

Chapter 7:

The Gospel of John: Jesus the Word of God

Student Preparations:

- Students were asked to read Chapter 7, pages 204-230.
- Students were assigned to complete Chapter 6 Review Questions 6-15 and 20-24.
- Students were asked to bring a music selection on CD that they feel sets a tone for prayer.
- Students were asked to make a commitment to reach out to someone during the last week who was often excluded in their community.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Share and discuss the students' responses to the Chapter 6 Review Questions which they completed prior to this session. Answers may be found on pages 135-136 of the Teacher's Manual.
- Facilitate a discussion about the role of music in teens' lives. Invite a few students to play their music selections. Encourage them to preface the music with a few comments about how they made their selection. Choose a piece of music to be used at closing prayer.
- Check on the students' commitment to reach out to someone in their community. In most cases, they should not identify the person by name. Invite them to reflect on their feelings as they made the contact, the reaction of the other person, and any new insights they may have gained as a result of their interaction.

Part 1:

Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: No Greater Love, Background on the Gospel of John, The Word of God, The Book of Signs (pages 205-221)

- Using pages 207-209 as a guide, help students fill in the posterboard listing the authorship, audience, date, place, and themes of John's Gospel. Answers can be found on page 143 of the Teacher's Manual.
- Review with students the information on Christology on pages 212-213. *Christology* is the study of Jesus, as *theology* is the study of God and *biology* is the study of life. The Catholic Church affirms that Jesus is truly God and truly human. John and the synoptics were the first wrestling to understand this mystery. Have students summarize the meaning of "Christology from above" and "Christology from below." Ask them to write individually an explanation of Jesus' human and divine nature for someone who had never before heard of Christianity.
- Review with students the titles for Jesus described on page 215. Have them list the qualities of Jesus that are expressed through these titles, such as protective, supportive, guiding, and life-giving. Divide students into small groups and ask each group to come up with three contemporary titles expressing these same qualities. Have each group share their results with the large group.
- Divide the class into seven groups and assign one sign to each group. Have each group write down the external and internal changes involved in their assigned miracle, and what the miracle reveals about Jesus. Then have each group develop a short skit acting out the miracle in a way that emphasizes these points. Have the students perform their skits.
- Have each group design a prayer service based on their assigned miracle. Each prayer service should include
 - a music selection (not necessarily from among those brought to class),
 - an opening prayer,
 - the assigned Scripture reading,
 - a brief reflection,
 - and a closing prayer.
- As a service project, students could conduct their prayer service at a future date in a classroom of younger students from your parish.

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Have several other students play their music selections. Ask students to journal about the impact of music on their lives. Invite them to reflect on the ways in which music expresses their lives and can change their perspective. Ask any remaining students to leave their CDs with you or bring them back the following week.

Part 2:

Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: The Book of Glory (pages 222-228)

- Put on the board, or have prepared in a poster, the verse from John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” Ask students to reflect on and discuss a time in the last few weeks in which God’s love has been apparent to them. Let the students know that you will be using this as a form of check-in for the remaining sessions of the class.
- Tell the story of St. Maximilian Kolbe, or show a clip of a video about St. Maximilian (e.g., *Maximilian, Saint of Auschwitz*). Accounts of St. Maximilian’s heroism at Auschwitz, when he gave his life in exchange for a fellow prisoner’s, can be found on the web. Ask students to draw comparisons between Jesus’ death and that of St. Maximilian.
- Divide students into small groups. Ask them to read chapters 14-17 of John’s Gospel. Provide them with large pieces of paper and markers. Ask students to prepare a Powerpoint-style version of Jesus’ message: main points highlighted, graphics optional. Have students share their summaries in class. Facilitate a discussion about the similarities and differences between the Scripture account and their versions (e.g., some bullet points may be more easily understood, yet the emotion and complexity of Jesus’ discourse is lost).
- Have students recall the distinct characteristics of the four Gospels. Ask them to take a few minutes to consider, and then decide, which of the four they prefer and why. Review with them why John’s Gospel is not considered a synoptic Gospel. Which of the Gospels seems to speak most directly to them? Note what common themes emerge, and whether students grasp the difference between John’s Gospel and the synoptics.
- Have students complete and discuss the “Do You Believe?” exercise on page 228. Question 5 can provide a foundation for a discussion on students’ ideas about heaven. Ask students to describe heaven, and discuss what they believe are the criteria for achieving heaven.
- Carefully review with students the information on the meaning of the resurrection on page 228. Emphasize for them the central importance of this doctrine, and the unique claim of Christians that God became present in this way in only one human being throughout history. Brainstorm with students the ways in which this teaching makes Jesus different from a great teacher like Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. (For example, Jesus can be present to us in ways those men cannot; his teaching has greater authority than theirs; Jesus could work miracles in his own name.) Ask them to list ways in which these distinctions make *their* lives different today.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes)

- Set up the prayer space in your usual manner, making sure the student music selection is ready.
- Have students bring the contemporary titles for Jesus which they created earlier in the class. Explain the tradition of litany within Catholic prayer: a repetitive form of prayer which often involves a set response on the part of the group. The Litany of the Saints is a familiar part of the Easter liturgy; the Kyrie is a very brief litany prayed at Mass. If desired, read a portion of the Litany of the Saints for the students by way of example. This prayer time will include a litany, in which students slowly read the titles they have created for Jesus one at a time, and the response will be, “Be with us.”
- Give students time to quiet themselves, using the music selection as an aid.
- Ask students to recall what they have learned and remembered about Jesus during this class, particularly their reading of John’s Gospel and thoughts on the resurrection.
- Pray together the litany, with Jesus’ titles reminding the group of his importance in our lives.
- Invite students to name any concerns they may have for which they seek prayer.
- Close with a spontaneous prayer, or the following words,

Jesus, you suffered and died so that we might become new people and live with you forever. Thank you for the power of your example in our lives. Help us to draw on your strength and guidance in good times and in bad. Be with us always. Amen.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Have students complete Chapter 7 Review Questions 5-13, 18 and 19 on page 230.
- Have students read Chapter 8, pages 232-255.
- Ask half of the students to bring an example of a variety of letter: letters to the editor, marketing letters received in the mail, personal letters, e-mails, letters from schools to parents, etc. To ensure variety, it would be helpful for the leader to bring in examples of several different types of letters as well.
- Assign each of the remaining students to find one story of martyrdom (death for the sake of the faith) which occurred in the twentieth or twenty-first century.
- As before, have some students bring in some CDs with appropriate music for prayer.