

# Believe in Me

Year 7

**Please note:** this file is an archived version of what we had posted on the old website (with a few formatting changes).

## **Theme 4.3: Why Do I Need You?** (*Guide pages 158 - 166*)

**Outcomes:** Participants will

- name and evaluate the ways that being female or male shapes the way they express themselves.
- be able to define human dignity and recognize the things that support it and things that undermine it.
- know that to accept other people, we must accept their sexuality, their maleness or their femaleness, their physical gifts and limitations.
- identify ways Jesus reached out to those who were excluded.

**For the catechist:** God created us male and female in the divine image. Humanity is incomplete unless it is both male and female. In this theme participants will name and evaluate the ways they express themselves. They will explore issues of human dignity and recognize things that support it and undermine it. Human beings were created to share, give and love. We are incomplete if we live entirely as individuals. Our sexuality is part of who we are and must not be belittled. We must defend the dignity and value of ourselves and every human being.

**PREPARATIONS:** Prepare slips of paper with one of the following scripture references on each: Luke 17:11-19; Luke 7: 36 - 48; Luke 8: 43 - 48; Luke 13:10-13; Luke 15:10 - 13; Luke 15: 1 -2; Luke 18: 15-17; Luke 18:35 - 43; Luke 7: 11 - 15

**What's My Experience?** Ask the participants to reflect on the question, "who would you like to be or be like?" Share some thoughts. Lead into a discussion that often people are not proud or satisfied with just being who they are. Why is this? How can we be more comfortable with letting people see who we really are? How can we help others be more comfortable with being themselves? We sometimes call it wearing masks if we do not be who we really are. When we look in a mirror do we see our real selves? Take turns looking into a hand mirror and sharing a thought like "I see a girl who is....." End this with looking again and saying, "I love you, own name." What did parents see when they first looked at their babies? Why? How is this like how God looks at each of us? How is it different?

**What's our Faith Story?** Divide into two groups (maybe male & female if even). Have each group define "dignity", what things lessen your feeling of dignity? what are common responses if your dignity is undermined? Discuss responses. Discuss which responses are negative and which are positive. From text page 81 Read this or just share some ideas from it. It stresses that any

two people working together can create something new, something that could not come from either one alone. The greatest example of this is two people producing a child who is new and unique. God created us in this way male and female. It is clear that differences are good and necessary. Therefore we must respect that we are all different and those differences are part of God's loving plan for creation. Now in groups or individually have them look up and read the scripture passages and prepare to answer these questions: Who was being excluded? How / or why? How did Jesus reach out? How is this exclusion like what happens today? How might we include others? Share responses. (Participants at this age should be comfortable with finding scripture passages. Give them as much help or freedom as needed.) These are just a few examples of how Jesus included people.

**What Does It Mean?** In small groups or couples create a poster promoting recognition of the dignity of someone who may experience exclusion in our society today. Share these. Emphasize that every person has one and the same dignity which comes directly from God the creator.

**What Will We Do?** A discussion as to how we can enhance the dignity of our gathering place and time together. (If there is time, Introduce the Litany of the Saints who are real people whose dignity has been recognized formally by our Church and how we can use a "Litany" to remember and to remind us that we form a community with those who lived before us. Text pages 82-83.) Close with the dismissal prayer from guide "Go forth and remember that because of the dignity of every person, how great it is to be yourself and to let others be themselves. Be there for one another and be true to yourselves."

(If the question of homosexuality arises, we want to maintain the principle that each person is created by God and we always respect and enhance the dignity of every person.)

## **Theme 5.1: What's In a Name?** (Guide pages 168 - 175)

**Aims:** Participants will:

- express their understanding of the meaning in a name and the ways we use names to classify people
- explain the significance of the many titles for Jesus
- identify the ways that the titles they use for Jesus shape their relationship with Jesus

**For the catechist:** How we name others shapes our relationships with them. A name used to put someone down can cut to the heart and remain an open wound for a lifetime. On the positive side, a name spoken in love will support and nurture a person and a relationship. To name someone is to support a certain relationship with that person. Names and titles we use for Jesus supports the relationship we have with Jesus. Jesus means 'God saves ' in Hebrew. The word "Christ" comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah" which means "Anointed One". It became the name proper to Jesus only because he accomplished perfectly the divine mission that "Christ" signifies...It was necessary that the Messiah be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord at once as king and priest, and also as prophet. Jesus fulfilled the Messianic hope of Israel in his threefold office as priest, prophet and king. CCC#436

Other titles for Jesus include Rabbi, Priest, Lamb of God, Prophet, Messiah-Christ, Son of David, Jesus the Nazarene, Son of Man, Lord, and most importantly Son of God.

**What's My Experience?** Explore the names of the participants. Do their names suit them? Are they called by other names that suit them better? Why? Do different people call them by different names? Do some use different names at different times? How does the way someone refers to us affect our relationship with that person? What different titles do they have? Read and discuss "What's in a Name?" in textbooks pages 86 - 87.

**What's Our Faith Story?** Read and discuss "Titles" on pages 87 - 88 in textbooks.

Assign each of nine individuals or groups one of the "Titles" for Jesus on pages 88 - 92. Have them study the material and prepare to explain to the large group the significance of the title and how it is an appropriate title for Jesus. Review all the titles so that everyone is somewhat familiar with all the titles. Then read together and discuss the main title for Jesus, the Son of God, on page 92. Make a quick large poster with the different titles added in smaller letters around "Son of God." or have them do this on an individual page in their individual notebooks.

**What Does It Mean?** Have each choose the title for Jesus that best describes their relationship with Jesus and journal about that. The title may be a different one from those discussed.. Take some time to refer back to their own names and do a fun exercise of re-naming each with a name that the group may think suits that student's relationship with the group...all positives!!!

**What Will I / We Do?** Brainstorm some derogatory names often used and discuss ways they could help eliminate or reduce these from their environment.

***Closing prayer:*** The Jesus Prayer is used by some as a mantra, that is it is short and easy to repeat, so you can take a few moments at any time and repeat it in silence to yourselves. Begin repeating it together and soften the sound until it is silent and allow that for a brief time. ‘Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.’ Encourage them to take home their books and share some of what you did together with family members.

## **Theme 5.2: How Does Jesus Challenge Me?**

**Outcomes:** Participants will:

- compare and contrast their expectations of Jesus with those of the people of Jesus' time
- identify the ways that Jesus challenged people's expectations, attitudes, and behaviour in scripture and the ways those scripture stories challenge us.

**For the Catechist:** The expectations we have of one another shape our relationships and behaviour. In the Scriptures Jesus challenged people's expectations. Jesus challenges our expectations and behaviour today. Jesus gives us courage to go beyond the expectations that are placed on us and on the people we know

**Experience:** Have participants reflect on and answer the questions on Activity page 23. Discuss responses.

**What's Our Faith Story?** Expectations are a necessary part of relationships. However, expectations must be communicated and re-examined periodically or they become warped and harmful to the relationship.

Read "The Eagle in the Chicken Coop" on page 94-95 of textbooks.

Discuss some of the situations from the Bible and the relevant background information provided on pages 95 - 97 in textbooks. Discuss how Jesus challenged the norms of the times. The suggested topics are on the Sabbath using Mt 12:9 - 14 and info on page 95, leprosy using Mt 8: 1-4 and info on pages 95 - 96, tax collectors using Luke 19:1-10 and page 96 - 97, and women using Luke 10:38-42 and info page 97. And on violence using John 18:1 - 11.

**What does it Mean?** Have individuals or small groups prepare a song or rap or skit involving a conflict between the expectations of our culture, or a significant group within our culture, and what the young people believe to be genuine Christian behaviour. Regardless of the topics chosen, remember that Catholic moral teaching begins with compassion for all the people involved.

**What Will We Do?** Brainstorm a list of attitudes and behaviours in our culture today which Jesus would likely challenge. What are some actions we could take to challenge some of them? For a closing prayer remind the young people that reading and reflecting on scripture is prayer itself as is the time spent in reflecting and acting on unjust expectations. But close using the excerpt from Eucharistic Prayer IV from textbook page 98. Remind them that Jesus challenges us to challenge some of the expectations of our culture.

## **Theme 5.3: What Makes Jesus Believable?** (*Guide pages 188 - 194*)

**Aims:** Participants will

- retell a variety of stories of people whose lives were changed by Jesus
- recognized the ways that believing in Jesus changes people's lives
- formulate answers to the disciples' questions: "What kind of man is this?"
- identify personal encounters with Jesus

**For the Catechist:** Has your relationship with Jesus been a real encounter with Jesus. Has it opened new opportunities for you...made new life possible? Do you encounter Jesus in others? Concepts to be developed: Jesus is believable because he really does give life in abundance. Jesus is believable because he meets us with love wherever we are. Encounters with Jesus change lives. Encounters with Jesus took place in Biblical times both before and after his death and resurrection, and have continued to take place in the centuries since those events. Through his actions Jesus reveals God's care for us. To believe in Jesus is to accept new possibilities in our lives.

**Gathering and Experience:** Tell a story from your own experience of someone who has affected your life in a way that changed your life. (Examples may include a grandparent, teacher, neighbour, a speaker, a coach etc.) Invite the young people to share similar stories.

**What's Our Faith Story?** In advance copy the Scripture references from your Guide for each of five groups onto slips of paper. #1 Mark 10:17 - 22 & Acts 9: 1 - 20 #2 John 9: 1 - 38 & John 5: 2 - 16 #3 John 7 : 53 - 8: 11 & John 18: 28 - 19: 16 & Mark 15: 33 - 39 #4 Luke 22: 54 - 62 & John 21: 15 - 19 & Matthew 27: 3 - 10 #5 Matthew 8:5 - 13 7 Luke 23: 39 - 43 & John 20: 24 - 29 Give each group of participants one slip of paper and some time to read and discuss each passage to learn what happened in the people's experience with Jesus, how the experience changed the people and what made Jesus believable for the people. Help them understand that Jesus was believable because he always acted in love, those who could not accept Jesus were not willing to accept love and the change that love would demand of them, and that those who accepted Jesus were able to live their lives more fully and freely.

Look at the pictures of Jesus on page 100 and discuss what image or quality of Jesus is presented in each.

**What Does It Mean?** Read the witness story on page 99 of textbooks. Have participants share similar experiences.

**What will we / I do?** Hopefully you can save a few minutes for this activity. It is an activity on active listening as one important part of how we relate lovingly to others. Again have the suggestions from your Guide 1 (e) on slips of paper enough for everyone to be part of a pair. If you have a very large group, you may have some do the speaking parts and others assigned to be observers. Observers answer questions, "What did I hear you say? What did I see you do? How did I think you felt? How did I see Jesus in you?"

Close by asking them to look at their favourite image of Jesus on page 100 while you quietly and slowly read the information on page 101. Possibly repeat the last paragraph. Remind the participants that Jesus is always there to turn to for whatever our needs and difficulties and, yes, also to share our good times! Encourage them to take books home to share stories and pictures with family members.

## **Theme 6.1: Am I Free To Be Me?**

**Outcomes:** Participants will

- identify what it means to live in the kingdom of God, where Jesus is Lord
- retell the story of the temptation of Jesus in the desert and articulate what it tells us about living life God's way
- explain how our culture can encourage us to live as God wants us to live, and how it can encourage us to live in ways that are opposed to God's ways

**For the Catechist:** Young people are pressured to be and act like others. This theme will explore how true freedom and happiness come to people when they live their lives according to God's way. The kingdom of God is a way of living, living as God wants us to live. Jesus is Lord because he is in charge of the kingdom. He makes it possible for us to share in the joy of the kingdom. As Lord, Jesus helps us to see right and wrong as he does. True happiness and freedom is only found in living our lives God's way.

**Experience:** Brainstorm a list of ways that other people put pressure on us to conform or to perform according to their expectations. Discuss What kinds of pressure are positive? Negative? Hardest to resist? When does it make sense to give in to the pressure? What helps you to resist negative pressure?

**What's Our Faith Story?** Connect the discussion of the pressures that are on young people to the fact that Jesus also experienced real pressures. Read Luke 4: 1 - 13 (The Temptations of Jesus) Discuss the details. The Church teaches that the devil is a created spirit who rejected the way of God and seeks to draw people to follow a way of evil. Jesus, like us, was free to make a choice. He freely chose to obey what he knew was the will of God. Point out that evil is real and powerful, it enters our lives through our human conditions such as pursuit of wealth or power, security and certainty, an easy life, comfort, etc. Our decisions shape our lives. God is more powerful than any evil. Read "God's Way, and God's Way Versus the Devil's Way" from textbooks pages 104 - 106. Emphasize in discussion that we believe that it is fully possible for us to live God's way because of Jesus' example of living God's way, and that we believe in the fulfilment of the kingdom of God in the world in good time.

**What Does It Mean?** Have two large sheets of paper for "graffiti walls," one labelled 'In God's Way' and the other 'Opposed to God's Way'. Have the young people think of as many Do's and don't's for healthy relationships and write them on the posters. You might have some magazines to add some pictures to each.

**What Will I / We Do?** You might have time to read the material from textbooks pages 106 - 107 on "Prayer, Fasting and Abstinence". Give each participant a strip of paper on which they will write an appropriate slogan about this theme and their personal freedom in responding to outside pressures. Close with the prayer "God our Creator, you have given us life and called us to be happy. Help us to live in the kingdom of God by making good decisions in our lives." Invite quiet reflection on their own relationships and what they need so they can live the way

God wants them to live. Have each share their slogans and place them in your prayer centre or add them to your posters. Close with the "Our Father" and a resounding "Amen!"

## Theme 6.3: Is My Way The Best Way?

**Outcomes:** Participants will

- articulate their understanding of the nature, purpose and effects of Jesus' parables about the kingdom of God
- identify signs of the kingdom in their lives
- articulate their understanding of the Lord's Prayer and its implications for their lives

**For the Catechist:** "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done..." is our affirmation that God's way is the best way. Jesus used parables to change the way people thought about God and what God desires for them. We need to be challenged to live according to the kingdom of God.

Parables have two levels of meaning: the literal level and the figurative level. Parables can draw us into the mystery of the kingdom of God, which is greater than the human mind can comprehend. All our actions have effects beyond ourselves. The kingdom of God is about unity and sharing in joy.

**Experience:** Do Option 3 on riddles in your guide pages 215 - 216. Discuss the unexpected in these riddles.

**What's Our Faith Story?** How do we react when our thinking is changed? (Surprised, amused, annoyed, angry, tricked) Jesus shook up his listeners sometimes by some of the stories or parables, he told. Can the young people think of any? You might remind them of the workers in the vineyard who were hired at different times of the day yet all received a day's wages. Also tell them that Jesus used examples that were very familiar to his listeners. Can they think of some? (Sheep, fields, money, trees, builders, weeds, fishing nets, friends, runaways) Jesus used very ordinary life experiences to lead people to an understanding of God's way.

Read "A Parable" on pages 116 - 117 in their textbooks and discuss the reflection questions. Then share the Dramatic Retelling of The Labourers in the Vineyard on page 118. How are these parables about living the way God wants us to live? Are these ways always our ways? (God wants us all to have what we need and to rejoice when others have what they need. God blesses each person who tries to live life the way God wants them to live. It is never too late to begin doing what God wants us to do. God's kingdom is not about competition, but about unity and sharing.) Divide the youth into five groups and assign each to read one parable of (1) *The Sower* Mt 13:3-8, 18-23 (2) *The Mustard Seed and the Yeast* Mt 13: 31 - 33 (3) *The Unmerciful Servant* Mt 18: 23 - 35 (4) *The Two Sons* Mt 21: 28 - 32 (5) *The Wedding Feast* Mt 22: 2-10 (Have these references on slips of paper for easier assignment) Have each group read and reflect on the parable to explain it to the large group with completing what it tells us the kingdom of God is and what it is not...

**What Does It Mean?** Have each of the above groups present a skit of the parable in a modern-day setting.

**What Will I / We Do?** Have two copies of Activity 29a, b, c and arrange for two readers to read the dialogue. Remind them to keep this dialogue in mind as you close with the Lord's Prayer. Emphasize when we pray "Thy kingdom come" it means we are asking God to help us live life in God's way so that we love God and all people more completely. Encourage the young people to share these pages with family members at home and to pray the Lord's Prayer every day. Maybe this can be a Lenten practice for the group. Have them mark their calendars for every time and check on them from time to time.

## **Theme 7.1: Why is Everybody Always Picking on Me?** (*Guide pages 224 - 229*)

**Outcomes:** Participants will

- describe the ways God works in co-operation with people
- identify the ways they can follow Mary's example and co-operate with God
- explain the meaning of the words "virgin birth" and "Immaculate Conception"

**For The Catechist:** There are many difficulties that we must face in life. We know that God's grace is there to help us face all difficulties and challenges when we co-operate with that grace. We also know that God needs our co-operation to get things done. Mary willingly co-operated in God's plan of salvation in spite of the personal difficulties she faced. The Incarnation depended on Mary's co-operation, but being 'full of grace' she was willing to do God's will. Those are the conditions we live with: knowing God's will and trusting in God's grace to do God's will. God's grace is a share in God's life to live as the children of God.

**Experience:** What does it mean to be picked on? What are some examples of being picked on? What are some ways of dealing with being picked on? Note that being 'picked on' might also mean being expected to do more than others or things they really don't like to do, etc.

**What's our faith story?** Someone in a famous play once said, "Lord, I know we're the chosen people, but once in a while couldn't you choose someone else?" What does the speaker feel and think? Being chosen by God brings many blessings but it does not necessarily mean an easy life. Each one is chosen by God for something special, but each must be willing to co-operate with God's grace to do or be what God has planned for us. God's grace is the gift of a share in God's very life which helps us do what needs to be done and to live as children of God.

Read together and discuss 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Romans 8:28. (In text books page 122). Introduce the three stories on pages 122 - 125 as stories of young people who had to face hardships in their lives but were able to look at life from a new perspective. Discuss how they experienced God's grace to have the courage and desire to bring good out of difficulties. Then share "What Mary Might Tell Us" on pages 126 - 127.

Explain in your own words the meanings of the terms "virgin birth" and the "Immaculate Conception" which are teachings specific to our Catholic faith. In the virgin birth, Mary remains a virgin in the event of conceiving and giving birth to Jesus. In the Immaculate Conception, Mary herself from the time of her conception was without any trace of sin because of the special role God's had planned for her. She was "full of grace" as we know from the Angel's greeting.

**What Does It mean?** In small groups assign the young people to create a symbol or a poem of "Grace" to share what they understand grace to mean in their lives. Share these.

**What Will I / We Do?** Discuss what they have learned about Mary and why they think we sometimes ask Mary to support and pray for us. Pray the "Hail Mary" together.

Close with listening to Song #3, "Give Life" and proclaim Luke 1 : 26 - 45. Invite the youth to think of ways that their "Yes" to God would make a difference in the world. Gather these responses into spontaneous prayer which you first model. Eg. "Lord, my mother is aging and requires more of my time. Thank you for the grace to say "Yes" to the needs of my mother." Invite their response "Amen". Encourage them to take books and share this theme ideas at home.

## **Theme 7.2: Who Understands Me?** (*Guide pages 230 - 238*)

**Outcomes:** Participants will

- examine what it means to understand someone else
- identify the things they have in common with the historical Jesus
- describe the political and cultural circumstances that shaped Jesus' life
- express the meaning of the term "Incarnation"

**For the Catechist:** God's Word became flesh: so we might know God's love; to be our model of holiness; and to make us partakers in divine nature. This important theme deals with the doctrine of the Incarnation which is central to our Christian faith and the root of our Christian spirituality. As catechist, reflect on its meaning to you. God's ongoing plan to have a relationship with humanity was fulfilled in this act of love in becoming human. God could not lose divine nature but could take on human nature. God in Jesus is both human and divine, born of a human mother into the full human condition. Jesus lives his humanity and demonstrates that true holiness does not go against human nature, but rather is the purest form of human nature. God understands human nature. God understands and loves each with a tremendous love.

**Experience:** Ask the young people to think about people who truly understand them. How do they understand them? Why are they able to understand them? Share some of their experiences. Have a discussion about what promotes understanding.

**What's Our Faith Story?** Read "Just Like Me" on pages 129 - 130 in their text books which tells of a little girl who changed when she encountered someone of her own race whom she felt understood her. Then read the text on "The wonder of the Incarnation" on page 130. This theme has a lot of information to help the young people understand the very human conditions of the life of Jesus. You may like to just read the information on pages 130 - 138 together and make some brief notes about the land of Palestine (includes Judea, Samaria & Galilee) and the city of Jerusalem with a diagram of the Temple (See notes in Guide pp234 - 235). You can also read the details about why the Romans were in Palestine and how the Jewish people related to the Romans. Teaching by catechist: It is a historical fact that Jesus lived in this land of Palestine in a period of certain period of time. It is a question of faith that Jesus was divine. This is one of the most significant aspects of our faith: the Incarnation. In the doctrine of the Incarnation, we believe that God loves people so much that God was willing to become a person in order that all people might draw closer to God. We believe that in Jesus, God became human without ceasing to be God. Early Christians expressed their belief that God and people were completely united in Jesus through a prayer hymn that St. Paul wrote to the Philippians. Read the prayer together on page 138. and read the rest of "God Understands" pages 138 - 140.

**What Does It mean?** Assign small groups of youth to each develop an acrostic poem about the "INCARNATION" where each word or phrase describes a strength or struggle they have which the human Jesus would have shared and understands.

**What Will I / We Do?** Read the notes about Jean Vanier on page 140 and his letter on page 141. Note the words, "But life really changes if we discover the beauty of people in their

weakness and the presence of God hidden in them". Ask each to take on a project of seeing the presence of God in one other person this week and to find new ways to relate to that person. Share some ideas. Close with a prayer of thanksgiving such as "God you so loved us that you became one like us in Jesus. Help us always to value human nature with its weakness, but help us to live in holiness as Jesus did". Encourage them to share some of this theme with family members at home.

## **Theme 8.1: What Risks Are Worth taking?**

**Outcomes:** Participants will

- describe the issues that led to Jesus' crucifixion
- give reasons for Jesus' accepting his death
- demonstrate the courage and determination needed to take a stand for truth and justice

**For the Catechist:** Jesus was committed to doing the will of God even when he faced the threat of death, because to do otherwise would be to deny the truth he had been teaching and it would be an injustice to deny his expressing the truth and for the people not to hear the truth. Jesus challenges us to love and to treat people with dignity, even if it means we have to accept suffering. Jesus challenges us to live according to God's plan, a plan in which all people are loved and treated with dignity. Jesus had to take risks to do what is right. Jesus was crucified because he challenged both the religious and social beliefs of his time.

**Experience:** Read "Should I have kept quiet?" in textbooks pages 144 - 147. Discuss the story. What risk did Keith take? Why? What were the consequences? What could be the consequences if he had not chosen to take the risk? What are some other kinds of risks people take? List some.

**What's our Faith Story?** Divide the young people into five individuals or groups. Each will study a section on pages 147 - 151 and an assigned scripture passage and prepare to share with the group why that group believes Jesus must die and what Jesus would need to do to get them to change their minds, and why Jesus could not change. Group 1: (The Priests) pp 147 - 148 and Mark 11:15 - 18 Group 2 (The pharisees) P 149 and Matthew 12: 9 - 14 & Luke 5: 29 - 32 Group 3 (The Sadducees) pp 149 - 150 and John 11: 45 - 53 Group 4: (Scribes) 150 - 151 and Matthew 23: 2 - 12 & Mark 2: 1 - 7 Group 5 (Pilate) P. 151 and Mark 15: 1 - 15

**What Does It Mean?** Brainstorm some situations in daily lives of young people where acting as a Christian demands taking a risk. Act out some of the situations. Invite different people to "freeze" the action if someone can suggest a different strategy for dealing with the situations. Discuss the criteria for taking risks or refusing to take risks including the following guidelines: It is never justifiable to do what is wrong in the hopes of achieving something good. The possibility of good coming from the risk must exceed the possibility of harm. Which choice shows the greatest respect for God's creation and for human beings? We cannot "play it safe" if it means being untrue to ourselves. Read Niemohler's poem on page 151.

**What Will I / We Do?** Have each young person write out a pledge in the form of "I will \_\_\_\_\_ even though \_\_\_\_\_ because I believe \_\_\_\_\_." Have a cross or crucifix available. Pass it around as each young person reads their pledge.

(If you have time you will very much appreciate the wonderful "Stations of the Cross" on pages 152 - 153. You will need to have the scripture passages marked before you gather.)

Remind the young people of Palm Sunday and upcoming Holy Week with the Triduum celebration, encouraging them to attend all three services with their families. Encourage them to take their books home and share some of this theme with family members.

## **Theme 8.2: What is the Point of Sacrifice?**

**Outcomes:** Participants will

- express the meaning of the phrase "we are redeemed by Christ's sacrifice"
- describe the relationship of Jesus' sacrifice to Old Testament sacrifices and to the Eucharist
- identify the sacrifices they might make for others

**For the Catechist:** This theme explores the meaning of sacrifice. Death on the cross was a means of execution. Jesus' crucifixion and death seemed to indicate failure and rejection. In retrospect we realize the love that Jesus had as he gave himself completely and went to the cross, and then the resurrection changed everything and gave a whole new meaning to the cross. The new life was an experience of triumph over all things evil and a fulfilment of the promise of a new and eternal relationship with God. We continue to participate in this sacrifice at the Eucharist. Jesus gives himself and we join in giving of ourselves.

**Experience:** Read the two stories on pages 154 - 155 in text books. Discuss the questions and develop a group definition of the word "sacrifice." Discuss different kinds of sacrifices they know.

**What's Our Faith story?** Read "What is a Sacrifice?" page 156. Read "Sacrifice in the Old Testament" pages 156 - 157 Begin to chart details to do a comparison with the next part about Jesus' sacrifice: Write notes in first column about the Old Testament sacrifices to answer What was sacrificed? How was it done? When / how often? Meaning? By whom? What did it express? What did it do for the people? Then read about Jesus' Sacrifice pages 157 and write notes in the second column for comparison. Then read together "The Sacrifice of the Mass".

**What Does It Mean?** Give each participant a copy of Activity Page 32 and ask them to fill in each quadrant with words or images that tell how they can live generous, self-giving lives by reflecting on how Jesus lived and how and why he died.

**What Will I / We Do?** Gather for sharing. Invite each to share one idea from Activity Page 32 with the words, "Jesus gave his life for us and so I....." to which everyone responds "I give thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart." Explain that our natural response to a sacrifice done in love is thanksgiving. There are many psalms of thanksgiving. Invite them to use their Bibles and pray Psalm 138 together in two groups alternately the verses. This is a good introduction to the beautiful prayers found in the Psalms which you can explain are the same used in the Mass as the Responsorial Psalms after the first reading.

Encourage the young people to share this theme material with family members at home. Also encourage participation at the Holy Week services on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil.

## **Theme 8.3: Who's In? Who's Out?** (*Guide pages 258 - 264*)

**Outcomes:** Participants will

- name the ways we exclude people
- name the spiritual deadness that surrounds not only those who are excluded, but also those who exclude them, and identify ways they might bring life to these situations
- articulate the understanding that Jesus' descent to the dead signifies that the message for salvation is for all people in all times and all places.

**For The Catechist:** One of the most important values for children and young people is to know that they belong. Yet many young people suffer from rejection by their family, peers, and communities. We profess in the Creed, "He descended to the dead." Christ experienced death by rejection and violence to embrace every human feeling and to break the bondage of all evil and of death. God's community of love is for all. Christ's redemptive work is for all people in all times and all places. We are called to share this Good News with all people. Christ proclaimed God's eternal love and the redeeming power of that love even in the midst of death.

**Gathering & Experience:** Begin by signing each young person on the forehead with the sign of the cross using words like, "Receive the cross on your forehead. It is Christ himself who now strengthens you with the sign of his love. Learn to know him and follow him." Explain that these words are used to welcome adults who wish to become members of our Church. Discuss how they felt about being signed and the significance of the cross which is a sign of the unity of all people who are followers of Jesus.

Begin a discussion on exclusion / inclusion. Ask questions: What groups of people are often put down by young people? Why? What kinds of people are often put down by adults? How do people feel when they are insulted or excluded? What kinds of things do people do when others are mean to them or exclude them? Why are inclusion and exclusion important in our society?

**What's Our Faith Story?** Explain that this theme will be exploring the part of the Creed that says, "He descended to the dead." To do this, read together the information in their texts on pages 162 - 165. Be sure to develop the concept that Jesus lived his whole life reaching out in love to everyone he met regardless of their state of being, and in his death God's love reached through Jesus to all who ever had lived. If we accept God's love we can feel the life that comes from it. Jesus taught us that when we feel God's love we want to share it with all others. Read together Matthew 25: 31 - 46. Discuss how love is expressed in this passage.

**What Does It mean?** Have each person write down a situation where a person or group of people can be excluded. And write down a Christian response to the same situation. Have them share their ideas. Encourage them to put these ideas into practice.

**What Will We / I Do?** Gather in your prayer space. Listen to "I Am You" Song #5. Recall the sign of the cross they were sealed with at the beginning and explain that just as they are blessed, they are called to be a blessing to others. Proclaim again Matthew 25: 34 - 40. Invite the children to voice prayers for people who are being excluded from full participation in the

community. Pray the Our Father together. Close with the blessing, "Go in peace and remember 'he descended to the dead' to bring God's love to everyone for all times and all places." Encourage the response "Thanks be to God."

Encourage the young people to share this theme material with family members at home.

## **Theme 9.1: Is there hope?** *(Guide pages 266 - 274)*

**Outcomes:** Participants will

- explain what it means to say that Jesus is raised to new life
- identify the hope that is found in Jesus' resurrection for the difficult moments of their lives
- contemplate how resurrection is transformation, not simply restoration of what used to be
- reflect on experiences of restoration

**For the Catechist:** The resurrection of Jesus gives hope and a sense of purpose to our lives. The resurrection is the cornerstone of our Christian faith. It is not just about our going to heaven when we die, but about the transformation and redemption of all creation— every day.

The resurrection is the offer of new life in the face of death. The resurrected Jesus is the same Jesus, yet he is no longer subject to physical limitations. Jesus calls us by name as he did Mary Magdalene. The disciples recognized the resurrected Jesus in the breaking of the bread. Jesus calls us to begin again when we fail. Jesus calls us to celebrate life with him by serving others.

**Experience:** Have the participants reflect and write their answers: Name a significant loss or ending in your life. How did you feel about this loss when you first experienced it? How do you feel about it now? How has the loss affected your life? Give each time to share. You go first.

**What's Our Faith Story?** Read "Do You Believe in the Afterlife?" How does the story remind you of the way people talk about life and death?

Divide your group into five individuals or small groups. Assign each a post-resurrection story from pages 169 - 174. Have each dramatize the story or explain its event and answer these five questions about their story: How did the people in this story recognize Jesus? How do you think the people felt in this encounter with Jesus? How did Jesus challenge the person or people? How does the story challenge us? How might the story help someone find hope? Make sure the ideas are developed that the death of Jesus had caused the disciples to lose all hope, but in these post-resurrection stories they come to new life and new hope. The new life in the resurrected Jesus brings the same possibilities for them in all the events of their lives. They understand Jesus' relationship with God and their relationship with Jesus has new hope and promise. The resurrected Jesus is the same Jesus but he has had a transformation. This is the transforming power of difficult times, losses, and even death...these are not the end, but the beginning of life changed and transformed.

**What Does It Mean?** Create a HOPE Card with a symbol and message offering hope to someone who needs it. It could be to an individual, group or a country.

**What Will I / We Do?** Quietly reflect on the Meditation in their books page 175. Encourage them to take their books home and share this theme's ideas with some family members. Also encourage them that the Christian offers hope because we know and believe in the resurrection power of God.