

Catechist Background

Key Concept

The key concept for each lesson is clearly stated at the start of each chapter.

Doctrinal Content

- The doctrinal content for each chapter will be found in this section. It will show how the chapter correlates to paragraphs from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Catechist Background

“So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone.”

Ephesians 2:19–20

Reflect How does being a member of the Church keep you connected to Christ?

The Catechist Background includes a short essay that provides easy-to-understand theological background on the chapter content for both novice and experienced catechists.

The catechetical process of ***Alive in Christ*** mirrors the divine pedagogy—the gradual and relational way God teaches us so that we can know him in his truth, be guided by the Holy Spirit to respond with faith and love, and accept the gift of new life in Christ. Each lesson encourages this personal and ongoing relationship, beginning with God’s invitation through Sacred Scripture. This leads youth to reflect on his Word, deepen their understanding of our Sacred Tradition, and respond with a lived faith within the home and in the community.

Alive in Christ incorporates the most trusted research on how children learn and communicate. Topics are presented at important developmental “windows”—ages when research in child development tells us that learning about a particular topic would be most effective. For example, the physical growth and change of the middle school years leads to questions and concerns about identity. It is an excellent time to talk about discipleship—following Jesus, as he offers us a pattern for living, showing us what it looks like to be fully human.

Reflect How has God invited you to know him and love him?

Catechist’s Prayer

Lord, thank you for calling me to the ministry of catechesis. It is a great privilege and an awesome responsibility to echo your Word to others. Draw me closer to you, so that I may teach your wisdom and mirror your love by word and example. Amen.

Chapter Connections

Tasks of Catechesis

The six tasks of catechesis are outlined in the *National Directory for Catechesis*. The relevant tasks of catechesis for a chapter will be found in this section.

Helping children grow in a faith that is “known, celebrated, lived, and expressed in prayer” (NDC, 20).

This chapter focuses on the following tasks of catechesis:

- Promoting Knowledge of the Faith
- Moral Formation

Catechist Instruction

Invite Page 1

Objective

- Reflect on God's personal invitation through Scripture

♥ Let Us Pray

Introduce the young people to the prayer space and invite them into it. Lead them in the Sign of the Cross. Read aloud the leader's prayer and the Psalm or other Scripture verse. Prompt the response from the group. Have the young people move out of the prayer space and back to their seats.

Note that this content will vary in that sometimes a volunteer will pray the Scripture verse or lead the prayer.

† Scripture

Guide the youth through the process of Scripture reflection.

Invite the young people to be still, close their eyes, and focus on their breathing. Encourage them to open their minds and hearts to what God is saying to them.

- Proclaim the Scripture and have the youth sit in silence.
- *Ask:* What did you hear God say to you today?
- Allow volunteers to share.

► You may play instrumental music to begin the reflection.

Remember, this is a spiritual discipline that takes practice. The young people will grow in their capacity to sit in silence. Throughout the year, build to four minutes of Scripture reflection.

Have you ever thought ...

- Have a volunteer read aloud the questions and invite the young people to respond to the questions.
- Point out the photo and ask the young people to describe what is happening in it. Explain that we can stay connected to Christ not only through the Sacraments in the Church, but also through nature and Christian fellowship.

Catechist Instruction

Discover (1) Pages 4-5

Objectives

Chapter objectives relating to the section are clearly stated here, at the beginning of each Catechist Instruction segment.

Eighth Grade

Point out that the Discover pages in this book will help the young people learn about their faith and deepen their relationship with God.

- Review the content of this page with the group, explaining the icons/symbols.

Say: Where you see a star on the page, you are given directions to help you interact with chapter content and better understand your Catholic faith. You may be asked to complete an activity, underline text, answer questions, or initiate a discussion.

† Scripture/Go to the Source

Applicable Scripture is studied in the Discover step as the young people learn about God's actions throughout salvation history and see Scripture as a source of Church teaching.

Explain to the group that the Go to the Source features prompt them to go directly to the Bible itself for reading, reflection, and activities relevant to the chapter.

Have a volunteer read aloud the Scripture quote from Ephesians. Then instruct the youth to take out their Bibles, locate and read Ephesians 1:15–23 to see what Saint Paul has to say about the Church as Christ's Body.

Ask: What does Saint Paul hope for his fellow believers? How does that message apply to the Church today?

After some discussion, ask the young people what is unique about the way Scripture is treated. Point out that the Word is always given prominent visual importance to highlight its significance, with a parchment background, an icon, and a logo.

Say: Throughout the year, you will be invited to know, love, and be formed by God's Word. You will have many opportunities to pray with Scripture, study biblical references, and reflect on and apply the Word of God to your lives.

Eighth Grade, continued

Have the youth read page 5 to learn about more valuable resources that they will find in their books.

Break the youth into five groups. Assign each group one of the following features/sections of the book: Unit Preview, Church Feasts and Seasons, Live Your Faith/Catholic Social Teaching, Church History Timeline, and Our Catholic Tradition. Give the groups five to eight minutes to locate three examples of their feature/section in their books. Have each group present their feature/section to the rest of the youth, sharing their examples and naming two or three purposes they think their feature/section has.

Work with Words

Point out the definition of *Sacred Tradition* called out in the box at the top of the page. Note that Catholic Faith Words are also highlighted in the text.

Explain to the youth that these words build a common language of faith using developmentally appropriate, precise theological language.

List and Discuss

- Explain that activities like this will help youth to think about the mission of the Catholic Church and what it means to belong to this community of disciples.
- Give them time to complete the first part of the activity on their own, and then work with partners and small groups to finish the activity.

Catechist Background: Where It Happened

- In the Student Book, this feature makes geographical and historical connections with scriptural accounts, events in Church history, and Catholic figures addressed within the chapter.
- In some instances, images are also used to provide visual context on the geographical and cultural connections.

Catechist Background: Church History Timeline

At the back of each Student Book, a Church History Timeline presents key people, places, and events in the Church's life, along with secular events that affected the course of the Church.

- The grade seven timeline spans from the death of Christ to 1085, the period surrounding the Great Schism (with the last entry noted on 1054). The grade eight timeline begins on 1085 (with the first entry on 1093) and covers up to the present day.

- Each Unit Preview includes a Church History Timeline connection.

Catechist Instruction

Discover (2) Pages 6-7

Objectives

- Identify the Bible as the inspired Word of God written by humans
- Discover that the Catholic Church's official collection of inspired books is called the canon of Scripture

The Church in Sacred Scripture

Summarize the first two paragraphs on page 6.

- Tell the group that the Church's canon, the complete list of inspired books included in Sacred Scripture, contains seventy-three books.
- Remind them that we cannot read and understand the New Testament without the background of the Old Testament.

Invite two volunteers to read aloud the next two paragraphs, describing the content of both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Share the definition of *salvation* from the Catholic Faith Words box.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud the caption that goes with the image on this page.

The Church in Sacred Scripture, continued

Arrange the youth in four groups. Assign each group one of the paragraphs on page 7.

- Invite the groups to review their paragraph together and to discuss the key points being made.
- Have a spokesperson from each group teach the other groups what they learned from their paragraph.
- Encourage the youth to ask questions to clarify their understanding of the text.

Quick Review The Old Testament and New Testament make up Sacred Scripture. When we study Scripture, we learn not only about God's past saving actions, but also about how he is still saving us today. We also learn more about the Catholic Church and our part in it.

Describe

Invite youth to silently read the instructions.

- Have the young people work independently to complete it.
- Invite volunteers to share their thoughts.

Catechist Background: Sacred Tradition

One source of God's Word is Sacred Tradition, the Word of God handed down from Jesus and the Apostles.

- The content of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition are systematically presented in precise theological language in the lesson objectives of each lesson and through Catholic Faith Words with definitions that grow as the young people's understanding does.
- Throughout the Student Books, the truths of the faith are organized in a hierarchy around the mystery of the most Holy Trinity, in a Christ-centered (or Christocentric) perspective. The essential elements of the faith are presented in a gradual and systemic way.

Catechist Instruction

Discover (3) Pages 8-9

Objectives

- Examine the constancy of our Triune God, who never changes
- Discover that the Holy Trinity guides and strengthens us to be Christ's disciples

Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church, and You

Have the young people silently read the text on this page. Encourage them to highlight the topic sentence in each paragraph.

- Ask: What three things will always be there for us? (God's wisdom, his Church, and his love)

Share the definition of *Holy Trinity* from the Catholic Faith Words box.

Get Ready

Say: As you move through this book and study Jesus' words and life in the New Testament, he speaks to you and asks you to live as his disciple.

Ask: Are you up to the challenge?

The Next Year

Point out the chart at the bottom of the page.

- Direct the young people to fill in the chart with their thoughts about next year. Remind them that they can always come back to the chart later in the year to check their progress or update the information.
- When they have completed their charts, initiate a group discussion by connecting the last question "How can I be alive in Christ?" to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

Catechist Tip: Live Your Faith Component

Each grade level of ***Alive in Christ*** presents the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching, articulated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In this Live Your Faith component, the scriptural and doctrinal foundations of the principles help youth connect their faith to a life of peace and justice. Every core chapter and seasonal lesson has a Catholic Social Teaching connection integrated into the lesson plan. Combining this component with the seasonal lessons can help your young people connect how we worship with how we live.

Catechist Instruction

Live Pages 10-11

Objectives

- Learn about different forms of prayer and how to be an active member of the Church

Our Catholic Life

Point out the *Live* heading on the page.

- Explain that each chapter in this book has a section that will help youth learn to live as good Catholics.
- Have the group silently read this section and reflect on the question at the end.
- Invite those who wish to do so to share their responses with the group.

People of Faith

Ask a volunteer to read aloud this paragraph.

- Tell the youth that in this feature, they will learn about Saints, Blesseds, and Venerables whose lives exemplify the content of the lesson. These holy people come from all periods of Church history, and all walks of life. This feature helps us see how connected we are to the Church community.

Reflect

Each chapter's closing activity will help the youth relate knowledge of the faith to their lives, and to commit more deeply to what it means to be Catholic.

Have youth record their answers to both questions. Then invite volunteers to share their thoughts with the group.

Celebration of the Word

♥ Explain that every chapter will end with prayer.

Sometimes you, the catechist, will be the prayer leader. In other cases, you will assign leaders and/or readers or arrange the class into two sides, and allow the volunteers to practice their sections.

Gather the group in the prayer space.

Follow the order of prayer on the printed page.

► Many prayers will conclude with a song downloaded from **aliveinchrist.osv.com**. Invite the young people to reflect on the lyrics as the songs are played. At times you may also end with sharing a sign of peace or praying the Lord's Prayer.