

Chapter 9: The Early Church: Jesus, True God and True Man

Student Preparation

- Students were asked to read Chapter 9, pages 258-281.
- Students were assigned to complete Chapter 8 Review Questions 1-3 and 13-21 on pages 255-256.
- Students were asked to commit themselves to ten to fifteen minutes of quiet time and prayer three to four times weekly for two weeks.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Share and discuss the students' responses to the Chapter 8 Review Questions which they completed prior to this session. Answers may be found on pages 166-167 of the Teacher's Manual.
- Put the questions at the bottom of page 174 of the Teacher's Manual on the board. Give students time to jot down their answers. Then form a panel of two or three students to discuss one or more of the questions. When they have had a chance to share, call more panels with other students as time permits.
- Read James 1:22-25 on page 258 as an opening prayer.

Part 1:

Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Hidden Treasures, The Letter to the Hebrews, The Catholic Epistles, The Revelation to John (pages 259-272)

- Have a student read page 259 aloud. Have students journal about times when they have overlooked an opportunity by not valuing it. Examples can include meeting someone and assuming they have nothing in common, only to discover a good friend later on; or assuming they were not interested in or would not be good at an activity, and later discovering its potential for them. Have students share their examples.
- Have students complete the pretest on page 260. Answers may be found on page 175 of the Teacher's Manual. Add together the total number of correct answers given collectively by the group. Students may be concerned if they have a number of wrong answers. Remind them that this chapter will go into greater depth about the teaching on Jesus. You will repeat the exercise at the end of the session and measure their improved score at that time.
- Have students turn to the table of contents in their Bibles. Ask them to name the letters which are considered to have been written by Paul (these are listed on page 238 of the Student Book). Then review with them the remaining letters, and Revelation, which is the last book in the Bible. Have student close their Bibles. Call out books of the New Testament one at a time, and have students find the book without referring to the table of contents. Provide a small treat for each person who finds the book first.
- Have students complete the journal exercise on page 261. Review with students that Scripture can be studied and prayed with in a variety of ways. There is a value in studying an entire book of the Bible with care, using outside references such as their student text. At Mass, passages are chosen for each Sunday and the homily provides insight and reflection. Another way to pray with Scripture is to focus on just one or two verses, taking time to find the depth of the riches offered there. Let students know they will be asked to use this process in prayer this week.
- Assign each of the small groups a chapter of 1 Peter, and have them summarize their chapter. Have students pay particular attention to the theme of suffering in this letter. As students report on their summaries, note Peter's advice on suffering on the board. Ask students their response to this advice. Invite them to apply this message to the Church's teaching on making peace in areas of conflict in our world.
- The book of Revelation is one of the most difficult of all the books in the Bible. Some groups have used passages from this book to support exaggerated claims about current events or even to justify violent action. Review the symbolism described on pages 269-270, and ask whether students have seen these symbols referred to in movies, books, or any other contemporary setting.
- Review with students the context of the book on pages 267-268 and the comments on apocalyptic literature on pages 268-269. For further emphasis, put the major points made in this reading on the board.
- Have a student read aloud the last two paragraphs on page 271. Have them discuss their own thoughts about the end of the world, and whether it is a matter that causes them much concern. Fr. Brown's quote can be reassuring if they encounter people who promote an anxious concern about an imminent end to the world.

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Have students do the reading recommended in the margin of page 272 and answer the questions listed there. Check to see if students have any continuing questions or concerns about the book of Revelation. If so, ask the students to do some research, or find further resources yourself (some are listed on pages 172-173 of the Teacher's Manual). Spend some time briefly in the following class bringing some closure to those questions.

Part 2:

Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Christology of the Early Church (pages 273-279)

- Brainstorm with students examples of Christian symbols and their meanings. Examples include the colors of the liturgical year, the symbols used in the sacraments, various types of crosses, symbols for the evangelists, symbols for Jesus such as the Lamb of God. List the symbols on the board. Then give students art materials and ask each to represent selected symbols. Have students share their drawings with the group.
- Prepare students for this section by asking the questions on pages 175-176 of the Teacher's Manual. The answers to these questions are complex, and will reveal limits in information about Jesus or previous lack of attention to the question. This awareness is an excellent preparation for the challenging work in this section.
- Do the "Warm Up" exercise on page 180 of the Teacher's Manual regarding titles. Have cards or cut pieces of paper prepared ahead of time. Distribute three to each student and have the student write his or her name on each. Then collect and shuffle the cards and redistribute among the group. Have each student create three affirming and respectful titles for the person whose name they received. They should note their own name at the bottom of the card. Collect the cards, sort them, and read them aloud. Review the titles for Jesus listed on page 273.
- Assign each student one or more of the teachings about Jesus described on pages 275-277 of the text. Have them take a few minutes to write the teaching in their own words. Then have them read their statements aloud.
- Complete the exercise on page 279. The Nicene Creed is a fundamental and ancient summary of our faith. Remind students that they are at a time of life when they are transitioning from a childish to a mature faith. Questions are a natural part of this process, and may be reflected in their answers to this exercise.
- Have students redo the exercise on page 260. Check the total correct answers against the score from the beginning of the class.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes)

- Set up the prayer space. Incorporate the students' portrayals of symbols into the prayer space.
- While you are preparing the space, ask each student to select one or two verses to be shared during this prayer time.
- Play some quiet music to help students transition into this quiet time.
- Ask each student to read their selected Scripture verses, allowing a time for quiet reflection after each reading.
- Invite students to say aloud any prayer intentions.
- Close with a spontaneous prayer or:

Lord, thank you for teaching us about yourself in your word. Give us the discipline to take time to spend with you, and open hearts to hear your message. Help us to come to know and love Scripture because it reveals your presence among us. Please bless all those we mentioned today, and be with all those in our world who particularly need your help this day.

Amen.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Have students complete Chapter 9 Review Questions 1-5 and 11-16.
- Have students read Chapter 10, pages 284-303.

- Ask students to commit to spending time in prayer over selected Scripture verses three or four times over the following week. Possible verses are Hebrews 11:1 and 4:12, 1 Peter 4:13-14 and 1 Jn 1:1. Recommend the format described on the bottom of page 177 of the Teacher's Manual. Write the points on the board, and have students copy them in their journals. If they do not have Bible commentaries at home, encourage them simply to refer to the notes in their Bibles and then to do personal reflection.
- Ask student to bring an item which symbolizes them, to be used in the closing prayer service.