have ever thought about it, so you do not have a quick answer. Maybe you are just not sure what you believe. Just considering the question is one of the first steps of faith. This chapter looks into what having faith means. Afterward, you may realize you have more faith than you thought you did.

### What Is Faith?

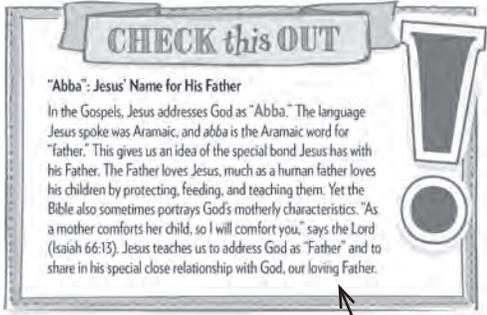
Throughout history, God has called upon people to follow his will. Faith is the way people respond to God's call. On a simple level, faith means a

**KEY WORD** Faith — Believing and accepting that God made himself known to us through his words and actions, especially through Jesus Christ. It is accepting God's truth with our minds and allowing it to guide our entire lives.

**Connect with God** offers a short prayer for young people to pray alone or together as a group.



**Praying Together** helps young people see the relationship between Catholic beliefs and worship.



limited understanding of God, we know and profess in our Creed that God the Father is maker of "all things visible and invisible," the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Jesus called God "Father," and we do the same. In calling God "Father," Jesus expresses his unique relationship with him: "All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father, and no one knows anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal himself, except the Father who has chosen him." (John 1:12-13)

God the Father is most certainly not like us, he is not a human being. It is important to note this difference and remind ourselves that God's ways are not our ways.

**KEY WORD** Abba — The Aramaic word for the Father.

**Check This Out!** provides a more in-depth exploration of topics related to the chapter.

**Good to Know** provides instructive and engaging information.

Third, events in the Gospels often delete or make perfect events that preceded earlier in the Old Testament. Chapter 6 of John's Gospel, for instance, recalls how God provided a kind of bread for his people in the desert so they wouldn't die (see Exodus, chapter 16). Then Jesus reveals that he is the perfect Bread from Heaven that gives eternal life to everyone who believes in him.

Fourth, we do not have to figure out everything ourselves. Many Bibles have helpful notes and comments. Thoughtful Christians have written many commentaries on the Gospels.

**good to KNOW**

We now have printers and other technology that can reproduce text easily. But before the 1400s, even printing presses didn't exist. Trained people—usually monks and nuns in monasteries—made new copies of the Bible by copying the Scriptures by hand.

**What Do You Think?** reflects on a topic and provides a question for discussion with the group or at home.

followed, the Apostles. Our bishops have the full power and responsibility to explain Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. But the Church also urges all of us to study and think about Jesus. If we ask in prayer, the Holy Spirit will guide us in our reading.

Reading the Gospels has changed lives. Missionaries have risked their own safety to bring the Good News to those who have not heard. Others have made the lives of those around their homes much better by their Gospel-inspired words and deeds.

If you want to make a difference in the world, try reading the Gospels. You will meet unforgettable, real people like Mary, the Mother of God; Joseph; Peter; James; and John. Above all, you will get to know Jesus. He will enlighten, challenge, encourage, comfort, and amaze you. He will become your hero and ideal. He will make you truly happy in this life and the next.



**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Imagine that Christ has just given this mission to you and your friends. Even though you don't have a lot of money or friends in important places or much experience in speaking to other people, you know you want to accept the mission. How would you go about spreading Jesus' teachings to all people? What first steps would you take? How far would you try to spread the message? Through what means would you do so?

**Living the Gospel** suggests ways young people can put their faith into action.

**LIVING the GOSPEL**

**How to Read Scripture**

God speaks to us personally in Sacred Scripture. We read Scripture to understand God's will for our lives. So, how can we get the most out of reading from Scripture, especially the Gospels?

First, we can ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand and live the Gospel message.

Second, we can read intentionally and carefully. We can imagine the people and events and even "make a movie" of them in our minds.

Third, we can pause to think about what we have read and how we can apply it to our own lives. How does the Holy Spirit encourage, teach, correct, challenge, comfort, or inspire us in this passage?

This way of reading and reflecting on Scripture can yield big insights. Of course, that will not always be the case, but if you keep trying with faith, the fruits will surely be great.

**Roots of Faith** provides historical insight into Catholic beliefs and practices.



**roots of faith**

**The Church and Other Religions**

The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions is one of the final documents the Second Vatican Council approved in the 1960s. The document marks a special moment in the Church's history with other religions, including Judaism. It rejects attitudes of contempt for Judaism and the Jewish people, and it rejects anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish) teachings. The Jewish faith, unlike other non-Christian religions, is a response to God's Revelation in the Old Testament. The Church has a profound love and respect for the Jews. While the Church deeply respects other religions, it emphasizes that we can know the fullness of God's Revelation only through the Catholic Church. This does not mean that those who follow other religions are barred from eternal life with God. Many people are not Christian but seek God with sincere hearts. People who try to do God's will, even if they do not know Jesus Christ or his Church through no fault of their own, may also achieve eternal friendship with God, or salvation.

**People of Faith** offers background on twenty-five of the many people who have strengthened the Church and inspired others with their faith.

**PEOPLE of FAITH**

Saint

**CATHERINE OF SIENA**

Catherine was born in 1347, in Siena, Italy, the twenty-fourth child born to her parents. Having experienced visions of Christ as a young child, she wanted to dedicate her life to Christ. Catherine loved the Church deeply, and she became known for her teaching and writing. She served people who were poor and sick. She ministered to people in prison and those suffering during the plague of 1374. During the papacy of Urban VI, the Church was in chaos and disarray. Urban was power hungry. The cardinals, recognizing their mistake in electing him, elected another pope. However, Urban refused to give up the papacy, so the Church had two rival popes. Catherine suffered, seeing the Church suffer. She prayed that her sufferings might heal this serious rift in the Church.

In 1380, Catherine collapsed from exhaustion and a practice of extreme fasting. Within months she was dead. At her death, the marks of stigmata (the wounds of Jesus) were seen on her body. Catherine is also known for her writings on the spiritual life. She was canonized and was the first layperson named a Doctor of the Church. Saint Catherine's feast day is celebrated on April 29.



# Catechist Guides

The **Chapter Summary** provides a concise explanation of the content covered in the chapter.

8 Year 1

Chapter 1

## Chapter Summary

"God is love" (1 John 4:8), and love is meant to be revealed. God chooses to reveal God's very life, love, and plan for humanity to us. We call God's sharing of his life, love, and plan Divine Revelation. God has chosen to communicate his Revelation through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. These together make up the single sacred Deposit of the Word of God, preserved, protected, and passed down through the Church for the sake of the world.

## Background for the Catechist

When you hear "God's Word" or "Word of God," what first comes to mind for you? For many people, it is the Bible. Sacred Scripture is a key mode of God's Revelation, but the Bible is not in itself, or solely, God's Word. Help the participants see that like a two-drawer filing cabinet, Scripture is only one part of the sacred Deposit of Faith!

Jesus himself is the *Eternal Word of God* (see John, chapter 1), and the Word has made the Father known to humanity by the power of the Holy Spirit from the very beginning of time. Emphasize to the participants that when discussing "the Word," we're ultimately referring to Jesus as revealed in Sacred Tradition and in Sacred Scripture. Both Tradition and Scripture are essential parts of God's Revelation to humanity. The Church preserves, protects, interprets, and communicates this Good News with the whole world in every generation. This is primarily the role of the Apostles and their successors, the popes and bishops of the Church, and we have the great joy of sharing their work.

Also emphasize that because we are human, we cannot expect to fully know God in this life. But as we live our life, we come to know God more and more until we come to fully know him in Heaven. This year will be a part of that very important journey toward God for the young people in your group, and you will be their guide.

## Catechist's Prayer

Good and gracious God, open my eyes to your grace, love, and presence in my life and in the young people in my care. Give me the grace to be a faithful witness to your existence, eternal truth, and loving kindness. Continue to reveal yourself to me that they might know you through me. Amen.

## Teaching Tip

When talking about God, it is helpful to use the term *mystery*. God is beyond our complete comprehension, but he is not unknowable. Help the participants see that it's okay to be awestruck and filled with wonder regarding God. It's okay for us to not have all the answers. God continues to draw us close to himself and reveal himself to us, but he remains a mystery. Invite the participants to be open to what God is revealing to them as they learn more about what God has revealed to the Church.

**Background for the Catechist** offers a point of reflection on a topic related to the chapter.

The **Catechist's Prayer** can be prayed before preparing for or teaching each chapter.

**Teaching Tip** offers suggestions or points of consideration for the chapter's lessons.

Each core lesson includes step-by-step instructions and follows the same format: **Opening Prayer, Engage Activity, Core Content, Core Learning Activity, Session Wrap-Up, and Closing Prayer.**

**Getting Ready** lists the core understanding and highlights key information to aid planning.

28 Year 1

Chapter 3 • The Holy Trinity 29

### Getting Ready

Connect! Bringing Faith to Life, pages 26–33

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**Core Understanding**  
The Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith—namely, that the one loving God has revealed himself in three Persons as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

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<p><b>Materials Needed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> index cards, one for each participant</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Words</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God the Father</li> <li>• Holy Spirit</li> <li>• Son of God</li> <li>• Trinity</li> </ul>	<p><b>Catechism Pillar</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Creed</li> </ul> <p><b>Catechism Connection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paragraphs 232–267 (The Trinity)</li> </ul>
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Chapter 3

Chapter 3

#### Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Make** the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.” (Pause.)
2. **Pray** the following:
  - Loving God, in your amazing, unquenchable love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Help us appreciate you for the invitation to immerse ourselves in your love. Help us say yes to your invitation, through Christ.
3. **Invite** the participants to offer any special intentions.
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

#### Engage Activity (10 minutes)

1. **Invite** the participants to say aloud together the Sign of the Cross. (“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.”)
2. **Ask** the young people how many times they have said the Sign of the Cross.
3. **Invite** a few volunteers to share with the whole group what the words mean.

#### Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

##### Trinity Spotting

**Objective:** To help the participants discover evidence of the Trinity all around them—that every time they see three in one, they might think of God.

1. **Explain** in these or similar words:
  - God desires that we know him and that we think of him and pray to him often. He has placed evidence of his loving presence all around us. Unfortunately, we don’t often have eyes to see this. In fact, I’m willing to bet that there is evidence of the Trinity in this room, in your house, and in the natural world that we’ve all been missing—until now.
2. **Ask** the young people to find “People of Faith” on page 33 in their books. Note that Saint Patrick saw evidence of the Trinity in a three-leaf clover and used that clover to teach the people of Ireland about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. **Arrange** the participants into pairs. Each pair should look around the room or, if possible, around the parish grounds to go “Trinity Spotting.” They have only 10 minutes to come up with as many examples of Trinity as they can. Tell them to look for three things that are distinct but closely related or one thing with three parts.
4. **Give** everyone an opportunity to share their findings with the group. Conclude by suggesting to the young people that they use the things they identified to remind themselves that the one loving God has revealed himself as three Divine Persons—Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit—who are in complete union with one another.

#### Session Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

1. **Invite** volunteers to share key things they learned during the session. Ensure that the following points are made:
  - There is only one God.
  - The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not separate gods. They are three Divine Persons united in the one God.
2. **Distribute** the index cards. Instruct the participants to write the following question on their cards:
  - What questions do I still have about the Trinity?
3. **Invite** the young people to take the cards home and refer to them a few times during the week. Ask them to answer the question for themselves or to share their cards with friends or family members and discuss their answers with them.

#### Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Direct** the participants to find “Connect with God” on page 27 in their books. Invite them to read the prayer aloud together.
2. **Close** by making the Sign of the Cross.

4. **Remind** the participants that at Mass when we recite the Creed, we begin with the words “I believe in one God.” Add comments in light of what was shared in step 3 (For example, if someone expressed the idea that Christians believe in one God, affirm that. If belief in one God didn’t come up, then clarify that the Father, Son, and Spirit are not separate gods.)
5. **Introduce** the term *trinity* and explain that it describes a unity of three things. Draw a picture of a shamrock (a three-leaf clover) that all the young people can see. Ask for volunteers to share why this might be a good symbol for something that is a trinity. (It is made up of three leaves united to make up a single, unique plant.)
6. **Explain** the following information:
  - The earliest Christians were Jewish and worshipped only the God of Israel, but through experience, they realized that the one, true, loving God was revealing himself as three Persons.
  - For Christians, the doctrine of the Trinity is the central truth of faith: There is one God in three Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (If accurate, remind them that they read a little about this in chapter 2.)
  - The love and unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit flow out to us and fill us so that we can share that love with others.

#### Core Content (15 minutes)

1. **Engage** the young people in a review of pages 27–32 in the *Connect!* book by dividing the material into sections, such as the following:
  - “One God, Three Divine Persons,” pages 27–29
  - “The Work of the Trinity,” pages 29–31
  - “The Trinity is a Communion,” pages 31–32
2. **Assign** each young person one of the sections of material. They can read silently to themselves or gather in small groups with others who share the same assigned material. If opting for small-group reading, ask one person from each group to read the material aloud.

**P** If a choice for your group, consider choosing to read the chapter prior to the participants to read the chapter during the session. This activity incorporates the key points listed on page 33 of this guide.

Chapter 3

**Optional Activities** are offered at the end of each core chapter, providing ways to adapt or extend lessons.

40 Year 1

Chapter 4 • Creation 41

**Optional Activities**

**Genesis on God and Creation (15 minutes)**

**Materials Needed**

- Bibles, one for each participant

**Objective:** To explore what Genesis tells us about God and creation.

1. **Arrange** the participants into small groups of three or four, and distribute the Bibles. Instruct everyone to find Genesis 1:24–2:4 and read the passage silently.
2. **Instruct** each group to appoint a recorder to write down its ideas. Give the groups the following task:
  - List at least five things the story tells us about God and creation that do not contradict what science tells us.
3. **Invite** each group to present its list to the large group. After each group has presented, affirm and build on their responses as necessary. Include the following things if the reports don't include them:
  - God created everything.
  - God is all powerful.
  - Human beings are made in the image of God.
  - Human beings are essentially good.
  - All of creation is good.
  - God shares his creative power with us.
  - Humans are responsible to care for God's creation.

**Caring for Creation (20 minutes)**

**Materials Needed**

- the video "CST 101: Care for God's Creation" (3:05), available on YouTube

**Objective:** To reflect on the gift of creation and the call to care for this gift.

1. **Read** aloud, or invite one or more participants to read aloud, Genesis 1:26–31. Highlight the following idea from the passage:
  - God gave human beings dominion over the animals—all the fish, the birds, and the creatures that walk on land.
2. **Write** *dominion* where all can see. Ask for volunteers to share their understanding of the common meaning of *dominion* (control, superiority, domination).
3. **Explain** to the young people that the Book of Genesis was written in Hebrew and that our text is a translation. Note that scholars who study the Hebrew language and how best to translate it emphasize that the common English language notion of dominion isn't an exact translation. Instead of thinking about control and domination, the idea of "taking care of" something is closer in meaning.
4. **Announce** that you are going to show a 3-minute video on caring for the Earth. Let everyone know that after viewing you will ask them to describe one scene or idea that especially caught their attention. Play the video "CST 101: Care for God's Creation."
5. **Facilitate** the participants' sharing of the aspects of the video that caught their attention.
6. **Highlight** the idea that caring for the Earth and caring for other people are related. Consider reshooting the segment in which Carolyn Woo talks about poor people being hurt most when creation suffers (begin at 1:27).
7. **Conclude** by reminding the young people about the theme of gift. Recall that we hear that theme in Genesis and also in the video: All creation is a gift from God, and we are called to take care of this gift.

**God's Ongoing Creation (15 minutes)**

**Materials Needed**

- markers
- newsprint, one sheet for each small group of three or four

**Objective:** To reflect on how God's creative power can be found at work in the world today.

1. **Arrange** the participants into small groups of three or four. Distribute some markers and a sheet of newsprint to each group. Ask the participants to brainstorm how God's creative power can be found at work in the world today. If they need some assistance, ask: "Where can you find people working to improve the world? How do natural events help bring about new life?"
2. **Invite** the groups to illustrate their examples.
3. **Direct** each group to present its illustration and to emphasize that God's creation continues.

The **Chapter Summary** provides the key ideas covered in the lessons. It may be used as a catechist reference, copied and distributed to the young people, or sent home with the participants as helpful information for their families.

**Chapter 4 Summary**

**Creation**

1. God created the entire universe out of nothing and without help.
2. The role of science is to figure out the physical nature of the universe, but only God can reveal that creation is a gift of God's love.
3. Evil exists, but God's love continually turns evil into good.
4. In Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we see the triumph of good (the Resurrection) over evil (his suffering and death on the cross).
5. God created us in his image, as free and loving beings, so that we can freely choose between good and evil.
6. Sin is the choice of evil (even on a small scale) over good. Sin separates us, even in a small way, from God and from one another.
7. We can sin by omission—that is, by not doing something we know we should do.
8. The Word of God, Jesus Christ, became man to save us, to give us new life, and to restore and deepen our union with God.
9. God continually guides creation toward greater love, and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can cooperate with God in his plan.
10. In the Nicene Creed, we summarize what has been revealed about God and his plan for us, including the creation of the "invisible," the angels.

The life-issue lessons that are part of the catechist guides for year 2 and year 3 follow a slightly different format: **Opening Prayer, Engage Activity, Core Learning Activity 1, Core Learning Activity 2, Session Wrap-Up, and Closing Prayer.**

158 Year 3
Life Issue G • Identifying Role Models 159

Life Issue G

### Getting Ready

**Core Understanding**  
The saints and other Christian role models show us how we can love God, others, and ourselves.

**Materials Needed**

- a Bible
- sticky notes, six for each participant
- newsprint, two sheets for each small group of three or four, plus three extras
- markers
- dictionaries, one of each for each small group of three or four
- copies of the handout "Guidance in Living Our Faith," page 000, one for each participant (optional)
- scissors, one for each small group of three or four
- rolls of tape, one for each small group of three or four
- several magazines for each small group of three or four
- other craft supplies

**Catechism Connection**

- Paragraph 2030 (Saints as Examples of Holiness)
- Paragraph 1477 (The Value of the Good Works of the Saints)
- Paragraphs 750–752, 771, 899 (The Church as Communion)
- Paragraph 1102 (Faith and Community of Believers)

**Engage Activity (15 minutes)**

- Distribute** six sticky notes to each participant. Instruct the young people to list the qualities and values that are most important to them (honesty, caring, strength, and so on), one per note.
- Collect** all the notes, read each one aloud, and then stick each to a sheet of newsprint, posted where all can see. Have another sheet of newsprint posted next to this one.
- Direct** the participants to find "Living the Gospel" on page 144 in their books, which lists the fruit of the Spirit. Invite a volunteer to read it aloud. Then ask the following question:
  - What qualities and values do people who are filled with God's Spirit possess? (*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control*)
- Write** the responses on the sheet of newsprint posted next to the one with the sticky notes. Point out the qualities and values that are the same or similar to those on the sticky notes and those that are different. Facilitate a discussion by asking the following questions:
  - The things we have posted here reflect what we value and what we believe, and what disciples of Jesus Christ value and believe. How do we put these values and beliefs into action?
  - Who do you know who demonstrates one or more of the qualities we have posted here? How do their lives reflect those qualities?

**Opening Prayer (5 minutes)**

- Make** the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God." (*Pause.*)
- Tell** the young people that this session will begin with a reading that speaks of the qualities of a Christian role model. Ask a volunteer to read Colossians 3:12–17 aloud. Pray the following:
  - Lord, bless our gathering today. We thank you for the saints and the people in our lives who show us how to live with love. Help us be good Christian role models for others. Amen.
- Invite** the participants to offer any special intentions for which they would like to pray.
- Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

**Core Learning Activity 1 (15 minutes)**

**Guidance in Living Our Faith**

**Objective:** To seek saints and Christian role models who we can look to as our guides.

- Arrange** the young people into small groups of three or four. Distribute a sheet of newsprint, a marker, and a dictionary to each group. Ask for one person in each group to write the phrase "Role Model" at the top of the newsprint. Explain the task as follows:
  - Each group has 3 minutes to come up with a dictionary definition for *role model*.
- Invite** each group to share its definition for *role model*. Comment as follows:
  - Role models are people who possess qualities that we want to imitate.
- Encourage** the groups to refer back to the qualities that were listed earlier on the newsprint. Instruct each group to develop a list of qualities and values found in a Christian role model and to share their lists. Ask the groups to name some people they consider Christian role models. (Suggest that they add names of role models they listed earlier or names of the people of faith featured in the *Connect!* book.)
- Invite** each group to share their role models. Write these names on another sheet of newsprint. Comment as follows:
  - Many of the role models in the media today are trying to sell us things. Sport figures and pop stars are role models who are sometimes glorified despite their bad behavior. Being a winner can be so valued that some people cheat to obtain this status. This contradicts the message of Jesus.
  - The saints and Christian role models are people we look to as our guides. Their attitudes and actions show us how we can love God, others, and ourselves.

160 Year 3

**Optional Add On:** Distribute a copy of the handout "Guidance in Living Our Faith" to each participant. Use the handout to help the young people reflect on the role of the saints in their own lives.

Life Issue G

**Core Learning Activity 2 (15 minutes)**

**What Is a Role Model?**

**Objective:** To reflect on the most important qualities of the ideal Christian role model for young people.

- Arrange** the participants into small groups of three or four. Distribute to each group a sheet of newsprint, scissors, a roll of tape, a marker, several magazines, and other craft supplies. Explain the task as follows:
  - Each group will use the large sheet of newsprint to trace the outline of a group member's body and then cut out the figure.
  - Use the magazines and craft supplies to create a group "role model."
  - Your role model will reflect the most important qualities of the ideal Christian role model for young people. You may refer to the people of faith in the *Connect!* book.
  - Be as creative as you'd like in introducing your role model to the large group.
- Invite** the groups to present their role models to the large group.

**Session Wrap-Up (5 minutes)**

- Invite** volunteers to share key things they learned during the session. Ensure that the following point is made:
  - The saints and other Christian role models show us how we can love God, others, and ourselves.
- Distribute** the index cards. Instruct the participants to write the following questions on their cards:
  - Who is one of my role models? Why?
- Invite** the young people to take the cards home and refer to them a few times during the week. Ask them to answer the questions for themselves or to share their cards with friends or family members and discuss their answers with them.

**Closing Prayer (5 minutes)**

- Ask** the young people to spend several minutes praying for those who have been role models for them. Pray the following:
  - Lord God, you have given us your Son Jesus, to show us the way to you. Thank you for sending us role models who show us how to love you, ourselves, and others. May the fruits of the Spirit shine in our lives as we become lives as we become role models for others. Amen.
- Close** by making the Sign of the Cross.

Life-issue lessons include a **handout** that corresponds to one of the learning activities with the lesson. A **chapter summary** is also included and can be used as a catechist reference, copied and distributed to the young people, or sent home with the participants as helpful information for their families.

**I Am God's Gift to the World**

I am \_\_\_\_\_, I am made in the image of God,  
write your name

not because of what I can do or what I look like, but simply because I am his child. God has given me a light to shine by giving me the gifts of \_\_\_\_\_.

list two or three of your gifts and talents

During this life, I will have many roles. I may not always know what my role is, but right now I know that I am \_\_\_\_\_.

list a few important roles you have: son, daughter, sister, brother, friend, student, volunteer, tutor, scout, team captain, and so on

But I cannot do everything on my own. God has also placed \_\_\_\_\_

list your family members

in my life. They are people I love and who love me by \_\_\_\_\_.

list what your parents and others have done for you

I am a member of the communities of \_\_\_\_\_

and \_\_\_\_\_

name

I am a temple of the Holy Spirit to whom God has given the qualities of \_\_\_\_\_

list a few of your qualities: joy, honesty, courage, curiosity, loyalty, humor, and so on

I am not God's gift to myself. I was not placed here to seek my own pleasure, but to serve. I serve others by \_\_\_\_\_

list a few good things you do for others

I am God's unique gift to the world. I am \_\_\_\_\_

write your name



**Life Issue A Summary**

**Feeling Alone**

1. Being identified with a group is fine. It is good to be a part of a larger community. In fact, much of our faith is about being part of something larger than ourselves.
2. Nonetheless, we are more than what we like, where we live, the school we attend, or the race or races we are.
3. To find out who we truly are, we can turn to God. God speaks to us through the Church, through the Bible, and through prayer.
4. Human beings are good. There is nothing we or anyone else can do to take this goodness away.
5. Though we are always good, we do not always do good things. There is a difference between being good and doing good things.
6. God made each of us differently. Each of us has a particular role that no one else can accomplish. Some of us have gifts and talents that others do not. Our job is to share our gifts and talents with one another.
7. Every human being is a creature of God and is therefore loved by God, regardless of nationality, race, gender, or religion.
8. All of our lives are gifts. Your life is not just God's gift to you; it is God's gift to everyone else.
9. Your gift and responsibility is to develop the gifts and talents God gave you to the best of your ability.

# Activity Book

The **activity book** offers two activities to supplement each chapter in the *Connect!* book. These activities can be incorporated into the lessons in a variety of ways.

Year 1  
**1A**

## Revelation

Thoughtfully and reflectively respond to the following questions.

Think about the events of a typical day for you—your classes in school, sports or other activities you participate in, and time with family and friends. How do you experience the presence of God in your day?

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Describe how your own artistic depiction of Creation would look. What elements would you include to convey God's power?

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Choose one of the elements you selected, and explain how it conveys God's power.

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Year 1  
**1B**

## Scripture and Tradition

Complete the following sentences, and then find each answer in the word search below. Words can appear in any direction.

1. The part of the Mass in which we hear readings about what God has done for our salvation is the Liturgy of the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ is another name for Sacred Scripture.
3. The Bible's authors were guided by the \_\_\_\_\_ to record without error what God wants us to know for our salvation.
4. At the Council of Trent, the bishops made clear that both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are necessary for our salvation.
5. The Bible contains the forty-six books of the \_\_\_\_\_ and the twenty-seven books of the \_\_\_\_\_.
6. God's Revelation is complete in \_\_\_\_\_.
7. In \_\_\_\_\_, we are called to be prophets by sharing God's Word with others in our words and actions.

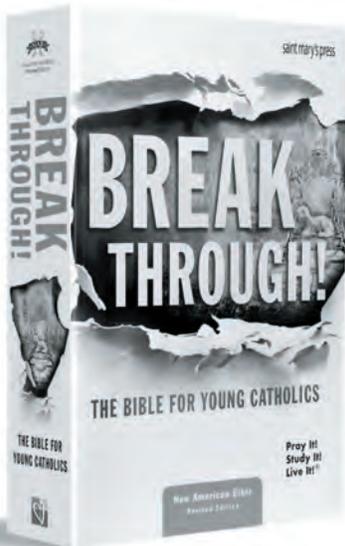
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D	T	J	C	S	K	H	Y	I	P	N	S

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# Bible

Young people will get the most from the lessons if they have their own Bible. The program works best with the *New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE)*. The NABRE translation of **Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics** (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2016) is highly suggested for use with this program as it was developed specifically for adolescents and can enhance the study of Scripture with its special features.

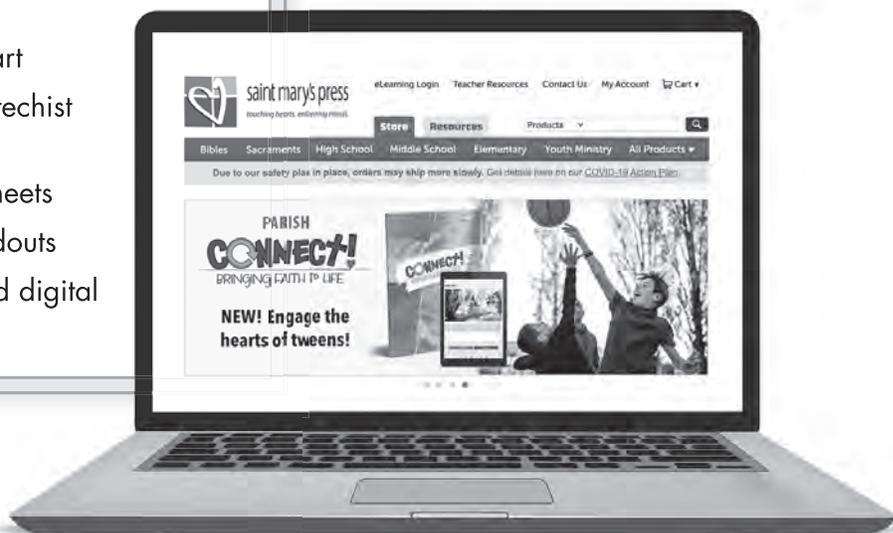


## Online Resources

**Online Resources** specific to each catechist guide can be found at [www.smp.org/connect\\_parish](http://www.smp.org/connect_parish).

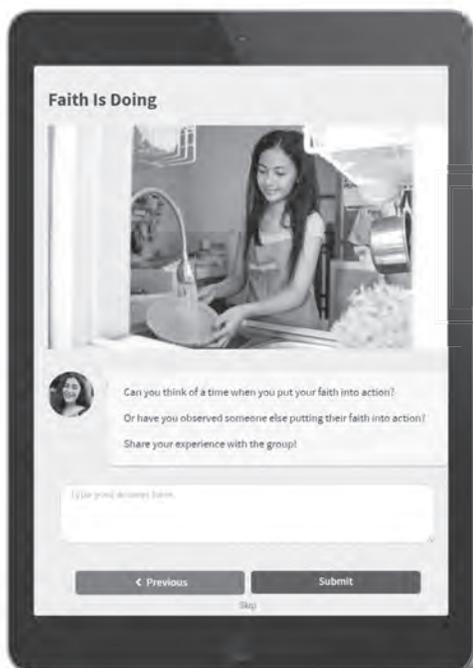
These resources include:

- a scope-and-sequence chart
- a digital version of the catechist guide
- catechist and parent tip sheets
- digital versions of all handouts
- web links to recommended digital media



## eLearning Lessons

Interactive **eLearning lessons** provide a digital learning option for the or at home.



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# Chapter 1

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## Revelation, Scripture, and Tradition

## Chapter Summary

“God is love” (1 John 4:8), and love is meant to be revealed. God chooses to reveal God’s very life, love, and plan for humanity to us. We call God’s sharing of his life, love, and plan Divine Revelation. God has chosen to communicate his Revelation through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. These together make up the single sacred Deposit of the Word of God, preserved, protected, and passed down through the Church for the sake of the world.

## Background for the Catechist

When you hear “God’s Word” or “Word of God,” what first comes to mind for you? For many people, it is the Bible. Sacred Scripture is a key mode of God’s Revelation, but the Bible is not in itself, or solely, God’s Word. Help the participants see that like a two-drawer filing cabinet, Scripture is only one part of the sacred Deposit of Faith!

Jesus himself is the *Eternal Word* of God (see John, chapter 1), and the Word has made the Father known to humanity by the power of the Holy Spirit from the very beginning of time. Emphasize to the participants that when discussing “the Word,” we’re ultimately referring to Jesus as revealed in Sacred Tradition and in Sacred Scripture. Both Tradition and Scripture are essential parts of God’s Revelation to humanity. The Church preserves, protects, interprets, and communicates this Good News with the whole world in every generation. This is primarily the role of the Apostles and their successors, the popes and bishops of the Church, and we have the great joy of sharing their work.

Also emphasize that because we are human, we cannot expect to fully know God in this life. But as we live our life, we come to know God more and more until we come to fully know him in Heaven. This year will be a part of that very important journey toward God for the young people in your group, and you will be their guide.

## Catechist’s Prayer

Good and gracious God, open my eyes to your grace, love, and presence in my life and in the young people in my care. Give me the grace to be a faithful witness to your existence, eternal truth, and loving kindness. Continue to reveal yourself to me that they might know you through me. Amen.

### Teaching Tip

When talking about God, it is helpful to use the term *mystery*. God is beyond our complete comprehension, but he is not unknowable. Help the participants see that it’s okay to be awestruck and filled with wonder regarding God. It’s okay for us to not have all the answers. God continues to draw us close to himself and reveal himself to us, but he remains a mystery. Invite the participants to be open to what God is revealing to them as they learn more about what God has revealed to the Church.

## Getting Ready

*Connect! Bringing Faith to Life, pages 8–17*

### Core Understanding

Out of love, God reveals himself and his plan for humanity in two main ways: through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

### Materials Needed

- Bibles, one for each participant
- index cards, one for each participant

### Key Words

- Gospels
- Revelation
- Sacred Scripture
- Sacred Tradition

### Catechism Pillar

- The Creed

### Catechism Connection

- Paragraphs 31–43, 50–141  
(The Revelation of God)

### Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Make** the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.” *(Pause.)*
2. **Pray** the following:
  - Good and gracious God, we thank you for bringing us here today. May this time we spend together bring us closer to one another and to you. We ask that you make yourself known to us. We cannot see you or hear you or touch you, but we know you are here. Please speak to our hearts. Make us aware of your presence. Amen.
3. **Invite** the young people to offer any special intentions for which they would like to pray.
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

### Engage Activity (10 minutes)

1. **Engage** the participants’ experience, using these or similar words:
  - I’d like you to think of a time when you really wanted to be friends with someone, or someone really wanted to be friends with you, and later you actually did become friends. Consider how that friendship got going and eventually developed.
2. **Invite** two or three volunteers to share how their friendships developed. Add comments that help everyone see that relationships develop because people are intentional about wanting to be friends and make themselves known—and so it is with God.

3. **Ask** the young people to think about ways God communicates with us and makes himself known, and invite a couple of volunteers to share.
4. **Affirm** everyone who shared. Build on the comments by summarizing in your own words these ideas from pages 9–10 of the *Connect!* book:
  - God communicates his presence to us in many wonderful ways.
  - We can see God’s presence in creation—the trees that give us shade, the sun that warms us, the people around us.
  - God makes himself known to us through the voice of the Church, and also through our conscience speaking from within us.
  - Perhaps you’ve had an experience in which you recognized God’s presence: in the feeling of God’s forgiveness that lifts the burden of sin, in a quiet moment of prayer, in expressions of love with people who are close to you.
  - God makes himself known to us because he loves us and wants to give himself to us so we know we are never alone.
5. **Explain** briefly that God is a mystery but that he is not unknowable. He communicates with us and continues to draw us close to himself and reveal himself to us. Invite the participants to be open to what God is revealing to them as they learn more about what God has revealed to the Church.

### Core Content (15 minutes)

1. **Engage** the young people in a review of pages 11–15 in the *Connect!* book by dividing the material into sections, such as the following:
  - “Revelation” (last three paragraphs), pages 11–12
  - “Sacred Scripture,” pages 12–14
  - “Sacred Tradition,” pages 14–15
2. **Assign** each young person one of the sections of material. They can read silently to themselves or gather in small groups with others who share the same assigned material. If opting for small-group reading, ask one person from each group to read the material aloud.
3. **Invite** volunteers to report key ideas from each section of the material to the large group. Be prepared to expand on the reports as necessary to ensure that key concepts are covered.

### Teaching Tip

If collaborative reading and reporting is not the best choice for your group, consider using one of the following options or another of your choosing:

- **At-home reading option:** Invite the young people to read the chapter prior to the session.
- **In-session individual reading option:** Ask the participants to read the chapter during the session, or read it aloud to them.
- **Presentation option:** Give a short presentation that incorporates the key points listed on the handout “Chapter 1 Summary” on page 16 of this guide.

## Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

### God's Creation

**Objective:** To discover the nature of truths revealed in the Bible by exploring the Creation accounts found in Genesis, chapters 1 and 2.

1. **Explain** in these or similar words:
  - The Bible teaches truth. The sometimes-difficult work is trying to figure out the truth that the Bible is trying to teach us. We will take a closer look at the two Creation accounts at the beginning of Genesis to identify the kind of truth they are teaching us.
2. **Arrange** the participants into small groups of three or four. Distribute the Bibles, and ask the young people to find Genesis, chapter 1.
3. **Direct** them to take turns reading each of the days of Creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3. Then instruct the groups to create a diagram that illustrates the order of God's creative activity. (They can either create a grid or draw a picture for each of the days.)
4. **Invite** one or two groups to share their findings. Ask the other groups if they have anything to add.
5. **Direct** the groups to do the same thing for the second Creation account by reading Genesis 2:4–25, noting what was created or being done at each step.
6. **Encourage** one or two groups to share their findings. Then ask the other groups if they have anything to add.
7. **Discuss** these or similar questions with the whole group:
  - How are the two Creation accounts in the Book of Genesis different? (*In the first account, humans are created last, after all else has been created. In the second account, the man is created first, then all the creatures of the Earth, then the woman.*)
  - How are the two Creation accounts in the Book of Genesis the same, or what truths do they have in common? (*God created all that exists, God creates humans to live in a special relationship as husband and wife, God creates humans in a special relationship with himself, God creates out of power and goodness, and God asks humans to share in his creative work.*)
  - There are different kinds of truth: historical, religious, moral, scientific, spiritual, and mathematical, for example. What kinds of truth are these truths at the beginning of Genesis? (*spiritual, religious, possibly moral*)
  - What kinds of truth are these accounts not trying to teach? (*mathematical, scientific, historical*)
  - How can you tell? (*The writing uses symbolic numbers, doesn't give specific dates, uses symbolic names, and so on.*)
8. **Remind** the participants that the Bible does not always provide the truths of science or the truths of history, but it always provides the spiritual and religious truth, the truths of salvation. (You could define *salvation* as "our true and perfect union with God and with one another.") It does not teach or intend to teach "how the heavens go" but rather "how to go to Heaven."
9. **Emphasize** the importance of Scripture, but remind the participants that God's Revelation also comes to us through the Church's Tradition. Provide an example by drawing attention to the Nicene Creed, which we recite during Mass. This has been handed on since the early days of the Church but does not appear in the Bible. This does not make it less important to Catholics.

## Teaching Tip

Many young people understand “truth” as limited to only the realms of historical or scientific inquiry. It is important here to emphasize that the Bible is true and does teach truth—not necessarily scientific or historical truth, but the truth of salvation. When someone asks, “Is the Bible true?” a good answer might be another question: “What do you mean by *true*?” Reference “Check This Out!” on page 17 in the *Connect!* book.

### Session Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

1. **Invite** volunteers to share key things they learned during the session. Ensure that the following points are made:
  - God’s reveals himself and his plan for humanity out of love.
  - God’s reveals in two main ways: through Scripture, or the Bible, and through Tradition, which are the truths handed down over the centuries by the Church.
2. **Distribute** the index cards. Instruct the participants to write the following questions on their cards:
  - Have I been aware of God being present to me in recent days? If yes, how have I recognized God in the moment? If no, how might God be quietly working in the background as I go through my days?
3. **Direct** the young people to take their cards home and refer to them a few times during the week. Ask them to answer the questions for themselves or to share their cards with friends or family members and discuss their answers with them.

### Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Direct** the participants to find “Connect with God!” on page 9 of their books. Lead the prayer, or invite a volunteer to lead the prayer. Invite everyone to join in saying “make yourself known to me” each time it appears.
2. **Close** by making the Sign of the Cross.

## Optional Activities

### Who Am I? (20 minutes)

#### Materials Needed

none

**Objective:** To help the participants understand that if we really want to get to know someone, we need to spend time with them, listen to them, and be concerned about things that matter to them.

1. **Explain** in these or similar words:
  - If we're going to get to know someone, it is important that we be willing to spend time with that person. We must ask them important questions and be willing to listen to their responses. We're going to practice this by getting to know each other today!
2. **Display** the following interview questions and have the participants write them down with space between each question for answers:
  - Have you ever lived in another state or country?
  - What is your favorite book and why?
  - What is your favorite movie and why?
  - If you could have any meal you wanted, what would it be?
  - If you could do anything for your future career, what would it be?
  - Have you ever had an experience of God? If so, what was it like?
3. **Arrange** the participants into pairs, and instruct them to interview each other. This will work best if each person is paired with someone they might not normally hang out with.
4. **Invite** each person to share with the large group one thing they learned about their partner.

**Materials Needed**

- comic strips from newspapers, several for each small group of three or four
- scissors, one pair for each small group of three or four
- glue or tape for each small group of three or four
- art paper, one sheet for each small group of three or four

**That's Pretty Funny (20 minutes)**

**Objective:** To emphasize that even today authors use nonscientific, nonhistorically accurate images and text to teach truths about people, places, and relationships.

1. **Arrange** the participants into small groups of three or four, and distribute the comic strips and art supplies.
2. **Explain** in these or similar words:
  - Comics use elements that clearly are not real—such as talking animals—to make us laugh, smile, or even cry. We know that real dogs, cats, cows, and chickens don't talk, but that doesn't mean that a comic using a talking cow can't teach us something true about real life.
3. **Direct** everyone to read the comics in their group and to choose two or three that are true in their experience (for example, "Oh, my gosh! I know that's what my dog is thinking all the time!"). Once they find the comics they relate to, they should cut them out, glue them to a sheet of art paper, and write explanations below each one about what makes the comic true for them.
4. **Ask** for volunteers to share the comics they chose and why. Collect and post the comics around the room for all to see.
5. **Discuss** the following or similar questions:
  - What makes a comic strip funny or popular? *(It teaches things that the reader recognizes as true.)*
  - Does the author expect that the reader would read the comic as if everything in it was real life? *(No. The author is not trying to teach that animals talk, for example.)*
  - How can understanding the variety of ways comic authors write help us better understand biblical authors or writing styles? *(Answers may vary but should include that truth, including God's revealed truth, is revealed through a variety of writing styles.)*
6. **Conclude** in these or similar words:
  - There are many different literary styles in the Bible. Some stories are meant to be primarily symbolic, like comics. The Bible also contains poetry, law codes, short sayings, letters, parables, and some religious history. Each style has its own "rules" to use in order for people to understand it correctly. If we read symbolic stories—like the first chapters of Genesis—as if they are historical accounts, we will not interpret them correctly.

## God's Invitation (20 minutes)

### Materials Needed

- the clip from the movie *Evan Almighty* (2007, 96 minutes, rated A-II and PG) where Evan first meets God (*optional*)
- Bibles, one for each participant

**Objective:** To invite the participants to think about what God might be inviting them to do for him.

1. **Show** the movie clip from *Evan Almighty* in which Evan first meets God. (If opting not to show this clip, skip to step 2.) Explain that after this, God asks Evan to build an ark, like Noah in the Old Testament. Eventually, Evan does this even though he does not understand the reason for doing so. At the end of the movie, the reason becomes clear.
2. **Distribute** the Bibles, and instruct the young people to find 1 Samuel 3:1–10. Have one or more participants read the passage aloud. Explain that Samuel wasn't much older than they are now when he heard God's call. Ask the following questions:
  - How did Samuel know that God was calling him? (*A wise, older person helped Samuel recognize God's call.*)
  - How do we recognize God's call? (*by listening to older, wise people; by praying; by recognizing our talents and gifts; by reading the Bible and learning Church teaching*)
3. **Direct** the participants to spend some time writing about how they can recognize God's voice in their life. Tell them they don't have to have to know God's call for their whole life right now, but they are at an age when they should start thinking about what kind of a person God is calling them to be. Assure them that God is calling each of them to be a strong, confident, courageous, morally upright follower of Jesus. Even more, God will call them to some unique work, or vocation. Write the following questions where all can see, to help them get started:
  - Who is a wise, older person you can talk to about God and God's call?
  - What kind of a person is God calling you to be right now? How are you doing at responding to God's call?
  - What might you see yourself doing as an adult to answer God's call?

# Chapter 1 Summary

## Revelation, Scripture, and Tradition

1. God makes himself known to us through the signs of creation around us, through the voice of the Church, and through the voices of our conscience speaking from within us.
2. What God has made known about himself is called Revelation. It is communicated to the world in two main ways: through Sacred Scripture and through Sacred Tradition.
3. God fully revealed himself in Jesus Christ.
4. The responsibility of teaching about Jesus Christ, through Scripture and Tradition, belongs to the Apostles and their successors, the Pope and the bishops.
5. The seventy-three inspired books and letters we recognize as the Word of God comprise Sacred Scripture. The Bible is another name for Sacred Scripture.
6. God is the ultimate author of the Bible, for the Holy Spirit inspired the human authors to communicate, without error, what God wants us to know for our salvation. This guidance of the Holy Spirit is called inspiration.
7. Four special books in the New Testament are called the Gospels. The Gospels tell us about the life, teachings, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
8. The word *tradition* means “to hand on.” *Sacred Tradition* means both the central content of the Catholic faith and the way that content has been handed down through the centuries under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
9. We cannot totally grasp God, because God is greater than anything we can understand. God is the ultimate mystery.



# Chapter 2

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# God the Father

## Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the participants consider, insofar as it can be described, the nature of God. God is Lord of all and the Trinity, yet Jesus calls God “Abba,” or “Father.” Because of Baptism, we too share in the inheritance of adopted sons and daughters and are also privileged to call God not only “Lord” but “Father.”

## Background for the Catechist

“Our Father who art in Heaven.” We pray this prayer often—at Sunday Mass and perhaps other times during the week. Because we are so familiar with this beginning phrase, we may not fully grasp how new it was when Jesus first taught it to his disciples. They might have responded: “Our Father? Seriously?”

A quick search of the word *father* in Sacred Scripture reveals that for much of the Old Testament this word referred to human fathers only. Yet there are significant exceptions. One is the prophet Nathan’s oracle to David, in which Nathan, speaking God’s Word concerning Solomon, says, “I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me” (2 Samuel 7:14). Jesus, as the Son of David, fulfills this sonship to perfection. In another place, the prophet Hosea says, again in God’s voice, “When Israel was a child I loved him, / out of Egypt I called my son” (Hosea 11:1).

Jesus is the New Israel, the Son of God who willingly accepted exile (a human life on Earth) in order to bring us back to our true Father, our Father who art in Heaven.

## Catechist’s Prayer

Loving Father, your Son, Jesus Christ, taught us to call you Father. As a disciple of Jesus, may I in turn hand on his teaching, so that the young people too will call you their loving and caring Father. I ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus, and in the love of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### Teaching Tip

When discussing God as Father, it is important to remember that not everyone has a good image of a human father, and this can affect their understanding of God as Father. You may want to use wording like “God is the ideal Father . . . the best Father . . . the most perfect Father . . .” You might also remind the participants that our human fathers strive to be the best fathers they can be, but sometimes, because they are human, they fall short. Also, it is helpful to remember that any image of God, including father, does not fully illumine the nature of God.

## Getting Ready

*Connect! Bringing Faith to Life, pages 18–25*

### Core Understanding

Through Jesus, we share in the close relationship he has with God, so we too can call God “Father.”

### Materials Needed

- Bibles, one for each small group of three or four
- index cards, one for each participant

### Key Words

- Abba
- mystery
- Yahweh

### Catechism Pillar

- The Creed

### Catechism Connection

- Paragraphs 198–213, 232–237 (Our Father)

### Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Make** the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.” (*Pause.*)
2. **Pray** the following:
  - God our Father, we know you love us and care for us. Help us discover you and know you better, discover you and serve you in our brothers and sisters. We ask this in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us that you are truly God our loving Father. Amen.
3. **Invite** the young people to offer any special intentions for which they would like to pray.
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

### Engage Activity (10 minutes)

1. **Engage** the participants’ experience by asking them to think to themselves how they would answer this question:
  - When you picture God in your mind, what do you see?
2. **Ask** for a show of hands by those who have seen God depicted as an old man with white hair and a white beard.

3. **Note** that many Christians imagine God this way, and explain the reason in these or similar words:
  - Images of an old man with white hair and a white beard resemble depictions of the Greek god Zeus. (*Consider inviting the young people to open their books to page 19 and view the image of the ancient statue of Zeus.*)
  - Because the Bible doesn't give us any physical descriptions of God, painters used Zeus as a model. Zeus was the most powerful among all Greek gods, so that's why they chose him.
  - For many centuries, Christians have been exposed to art that shows God modeled after Zeus. But as the Gospel of John says, "No one has even seen God" (1:18), so we know that God as Zeus is not really how God would appear if we could see him.
4. **Ask** the participants to recall the images that came to mind a few minutes ago, and invite volunteers to share their images of God. Affirm all who share, and, if applicable, note distinctions between images of physical attributes and nonphysical attributes. Conclude by saying that although we can't know God's physical appearance, he does reveal himself to us so we can know other more important things about God.

### Core Content (15 minutes)

1. **Engage** the young people in a review of pages 20–24 in the *Connect!* book by dividing the material into sections, such as the following:
  - "Who Is God?," all paragraphs on page 20
  - "Who Is God?" and "The Trinity," all paragraphs on page 21
  - "God the Father," first, second, and third paragraphs on pages 22–23
  - "God the Father," all paragraphs on page 24
2. **Assign** each young person one of the sections of material. They can read silently to themselves or gather in small groups with others who share the same assigned material. If opting for small-group reading, ask one person in each group to read the material aloud.
3. **Invite** volunteers to report key ideas from each section of the material to the large group. Be prepared to expand on the reports as necessary to ensure key concepts are covered.

### Teaching Tip

If collaborative reading and reporting is not the best choice for your group, consider using one of the following options or another of your choosing:

- **At-home reading option:** Invite the young people to read the chapter prior to the session.
- **In-session individual reading option:** Ask the participants to read the chapter during the session, or read it aloud to them.
- **Presentation option:** Give a short presentation that incorporates the key points listed on the handout "Chapter 2 Summary" on page 25 of this guide.

## Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

### Jesus Tells Us about the Father

**Objective:** To discover the Revelation of God as Father by discussing several Scripture passages.

1. **Ask** a volunteer to read “Check This Out!” on page 23 in the *Connect!* book, which concerns the familiar name Jesus called God the Father: Abba.
2. **Explain** in these or similar words:
  - The Revelation of God as Father is witnessed in several passages in Sacred Scripture. Note the Scripture passage from Matthew (11:27) in your book on page 23 (middle paragraph), in which Jesus says: “All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.”
  - Today, we will look at several Scripture passages that tell us more about Jesus’ personal relationship with God the Father, and how we share in it.
3. **Arrange** the participants into small groups of three or four. Distribute a Bible to each group, and assign each group a Scripture passage from the following list to find and read together. Be sure to assign each passage to at least one group, and ask each group to choose a recorder.
  - John 5:19–20
  - John 5:21
  - John 14:6–7
  - John 15:1,5
4. **Write** the following questions where all can see, and ask the recorder to write down the group’s responses:
  - What is Jesus saying about God the Father in this passage?
  - What is Jesus saying about himself (or what is being said about Jesus) in this passage?
  - Where are we (or you) in this passage? What is the message from Jesus to us today?
 Remind the recorders to write legibly and to sign all the group members’ names.
5. **Invite** each group to share its responses.
 

*Possible responses to the first two questions and points for discussion:*

  - **John 5:19–20:** Jesus compares himself to an apprentice, who models himself after his father.
  - **John 5:21:** Only God can give life, and Jesus shares his Father’s life-giving power.
  - **John 14:6–7:** Jesus expresses his close relationship with the Father and says that anyone who knows Jesus knows the Father. Through Jesus, we can have a relationship with the Father.
  - **John 15:1,5:** Jesus describes our close relationship with both him and the Father by saying he is the vine, the Father is the vine grower, and we are the branches. We bear fruit if we stay on the vine—if we stay connected to Jesus.
6. **Allow** time for group members to add comments after the group’s recorder has shared the group’s responses.
7. **Conclude** by highlighting the participants’ responses to the question about Jesus’s message to us today. Ask the question again if the groups didn’t touch much on that.

## Session Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

1. **Invite** volunteers to share key things they learned during the session. Ensure that the following points are made:
  - Jesus addressed God as Father, which gives us an idea of their close relationship.
  - Through Jesus, we share in the close relationship he has with God, so we too can call God "Father."
2. **Distribute** the index cards. Remind or inform the young people that the Bible often portrays God as appearing in the form of a cloud (see "Good to Know" on page 24 in the *Connect!* book). Instruct the participants to write the following questions on their cards:
  - Look to the sky and notice clouds this week and reflect on these questions:
    - o How is God like a cloud?
    - o How is God unlike a cloud?
    - o Do the answers to the questions have meaning for my life today?
3. **Direct** the young people to take the cards home and refer to them a few times during the week. Ask them to answer the questions for themselves or to share their cards with friends or family members and discuss their answers with them.

## Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Direct** the participants to find "Connect with God" on page 19 in their books. Invite them to pray the prayer aloud together.
2. **Close** by making the Sign of the Cross.

## Optional Activities

### Materials Needed

- Bibles, one for each participant
- blank paper, one sheet for each participant
- drawing supplies such as crayons or colored pencils; or an assortment of magazines with images of people and nature, scissors, and glue

### Illustrating Psalm 139 (20 minutes)

**Objective:** To invite the young people to reflect on what Psalm 139 says about the presence of God and his relationship to us.

1. **Distribute** the Bibles, and invite the participants to read Psalm 139:1–16. Remind them or note that an excerpt from this psalm appears with an image on page 21 in the *Connect!* book.
2. **Distribute** the paper and art supplies. Ask the young people to select one or more verses from the psalm that stood out to them and to create an illustration of the verse or verses. Instruct the participants to include the words of the psalm with the image or images illustrating that phrase.
3. **Invite** everyone to present their work to the large group.

### The Truth and Love Game (20 minutes)

#### Materials Needed

- index cards, one for each participant, half labeled “Truth” and half labeled “Love” (a group of twenty participants requires ten “Truth” cards and ten “Love” cards)

**Objective:** To encourage the young people to recognize that because they carry God’s life within them through Baptism, they are strengthened to share God’s truth and love with others.

1. **Arrange** the participants into a circle. To start the game, shuffle the index cards. Choose one person to pick a card. If they choose a “Truth” card, they must state one truth they remember from this lesson (e.g., “God the Father is the First Divine Person of the Trinity”). If they choose a “Love” card, they must close their eyes, spin around three times, point to someone else, and promise to do something good for that person. They should write the name of the person they selected and the promise on the card and keep it as a reminder to carry out the good deed as soon as possible after the game.
2. **Direct** the participant first chosen to then choose someone else to pick the next card. The game continues until everyone has had a turn. (Those who have been promised a good deed by another can have only one good deed. If a participant with a “Love” card chooses someone who has already been promised a good deed, then the participant has to spin three times again to choose someone else.)

## Force, Master, Boss, Father, or Mother (20 minutes)

### Materials Needed

- the video “Who Is God? (Catholic Speaker Ken Yasinski)” (5:02), available on YouTube

**Objective:** To better understand the image of God as father by comparing it to images of God as force, master, and boss.

1. **Show** the video “Who Is God?”
2. **Invite** volunteers to name the three inadequate images of God that the speaker discusses (force, master, boss) and to recall a point or two about why these images are inadequate.
3. **Ask** the participants to identify characteristics of a father. Record them where all can see. Once the list is developed, ask the participants to identify the characteristics that you think Jesus would say applies to God the Father. Circle all of these.
4. **Remind** the young people that although we address God as Father, God is neither male nor female and that the Bible portrays God with motherly characteristics. Ask the participants to identify characteristics of a mother. Record them where all can see. Once the list is developed, ask the young people to identify the characteristics you think the Bible would use to describe God. Circle all of these.
5. **Invite** the participants to spend a minute reviewing the two groups of circled characteristics. Ask them to think about this question:
  - How do images of both fathers and mothers help us understand our relationship with God?
 Invite volunteers to share responses.
6. **Conclude** by explaining or reminding the young people that Scripture presents many images of God in order to help us understand who God is, but no single image can fully express the nature of God. God always remains a mystery.

# Chapter 2 Summary

## God the Father

1. God revealed himself to Moses as I AM, or Yahweh. This name expresses the power and infinity of God.
2. God has revealed himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit— one God in three Divine Persons who is the Holy Trinity.
3. Belief in God as Trinity is the central belief of all Christians.
4. Even when God reveals himself to us, he is essentially mystery. No human being can completely know or understand God.
5. God the Father is all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere. Although God is neither male nor female, we call God “Father,” as Jesus did.
6. God is eternal and beyond time, the one who is, always was, and always will be.
7. God is Truth and Love. God created us out of love and always keeps his promises. God the Father gave us his only Son and sent the Holy Spirit to be with us always. There is no greater sign of love than this.



# Chapter 3

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## The Holy Trinity

## Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the participants come to a deeper understanding of the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God has revealed God's self to humanity as one God in three Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity reveals to us that God is love, and love by its very nature is self-diffusive, meaning that it is to be shared. Unrevealed, unshared love is no love at all! The participants come to appreciate that the love of God is shared in this communion of Divine Persons.

## Background for the Catechist

What is your experience of the passionate pursuit of love? Perhaps you have seen someone stop at nothing to reveal their love to their beloved. So it is with God as he is revealed to us, his beloved, in the unfolding mystery of the Trinity. Our life finds its ultimate fulfillment and peace only when immersed in God's eternal exchange of love.

The Trinity reveals to us the wondrous mystery of the inner communion of God's life and love. This is nothing short of extraordinary! What a wonderful gift God has given us: to know God's own inner life. Just as married couples continue—even after years of marriage—to fall more deeply in love as they grow in knowing and understanding of each other, so too do we fall more deeply in love with God as we grow in knowing and understanding of the mystery of God.

The participants already understand that the more they know about their friends, the more powerful and meaningful those friendships become. Such friendship takes great trust and love, as well as a desire to share one's deepest thoughts. Help everyone understand that God's revelation of himself to us in Scripture and Tradition is a sign of his love and his desire to be known by us. God wants to be in relationship with each one of us—he wants to be our friend (see John 15:15). God is simply not satisfied being the God "out there." Through the Incarnation, he became the God "right here" in the person of Jesus Christ!

## Catechist's Prayer

Loving Father, help me better understand you so that I might better teach your mystery of three Divine Persons in one amazing God. Help me express to the young people I serve the truth that we can know you even while you remain a mystery. Help me convey with humble confidence what you have revealed to your followers through Christ, our Lord, in the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### Teaching Tip

When discussing the Trinity, don't be afraid to point out that this doctrine is an inexhaustible mystery of our faith! Nothing we can experience in this life can help us fully understand the Trinity, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't try to better understand it. It can be helpful to share some analogies that at least begin to convey the ideas of oneness and distinctiveness. For example, you might show a three-leaf clover (three leaves, one clover) or a triangle (three sides, one triangle) or ice, water, and steam (three manifestations of H<sub>2</sub>O). You might also show three lights in a room that together create one lit room. All these examples hint at the reality but ultimately fall short of its amazing nature.

## Getting Ready

*Connect! Bringing Faith to Life, pages 26–33*

### Core Understanding

The Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith—namely, that the one loving God has revealed himself in three Persons as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### Materials Needed

- index cards, one for each participant

### Key Words

- God the Father
- Holy Spirit
- Son of God
- Trinity

### Catechism Pillar

- The Creed

### Catechism Connection

- Paragraphs 232–267  
(The Trinity)

### Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Make** the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.” (*Pause.*)
2. **Pray** the following:
  - Loving God, in your amazing, unquenchable love for us, you revealed yourself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Help us appreciate the great gift of your divine life. Thank you for the invitation to immerse ourselves in your light and love. Give us the courage to say yes to your invitation, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.
3. **Invite** the participants to offer any special intentions for which they would like to pray.
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

### Engage Activity (10 minutes)

1. **Invite** the participants to say aloud together the words that accompany the Sign of the Cross. (“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”)
2. **Ask** the young people how many times they have heard these words.
3. **Invite** a few volunteers to share with the whole group their thoughts about what these words mean.

4. **Remind** the participants that at Mass when we recite the Creed, we begin with the words “I believe in one God.” Add comments in light of what was shared in step 3 (For example, if someone expressed the idea that Christians believe in one God, affirm that. If belief in one God didn’t come up, then clarify that the Father, Son, and Spirit are not separate gods.)
5. **Introduce** the term *trinity* and explain that it describes a unity of three things. Draw a picture of a shamrock (a three-leaf clover) that all the young people can see. Ask for volunteers to share why this might be a good symbol for something that is a trinity. (It is made up of three leaves united to make up a single, unique plant.)
6. **Explain** the following information:
  - The earliest Christians were Jewish and worshipped only the God of Israel, but through experience, they realized that the one, true, loving God was revealing himself as three Persons.
  - For Christians, the doctrine of the Trinity is the central truth of faith: There is one God in three Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (*If accurate, remind them that they read a little about this in chapter 2.*)
  - The love and unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit flow out to us and fill us so that we can share that love with others.

### Core Content (15 minutes)

1. **Engage** the young people in a review of pages 27–32 in the *Connect!* book by dividing the material into sections, such as the following:
  - “One God, Three Divine Persons,” pages 27–29
  - “The Work of the Trinity,” pages 29–31
  - “The Trinity Is a Communion,” pages 31–32
2. **Assign** each young person one of the sections of material. They can read silently to themselves or gather in small groups with others who share the same assigned material. If opting for small-group reading, ask one person from each group to read the material aloud.
3. **Invite** volunteers to report key ideas from each section of the material to the large group. Be prepared to expand on the reports as necessary to ensure key concepts are covered.

### Teaching Tip

If collaborative reading and reporting is not the best choice for your group, consider using one of the following options or another of your choosing:

- **At-home reading option:** Invite the young people to read the chapter prior to the session.
- **In-session individual reading option:** Ask the participants to read the chapter during the session, or read it aloud to them.
- **Presentation option:** Give a short presentation that incorporates the key points listed on the handout “Chapter 3 Summary” on page 33 of this guide.

## Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

### Trinity Spotting

**Objective:** To help the participants discover evidence of the Trinity all around them—that every time they see three in one, they might think of God.

1. **Explain** in these or similar words:
  - God desires that we know him and that we think of him and pray to him often. He has placed evidence of his loving presence all around us. Unfortunately, we don't often have eyes to see this. In fact, I'm willing to bet that there is evidence of the Trinity in this room, in your house, and in the natural world that we've all been missing—until now.
2. **Ask** the young people to find “People of Faith” on page 33 in their books. Note that Saint Patrick saw evidence of the Trinity in a three-leaf clover and used that clover to teach the people of Ireland about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. **Arrange** the participants into pairs. Each pair should look around the room or, if possible, around the parish grounds to go “Trinity Spotting.” They have only 10 minutes to come up with as many examples of Trinity as they can. Tell them to look for three things that are distinct but closely related or one thing with three parts.
4. **Give** everyone an opportunity to share their findings with the group. Conclude by suggesting to the young people that they use the things they identified to remind themselves that the one loving God has revealed himself as three Divine Persons—Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit—who are in complete union with one another.

### Session Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

1. **Invite** volunteers to share key things they learned during the session. Ensure that the following points are made:
  - There is only one God.
  - The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not separate gods. They are three Divine Persons united in the one God.
2. **Distribute** the index cards. Instruct the participants to write the following question on their cards:
  - What questions do I still have about the Trinity?
3. **Direct** the young people to take the cards home and refer to them a few times during the week. Ask them to answer the question for themselves or to share their cards with friends or family members and discuss their answers with them.

### Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Direct** the participants to find “Connect with God” on page 27 in their books. Invite them to read the prayer aloud together.
2. **Close** by making the Sign of the Cross.

## Optional Activities

### What Is the Trinity? (15 minutes)

#### Materials Needed

- the video “3 Minute Theology 1.1: What Is the Trinity?” (3:30), available on YouTube
- Bibles, one for each participant

**Objective:** To have the participants further their understanding of the Trinity by viewing a video from 3 Minute Theology and reading passages from the Bible.

1. **Announce** that you are going to show a video that provides an explanation of the Christian understanding of God as Trinity—three Divine Persons in One God. Distribute the Bibles, and note that you’ll be pausing the video a few times to read passages about biblical events referenced by the video’s narrator.
2. **Start** the video “3 Minute Theology 1.1: What Is the Trinity?” At about 1:27, pause the video and ask everyone to find Deuteronomy 6:4–5 in their Bibles. Read the passage aloud, or ask a volunteer to do so.
3. **Restart** the video. At about 1:47, pause the video and ask everyone to find Luke 11:1–4 in their Bibles. Read the passage aloud, or ask a volunteer to do so.
4. **Restart** the video. At about 2:27, pause the video and ask everyone to find Acts 2:1–4 in their Bibles. Read the passage aloud, or ask a volunteer to do so.
5. **Conclude** the activity by asking the participants to identify something they learned in watching the video or listening to the biblical passages. Invite a few volunteers to share with the large group.

### The Love Bounce (10 minutes)

#### Materials Needed

- a Bible

**Objective:** To better understand what the Bible says about the love of God and how it works in us.

1. **Find** 1 John 4:7–12, and explain it in these or similar words:
  - The author of the First Letter of John included a beautiful explanation of what it means when we say, “God is love.” I am going to read a passage from First John aloud. To help you understand how much the author emphasized love, I want you to change position each time I read a form of the word *love*, such as *love*, *loved*, *loving*, and so on.
  - Stand up when you hear the first mention and stay standing. Sit when you hear the second mention. Move from sitting to standing or standing to sitting as you hear each subsequent mention. You will need to pay close attention in order to catch all the times *love* is mentioned.

2. **Read** aloud 1 John 4:7–12 deliberately, not too fast or too slow. If the participants enjoy the activity and you want to drive the point home even more, read it again, but faster.
3. **Begin** a dialogue with the young people, using these or similar questions:
  - Did it surprise you how many times the author used the word *love* in this passage?
  - Why do you think the author emphasized love so much? (*because you cannot be a Christian if you do not love*)
  - What was the author's main point? (*If we truly have the love of God in us, it will show in how we love other people.*)
  - If we love God, does that mean we have to love everyone? (*It means we should do our best to love everyone, even our enemies and people who do bad things. We do not have to love the bad things that people do.*)

### Trinity Triptych (20 minutes)

#### Materials Needed

- poster board or large sheets of art paper, one for each participant or each small group of three
- art supplies such as paint, markers, scissors, glue, and magazines with images, enough for all to share

**Objective:** To have the participants deepen their understanding of the Trinity by creating a visual representation of the Trinity.

1. **Explain** to the young people that they will be creating a triptych, a type of art that explores a particular theme in three panels. Distribute the poster board or art paper. Tell the participants that they can draw, paint, or cut out images from magazines and glue them to their poster. The young people can work individually, or you can have everyone work in small groups of three, with each member taking responsibility for one of the panels. Engage their imaginations!
2. **Introduce** the activity in these or similar words:
  - For this project, you will create a visual presentation of the Trinity. You will do this using a Christian art form called a triptych. A triptych is a work of art divided into three panels. Each panel is unique, but all three panels are connected to one theme.
  - The theme for our triptychs is the Holy Trinity. One section must represent God the Father, another must represent God the Son, and another must represent God the Holy Spirit. You can represent the Persons of the Trinity and their works however you wish in your sections. Pretend that the people seeing your triptych will not know about the Trinity, and your art should help them understand it better.
3. **Give** further directions on how to divide and create the sections for the triptych, and then allow the young people time to work.
4. **Invite** the participants to present and explain their triptychs.

# Chapter 3 Summary

## The Holy Trinity

1. The one God has revealed himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—one God in three Divine Persons who is the Holy Trinity.
2. The central mystery of our Christian life and faith is the Trinity.
3. Each Person of the Trinity does not make up one-third of the whole God. The complete presence of God can be found in each of them. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from one another.
4. The three distinct Persons are wholly united, not just by their actions but by who they are: one Divine Being.
5. All the works of God are done by all three Persons.
6. Yet some of God’s works are more strongly associated with the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit.
7. God the Father is the First Person of the Blessed Trinity. God the Father is the source from which life comes. Although God the Son and God the Holy Spirit also created the world, it is natural to think of God the Father when we think of the Creator.
8. God the Son is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. When he became man, he was given the name Jesus. Later, he was also given the title Christ, or Anointed One. We call Jesus Christ the Savior to recognize his saving actions, but the Father and the Holy Spirit also save us.
9. God the Holy Spirit is the Third Divine Person of the Blessed Trinity, who inspires us, guides us, and makes us holy. Although the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are also given by the Father and the Son, it is proper to recognize them as being from the Holy Spirit.
10. The Trinity is a communion of the three Divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is a perfect community of harmony and love. We share in this love and harmony of the Trinity through family life and through service to our local community and our world.

