

## Chapter 3: The Essential Jesus

### *Student Preparations*

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 3, pages 86-115.
- Students were also asked to complete the Chapter 2 Review Questions, pages 83-84.

### *Warm-up (about 20 minutes)*

- Have students do the exercise on page 88. It can be helpful if the leader takes a first step in sharing about the challenge of Jesus' message in his or her own life. Have students process in small groups of two or three, and then gather the large group and share some responses.
- Collect and check the Chapter 2 Review Questions. Answers to the questions can be found on pages 76–78 of the Teacher's Manual.

## Part 1:

### *Lesson (about 30 minutes)*

*Text Reference: The Light of the World, Mysteries of Christ's Life, pages 87-99*

- This chapter introduces the core themes which occur throughout the Gospels. The following chapters will focus on each of the four Gospels individually. The first Gospel theme is that of mystery. Have students name examples of mysteries. Write the suggestions on the board. Explain that "mystery" when used about Jesus is similar to our understanding of "the mystery of love" a reality that is so great it is beyond our understanding
- Have students individually write a paragraph describing Mother Teresa. What did she stand for? What events shaped her life? What impact has she had on other people? Discuss the similarities and differences in students' descriptions. Like these descriptions, the Gospels have core similarities and some differences in their descriptions of Jesus.
- Have students read Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2. Using these passages as reference, review the chart on page 91 to see compare and contrast these accounts.
- *Redaction criticism* considers how and why Scripture authors wrote as they did. Choose a sport or activity familiar to most of the members of the group. Have those students describe a recent or important game as if they were presenting a report to a member of the team who had missed the game. Have another group of students describe the game as if they were presenting to a group of people who had never heard of the sport. What is different about the two presentations, although they are describing the same event? Matthew is a Jewish Christian writing to Jews; Luke is writing to Gentiles. Review pages 91-93 to see how those differences shaped the Gospels. What are the most important differences? Similarities?
- The Gospels deal both with history (what happened) and with religious truth. Jesus' baptism is the beginning of his public ministry. Ask: What is the religious meaning of this event? What was John the Baptist's role in the Gospels? Why did Jesus begin his work by being baptized? What does his baptism symbolize?
- Explain the *criterion of embarrassment* (page 96), a valuable tool for understanding Scripture and accounts of non-religious events. This means, for example, that if a political candidate were to acknowledge breaking the law as a young person, we can be confident the statement is true because admitting to such an act is an embarrassment rather than a help to the candidates' cause. Therefore, when the Gospels include facts about Jesus which would have been confusing or even scandalous to people of the time, historians recognize a greater probability that the accounts are accurate.

### *Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)*

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Provide students with poster board, markers, and an assortment of magazines. Have them create a poster "advertising" Jesus and his message. What is Jesus for? What is he against? Why would people want to listen to him? Where would he be if he were physically among us today?
- Have students do the exercise on page 98. What do they see as the most powerful temptations in teens' lives today?

## Part 2:

### *Lesson (about 30 minutes)*

*Text Reference: Jesus the Teacher, Jesus the Miracle-Worker, Jesus' Obedience to His Father's Will (pages 99-111)*

- Jesus is a teacher, but he is a teacher of life; in many ways, he is comparable to a coach. Have students brainstorm the qualities of an effective coach. How do these qualities relate to the list on pages 99-100?
- Jesus used parables, or stories and comparisons, to help his listeners remember his message. Choose a song which carries a strong message and play it for the students. Why is music effective in getting a point across? Why do we often remember music or stories better than lectures?
- Have students choose a parable from the list on pages 101-102. Have them retell the parable using contemporary images. What is the important meaning in the parable?
- Share a story with students about a modern-day miracle. (Possible resources are the books *Where Angels Walk* and *Where Miracles Happen* by Joan Wester Anderson, or the video *Mother Teresa*, segment on Beirut.) Ask students whether they or anyone they know has experienced a dramatic answer to prayer. Facilitate a discussion on whether miracles occur today as well as in Jesus' time. Ask them to define a miracle in their own words. Continue the discussion. Ask: What is the purpose of miracles (pages 106-107)? Reviewing the list of Jesus' miracles, are some easier to accept than others?
- Clarify for the teen that although Jesus obeyed the Father, he is equal to the Father as God. Clarify this point for students. The words of the Creed, "God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God" confirm this central teaching of Catholicism.
- Jesus was "a sign of contradiction." This means that his message went contrary to the expectations of many people of his day. Ask students to choose two of Jesus' teachings from page 109 which are still difficult today. Facilitate a discussion on what makes that message hard to hear.

### *Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes)*

- Set up prayer space as in previous sessions.
- Using music if desired, have students quiet themselves in preparation for prayer.
- Have a student read the quotation from St. Gregory on page 87.
- Invite students to quietly consider the role Jesus has played in the world and in their lives. Give students the opportunity to name intentions for those they know and for the world.
- Close with a spontaneous prayer, or read, "Jesus, help us come to know better who you are in our lives. Thank you for sharing our lives, for suffering and struggling alongside us. Help us to trust you and follow you more each day."

### *Conclusion (5 minutes):*

- Assign students to answer the Review Questions 1-10 and 15-17 on page 112 and review the vocabulary on page 133.
- Have students read Chapter 4 on the Gospel of Mark for the next session.