

Pastoral Formation Program Material

In Two Volumes

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Introduction

Volume 1

This book introduces you to service in the church, prayer, and our statement of faith. You are asked to pray over each section of the text materials and invite the Spirit to come to you in this action. By praying through these chapters you will find that your own prayer life will be deepened.

In each of the first eighteen chapters, a passage from the *Acts of the Apostles* is cited. This scripture study focuses on the growth of the early Church, the ministry of preaching and service of the Church leaders, and the working of the Spirit in the Church. Reading and praying over these scripture passages will help you recognize the working of the Spirit in your local Church. It will also help you understand more clearly your own call to ministry and service. In the last twelve chapters, scripture passages are taken from different parts of the Bible. These passages will support the idea discussed in the first part of each chapter. Praying over the Word will help you see how God communicates to us through the scriptures.

It is important to look up the various scripture citations in each chapter. By reading them they will reinforce the messages presented. **Using a study bible will be of great benefit to you. We recommend the *Catholic Study Bible (New American Bible) 1990*, which has close to 600 pages of reading guides that lead you through the text. This background will give you the context of the time it was written and will enable you to make sense of it in this time. For those who are Non-Denominational we would recommend that you choose a Translation of only the highest scholarly and reliable quality, such as the NKJV or the NRSV. We do find the New American Study Bible to be historically accurate and within the norms for ecumenical use.**

Questions are provided for each chapter. You are asked to respond to the questions and begin to generate questions yourself. Present your questions to your mentor. For years scholars have studied the Scriptures and they continue to yield new ideas as we open ourselves to the Spirit. Complete your answers and email them to your advisor. He/she will react to your responses and provide feedback in a timely manner. We hope you will find these materials to be challenging and rewarding as you start your studies. We ask you for your feedback so that we can make these materials even better in the coming years. Enjoy your journey!

All scripture passages were taken from the *New American Bible: The Catholic Study Bible*, 1990 by Oxford University Press, Inc., 200 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

These materials have been adapted from *Builders of the New Earth: The formation of deacons and lay ministers*. Kino Jesuit Community: Catholic Diocese of Rapid City, SD. 1991. Special thanks to John E. Hatcher, S. J. and Patrick M. McCorkell, S. J.

CHAPTER ONE

BEING CALLED TO SERVE

YOU HAVE PARTICULAR WORK TO DO Jesus has called you to serve the Church. He has a particular work for you to do. Only you can do this work for him. If you give yourself completely to this work, then Jesus will be able to touch the hearts of your brothers and sisters.

IN THE CHURCH YOU REPRESENT CHRIST TO THE WORLD You are called to serve Jesus as a leader in the Church. You are sent by Jesus to be his representative. This is often difficult and frightening work, but Jesus has chosen you and will help you to do it. He will teach you how to lead the people and he will give you the courage and strength you need to do it.

JESUS MAKE YOU WORTHY TO SERVE No one is worthy to serve as a leader in the Church. Everyone has done things they regret having done. Nevertheless,

Jn 21: 15-17 Jesus calls you, a sinner, to serve as a leader in his Church. His call makes you worthy to serve your brothers and sisters as a deacon, priest, bishop or lay minister.

YOU MUST ANSWER You are called to service every day.
THE CALL EVERY DAY When you first heard and answered the call, you had to change your life. Everyday you must hear and answer the call. Each day you are called to deeper service. Jesus, who calls you, will make it possible for you to minister to others. He will be at your side and the Spirit will be there to help you in your ministry.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER ONE

ACTS 1:6-14 Jesus returns to the Father

Footnotes:

1,6: The question of the disciples implies that in believing Jesus to be the Christ they had expected him to be a political leader who would restore self-rule to Israel during his historical ministry. When this had not taken place, they asked if it is to take place at this time, in this period of the church.

1,7: This verse echoes the tradition that the precise time of *parousia* (end time) is not revealed to human beings.

1,8: Just as Jerusalem was the city of destiny in the Gospel of Luke (the place where salvation was accomplished), so here at the beginning of Acts, Jerusalem occupies a central position. It is the starting point for the mission of the Christian disciples to "the ends of the earth," the place where the apostles were situated and the doctrinal focal point in the early days of the community.

Acts 1:6-14

6 When they had gathered together they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?" 7 He answered them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. 8 But you will receive the power

when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” 9 When he said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. 10 While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. 11 They said, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?” This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. 13 When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14 All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

REFLECTION:

The public teaching of Jesus came to an end. Jesus returns to his Father in glory. However, the work of salvation is not finished. The whole world is to learn the Good News about Jesus. He will send his Holy Spirit. The Spirit will give the Apostles the power to tell the world about him and to gather a community in Jesus’ name. The community gathered by the Spirit waits for the return of Jesus in glory. All of us share in the task given to the Apostles to tell the world about Jesus. We are called to be public witnesses to Jesus just as those who lived in his time. We are called to serve our brothers and sisters by bringing to them God’s revealed Word made flesh. As ministers in the Church, we walk hand in hand with our people as together we make this journey of faith.

Together we navigate this life time as partners in Christ.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

As a future leader in the Church, what do you believe is your mandate as an ordained deacon/priest/lay minister?

Describe where you are on your faith journey.

As a person preparing for a leadership role in the Church, what expectations, concerns, and hopes do you currently have as you begin your training?

CHAPTER TWO WE CAN EXPECT RESISTANCE

YOU WILL OPPOSED IN YOUR MINISTRY When you begin to serve the Lord, you can expect resistance. Sometimes old friends turn against you. Sometimes people make fun of you and threaten you. Sometimes clergy from other denominations will oppose you. The Lord will see you through these times. He will give you the necessary grace to overcome opposition to your ministry. **Go to God in prayer when these times arise.**

MINISTERS MUST TRUST THE LORD You will work hard every day in your ministry and no doubt you will become discouraged from time to time. This is to be expected. We all have these times in our ministries when we wonder why did we get into this work. Remember the Kingdom of God grows slowly. For over 2000 years the movement has been in progress and it will continue until the end of time. When things are most hopeless, that is when the Lord can do the most good. The good that is done clearly depends on the Lord, not on us.

ESUS CHANGES THE HEARTS OF PEOPLE If you are to be successful in your ministry, you must **place your trust in God**. The work you are called to do is the Lord's work. No amount of work or number of hours will mean success. Your work will only succeed when you give yourself over to Christ. He is the one who changes people's hearts.

JESUS IS LORD
overwhelmed

It is good for ministers to be so

OF THE WORK by the work of serving God's people that they
Mk 11: 22-24 pray as if everything depends on them and work with
the peace that comes from knowing that everything depends on God.
This attitude allows a minister to have the staying power to do God's
work without taking on too much or worrying about succeeding at it.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWO

Acts 2:1-11 The Spirit comes

Footnotes:

2, 1-4 : Luke's Pentecostal narrative consists of an introduction, a
speech
ascribed to Peter declaring the resurrection of Jesus and its messianic
significance, and a favorable response from the audience. It is likely
that the narrative telescopes events that took place over a period of
time
and on a less dramatic scale. The Twelve were not originally in a
position
to proclaim publicly the messianic office of Jesus without incurring
immediate reprisal from those religious authorities in Jerusalem who
had
brought about Jesus' death precisely to stem the rising tide in his
favor.

2, 2: There came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind...
wind
and spirit are associated in Jn 3, 8. The sound of a great rush of wind
would herald a new action of God in the history of salvation.

2, 3: Tongues as of fire... (see Ex 19, 18) where fire symbolizes the
presence of God to initiate the covenant on Sinai. Here the holy Spirit
acts upon the apostles, preparing them to proclaim the new covenant
with
its unique gift of the Spirit.

2, 4: To speak in different tongues...ecstatic prayer in praise of God,
interpreted in vv 6 and 11 as speaking in foreign languages,
symbolizing
the worldwide mission of the church.

Acts 2:1-11

1 When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. 2 And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. 3 Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each of them. 4 And they were filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. 5 Now there were devote Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. 6 At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? 9 We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, 11 both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God."

REFLECTION:

On Pentecost the Apostles received the Spirit. The Spirit gave them a clear understanding of Jesus and his message. They now knew that Jesus was both God and man. They knew he made them children of God and saved them from their sins and from death. Jesus sent the Spirit from the Father in order to create the Church.

Today the Church continues to be lead by the Spirit as are all God's people. Our task is to open ourselves to the Spirit and follow where we are being lead. You are being called to ministry. This is not your doing, but God's doing. God is calling you by name. The Spirit is in charge. You are to respond with a "YES." Just as the Apostles experienced the Spirit, we too experience that as well. Today, as in years past, the Spirit works through us to make Jesus known to all. Can we take the chance and respond to God's call?

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is it necessary to trust in God completely?

What did the Spirit teach us about Jesus?

How does an ordained or lay minister grow in trust of the Lord?

CHAPTER THREE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

HISTORY Sixty years after Jesus' death Christians began to sign + themselves with a reminder that Jesus Christ had died for them on the cross. It was a reminder that he had died for them so that they could have life. He was crucified as a common criminal with two others. Christians were laughed at because they worshipped a God who was put to death as a common criminal.

JESUS WAS REALLY HUMAN enjoyed Jn 11:35-37 prayed. He Mk 14:32-42 that the Jn 4:5-6 worshipped a Human God.	Jesus was human just like us. He walked the earth in service to others. He had feelings. He himself. He cried. He suffered. He was completely human. People thought Christians were foolish because they
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GOD BECAME HUMAN TO OVERCOME EVIL Jesus in order to confront the evils that beset people. Each person suffered from the effects of sin, sickness, Satan and death. God became human so that he could experience the effects of these four evils and by submitting to their power win a victory over them.	God became human in the person of Jesus in order to confront the evils that beset people. Each person suffered from the effects of sin, sickness, Satan and death. God became human so that he could experience the effects of these four evils and by submitting to their power win a victory over them.
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JESUS GAINED THE FINAL VICTORY heaven and earth he became the Christ (the anointed one of God Phil 2:6-11 the Lord). He was given the final victory over the evils of sin, sickness, Satan, and death. The Cross has become the	When Jesus was suspended between earth he became the Christ (the anointed one of God Phil 2:6-11 the Lord). He was given the final victory over the evils of sin, sickness, Satan, and death. The Cross has become the
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triumphant sign of that victory. When we use the Sign of the Cross we share in the Lord's victory over these evils.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS IS A TESTIMONY
In the Church we begin and end each prayer and each service with the Sign of the Cross. It is a way in which we testify to all peoples that Jesus is Lord. We Apply the victory of the Cross in our lives and in the Lives of people around us.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER THREE

Acts 2:14-24 Peter's first sermon
Footnotes:

2, 14-36: The first of six discourses in Acts dealing with the resurrection of Jesus and its messianic import. Five are attributed to Peter, the final one to Paul. Modern scholars term these discourses in Acts the "kerygma," the Greek word for proclamation.

2, 17: Peter's sermon. The gift of the Spirit to all flesh, and not just to chosen individuals, is a mark of the Messianic age (Joel 2:28-32). Like Paul (1Cor 12:13), Acts usually assumes that all Christians receive the Spirit.

Acts 2:14-24

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, "You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you, and listen to my words. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. 16 No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17 'It will come to pass in the last days,' God says, 'that I will pour out a portion of my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old

men shall see visions. 18 Indeed, upon my servants and my handmaids I will pour out a portion of my spirit in those days, and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will work wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below: blood, fire, and a cloud of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the great and splendid day of the Lord, 21 and it shall be that everyone shall be saved who calls on the name of the Lord.' 22 You who are Israelites, hear these words. Jesus the Nazorean was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. 23 This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. 24 But God raised him up, releasing him from the thrones of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it.

REFLECTION:

Peter explained to the crowd what had happened. The speaking in strange languages by the Apostles was a sign that the Last Days had come. The Spirit gave the Apostles the power to announce God's salvation to people of different countries. Joel had said this would be a sign of the Day of the Lord. The Apostles preached the message of Jesus Christ. Jesus was the one sent by God to free the people. According to God's plan Jesus freely died for us. The Father raised him to life, a life that was new. All who believe in Jesus are offered that same life as God's children. It is God's gift to all his creation. Peter and the other Apostles preached this message on Pentecost. How are we bringing the message of the Word to the world? What gifts have you received from the Spirit? Do you recognize them? Are you using them?

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

What is the significance of the cross ?

How can you use the cross to teach people about Jesus?

What is the significance of Pentecost in the Church today?

CHAPTER FOUR BAPTISM AND THE CROSS

THE CROSS REMINDS When we make the sign of the cross,
US OF BAPTISM we say "*In the name of the Father, and*

Mt 28:16-20 of the *Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*" In baptism we use these words as water is poured over the person receiving the sacrament. When we invoke the words of the Sign of the Cross we are stating to the world we want to live our lives in the Kingdom of God. We link ourselves to the Triune God we honor and worship.

OUR GOD IS ONE GOD We believe in the Triune God.
One God,
Dt 6: 4-9 three person: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The Father created us. The Son saved us from our sins on the Cross, and the Spirit provides us grace necessary to carry out God's plan for us. The Spirit makes it possible for us to confess that Jesus is Lord.

THERE ARE REAL There is one God, not three gods. The DIFFERENCES IN Father, Son, and Spirit mean real GOD differences in God. They are not simply Lk 3:21-22 names for the different faces God puts Jn 17:20-23 when he relates to us. In baptism we Jn 16:7-16 are given the relationship to the Father that the Son has. The Spirit testifies to the Father that we are sons and daughters, and to the Son we are his brothers and sisters, and to us that it is so.

AMEN" MEANS WE WILL SERVE GOD itself. It At the end of the Sign of the Cross we say "Amen." "**Amen**" is a prayer in itself. It is a way of saying "YES" to our baptism.

We say publicly that we have chosen to lead our lives for Christ. When we say "**Amen**" we are saying "**YES**" to the prayer that went before and we are saying "YES" to God.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS We use the Sign of the Cross to bless ourselves and others. We IS A SIGN OF THE LORD'S use it to bless VICTORY medals, crosses, rosaries, and other objects. We use this sign because it is at the heart of our faith. On the Cross Jesus died for in order to win the new life of Resurrection. In baptism we die with

him and share in the new life of the Resurrection. We claim the Cross as a sign of victory.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER FOUR

Acts 2: 36-42 The people react to Peter's sermon

Footnotes:

2, 36: Early Christians believed that Jesus was not only the Messiah on earth, but also the heavenly Lord.

2, 38: Repent and be baptized ... repentance is a positive concept, a change of mind and heart toward God reflected in the actual goodness of one's life. It is in accord with the apostolic teaching derived from Jesus and ultimately recorded in the four gospels. Luke presents baptism in Acts as the expected response to the apostolic preaching about Jesus and associates it with the conferring of the Spirit.

2, 42: The breaking of the bread, apparently a common meal which included the Lord's supper.

Acts 2: 36-42

36 Therefore let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified. 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" 38 Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call. 40 He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accept his message were baptized, and about three

thousand persons were added that day. 42 They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.

REFLECTION:

Peter told the crowd to turn from their sins and receive the victory Jesus

offers them. In order to do this, they needed to turn from sin and be baptized with water. By doing these two things they were joined with Jesus. The Spirit moves us to join a community of believers. The scripture describes this community that has been created by the Spirit. There are four basic elements: 1) the disciples devoted themselves to the *teaching of the Apostles* (studying the teaching of the Church); 2) *fellowship* (community life); 3) *breaking of the bread* (Eucharist); and 4) *prayers*. In today's community of faith we are called to the same element. How do they fit into our lives? Which ones suffer because of time, other commitments, or neglect?

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

What do we need to do to become followers of Jesus Christ?

Why is baptism given in the name of Jesus?

How does the Spirit move a community of believers?

CHAPTER FIVE

GLORY TO THE FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be world without end.
Amen.

GOD'S GLORY IS In the Hebrew scriptures when the word HIS PRESENCE IN "glory" was applied to someone, it meant that POWER the person was important. A person who was rich and powerful was "glorious." When the word was applied to God, it meant that **he was present**. God's glory was in the pillar of fire and the cloud that led the Jewish people to the promised land. It resided in

the temple at Jerusalem. The glory of God is God present in his loving creative power.

THE POWERFUL In the prayer, *The Glory Be*, we recognize the creative presence of God. We give praise to PRESENCE OF GOD the Father, and to the Son, and to the Spirit. We give all three equal praise. In *The Glory Be*, we say that all three are God. When they act on our behalf, God's glory, his loving creative power, is present.

WE CAN GIVE Angels and human persons can give glory to GLORY TO GOD God. Only a person can recognize the Eph 3:20-21 presence of God's creative love and give him thanks and praise. But we do more than recognize the powerful presence of God and thank him. In baptism we receive a share in the life of God. We are changed and begin to live in his loving creative power.

WE BECOME LIKE God becomes human in the person of Jesus so JESUS that we could become what he is, divine. Our Col 1: 9-14 glory is that in the Risen Christ we can be free from sin and death and share in his life forever. Only a human person can become like the Risen Christ, the son of God, who is God's glory.

WE BECOME THE In the *Glory Be*, we praise God for his creative power. We also celebrate GLORY OF GOD ourselves as gifts of 2 Cor 3:18 that loving creative power. Each one of us is a 2 Thes 1: 11-12 living *Glory Be*. As we put off our old selves and put on the new life of the resurrection we become the Glory of God.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER FIVE

Acts 5: 12-16 The Apostles carry on Christ's work

Footnotes:

5, 12-16: This, the third summary portraying the Jerusalem community, under-scores the Twelve as its bulwark, especially because of their charismatic power to heal the sick.

Acts 5:12-16

12 Many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles. They were all together in Solomon's portico. 13 None of the others dared to join them, but the people esteemed them. 14 Yet more than ever, believers in the Lord, great numbers of men and women, were added to them. 15 Thus they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them. 16 A large number of people from the towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem also gathered, bringing the sick and those disturbed by unclean spirits, and they were all cured.

REFLECTION:

Jesus healed people of sickness and freed them from evil spirits. After Pentecost the Apostles did these same works. These works were signs of the deliverance that Jesus brought to all peoples. Through the Apostles Jesus continued to work for the deliverance of everyone. Signs of Jesus' deliverance are present in the Church today. Through lay people, deacons, priests, and bishops of the Church, Jesus continues his work. He continues to heal people and to overcome evil. The work of Jesus goes on in our lives each day. Some of us hear preaching about Jesus and change our lives. Some of us are able to remain faithful to Jesus in spite of hardship. Still others find in service to others that they are instruments of God's love. In whatever calling you experience, God will give you the grace to carry it out.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit responses to one page per question).

What is the significance of the *Glory Be* prayer?

How did the Apostles continue the work of Jesus?

Where have you seen the work of Jesus in your community?

CHAPTER SIX
THE HAIL MARY PRAYER

THE HAIL MARY

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you.
Blessed are you among women
and blessed is the fruit of
your womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of
our death. Amen.

THE PRAYER
on

TEACHES US
and about
ABOUT MARY

In the
AND JESUS
ask

Lk 1:26-38

The *Hail Mary* is a prayer that is based

scripture. It teaches about Mary

her son. Jesus, the anointed one.

second part of the prayer we confidently

Mary to support us with her prayers.

THE SAVIOR
messenger of God

IS NEAR spoke to Mary. When she heard them, she was upset. The fact that a messenger of God would come to her was unsettling enough; but when he used these words, Mary knew that the time of the Messiah, the **one-sent-by-God-to-save-the-people**, was at hand.

Hail Mary are the words the

MOTHER OF THE
"full of

SAVIOR grace." By these words Mary understood that she was to be the one who would bring the Messiah into the world. Mary was

The messenger of God then said to her,

chosen by God to be the Mother of the Savior. This was a great favor given by God to Mary.

MARY IS MOST BLESSED AMONG WOMEN
When Mary went to see Elizabeth, her cousin, Elizabeth said to her, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." In the past these words had been used to address other great women of Israel.
Lk 1:39-45
Gn 17:15-22
Gn 18:9-15
Gn 21:1-7
Mary was blessed because she was the mother of the Messiah. She was the mother of God-the mother of the man Jesus, who is our God.

GOD MADE MARY WORTHY
In the second part of the prayer, Mary is called "holy." She is holy because God called her and made her holy. On her own, Mary is not worthy or deserving of her calling to be the mother of the Messiah. God chose her and made her worthy and deserving.
Lk 1:46-55

MARY WAS THE MOTHER OF THE MAN JESUS, OUR GOD
Mary is called "mother of God." This title reminds us that Jesus is human just like us. He had a real human mother. He was the Son of God and the son of a human person. Because of Mary's motherhood God is united with us. He can feel our limitations and we can share in his freedom from limitation.

JESUS IS OUR BROTHER, WE ARE MARY'S CHILDREN
In the last part of the prayer, we ask Mary to pray for us "now and at the hour of our death." We pray to Mary because she is the mother of Jesus. In our baptism we were made brothers and sisters of Jesus, and Mary became our mother. We ask her to pray for us. She is alive with Jesus and cares for us her children.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER SIX

Acts 6: 1-7 The Apostles choose helpers

Footnotes:

6: 1-7: These are traditionally regarded as the first deacons, but their functions are more like that of presbyters or bishops. The Hellenists were not necessarily Jews from the *dispora*, but were most probably Palestinian Jews who spoke only Greek. The Hebrews were Palestinian Jews who spoke Hebrew or Aramaic and who may also have spoken Greek. Both groups belong to the Jerusalem Jewish Christian community. The conflict between them leads to a restructuring of the community that will better serve the community's needs. The real purpose of the whole episode, however, is to introduce Stephen as a prominent figure in the community whose long speech and martyrdom will be recounted in Ch 7.

6: 2-4: The essential function of the Twelve is the "service of the word," including development of the *kerygma* by formulation of the teaching of Jesus.

6: 6: *They ...laid hands on them*: the customary Jewish way of designating persons for a task and invoking upon them the divine blessing and power to perform it.

Acts 6: 1-7

1 At the time, as the numbers of disciples continued to grow, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said, "It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table. 3 Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, 4whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 The proposal was acceptable to the whole community, so they chose Stephen, a man filled with faith and the holy Spirit, also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them. 7 The word of God continued to be spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly; even a large group of priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

REFLECTION:

Jesus commanded the Apostles to tell everyone the Good News about himself. The Spirit gave the Apostles the power to do this. The Apostles spent their time in prayer and teaching about Jesus. As the number of disciples grew problems came up. Some groups in the community argued with others. The Apostles needed helpers. They appointed seven people to assist them. These persons were appointed to serve the community. They were to witness to the Gospel of Jesus. Is this any different then what we experience in the present Church? How will we deal with those issues of disunity that continue among Christians today?

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is the prayer to Mary a significant experience for people?

In our ministry today, we seek a balance among prayer, preaching, service, and liturgical events (along with having a lay job). How do you see managing this in your ministry?

How is community formed?

CHAPTER SEVEN

WE DARE TO SAY 'Our Father'

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be they name;
Thy kingdom come; thy will be done On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses As we forgive those who trespass
against us;
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. Amen.

THE PRAYER OF
BAPTIZED PEOPLE
prayer
Mt 6:9-13
hearts,

The *Lord's Prayer* is a prayer of all
baptized men and women. It is a
of all of those who have said in their

Lk 11: 1-4
died
power over the

Jesus is Lord. When Jesus suffered and
on the cross, he was given

Kingdom of Satan. Jesus overcame the
power of evil. But that victory is not yet
complete. It will only be complete, when
Jesus comes again in full power and

glory.

WE PRAY THAT
have to
mind. In the first place, it
OUR HEARTS
help

When we say the *Lord's Prayer*, we
keep two ideas in
is a prayer in which we seek the Father's

today. We know that there is a struggle between the kingdom of God
and the power of evil. We are caught up in that struggle.

We experience in ourselves and in the lives of our brothers and sisters
the fight between the kingdom of God and the power of evil.

BAPTISM GIVES US VICTORY In baptism we have been given the victory
over the power of evil and over the power of Satan.
In the *Lord's Prayer* we ask that the kingdom of God will grow in our
hearts and in the hearts of our brothers and sisters.

WE PRAY THAT
when we say
JESUS WILL
asking that

The second idea to keep in mind
the *Lord's Prayer* is that we are

COME AGAIN Jesus will return to us in full power and glory as soon
as possible. We are asking that Jesus will come again this day so that
all people will see clearly that "Jesus Christ is Lord.

WE PRAY FOR
we pray for
CONTINUING
the power

In each part of the *Lord's Prayer*
the continuing victory over evil and

VICTORY AND of Satan in our hearts and the hearts of
our
FINAL VICTORY brothers and sisters. And we pray for the end of
time to come when Jesus will put an end to the struggle between the
kingdom of God and the power of evil.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER SEVEN

Acts 7: 51-60 Stephen is killed

Footnotes:

7: 55 He ... saw...Jesus standing at the right hand of God ... Stephen affirms to the Sanhedrin that the prophecy Jesus made before them has been fulfilled.

7: 57 Covered their ears...Stephen's declaration, like that of Jesus, is a scandal to the court, which regards it as blasphemy.

7: 58 The witness...who were legally required to cast the first stones at the offender (Deut 17:7).

Acts 7: 51-60

51 "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always oppose the holy Spirit; you are just like your ancestors. 52 Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They put to death those who foretold the coming of the righteous one, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become. 53 You received the law as transmitted by angels, but you did not observe it." 54 When they heard this, they were infuriated, and they ground their teeth at him. 55 But he, filled with the holy Spirit, looked up intently to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56 and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." 57 But they cried out in a loud voice, covered their ears, and rushed upon him together. 58 They threw him out of the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them"; and when he said this, he fell asleep.

REFLECTION:

Stephen became a powerful preacher of God's word. The Jewish leaders called Stephen before them to explain his teaching. Stephen showed from the scriptures that Jesus was the one sent from God. He told the leaders that they were acting against the Holy Spirit, because they refused to believe this. The leaders accused Stephen of talking against God and their religion. They led him out of the city and stoned him to death. The Holy Spirit made Stephen's faith strong. As he died, he forgave those who killed him. What does his action say to us in this modern world?

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit your response to one page per question).

What is the significance of the *Lord's Prayer*?

What did you glean from the Acts 7: 51-60?

How would you relate the story of Stephen in today's world?

CHAPTER EIGHT

WE HAVE A RIGHT TO CALL GOD 'Father'

IN BAPTISM WE
CHILDREN OF
GOD
Gal 3:26-29

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray to the Father as "our" father. Because of our baptism we have all been made children of the Father and brothers and sisters of Jesus. Just as Jesus prays to the Father as favored Son, we are to pray to the Father as favored sons and daughters.

WE ARE AS CLOSE
TO THE FATHER AS
used
JESUS IS
Rom 8:14-17

Jesus taught us that God was our father. When Jesus prayed to his Father, he used the word "abba." This word is from the Aramaic language. It means "daddy" or "papa." It shows that Jesus was very close to his Father. In this prayer Jesus tells us to pray to the Father as "daddy." We are given

the same close family relationship with the Father as Jesus has.

WE HAVE A RIGHT
given
TO CALL GOD
"FATHER"
1 Jn 3:1-3

Because of our baptism we have been
the right to call God "Father." We are
invited to be close to him and to give our
lives to him. When God looks on us God is
as pleased as when he looked on Jesus. He
loves us as his favored daughters and
sons.

THE FATHER IS A
PERSON
in
us. He wants to share his life with us. The
Father wants us to share our lives with him.

In the prayer we refer to God as "who?"
Our Father is a person. He is interested

HEAVEN IS
COMPLETE UNION
down.
WITH GOD
the
with
God.

In the *Lord's Prayer* we say that the Father
is "in heaven." Heaven is not up or

Heaven is a word we use to talk about
complete union we will one day have
the Father. Heaven is the kingdom of

In this kingdom all men and women
confess
that *Jesus is Lord*. In this kingdom everyone and everything are under
the rule of God. Heaven begins in us as we begin to allow Jesus to be
the Lord of our lives. We will enjoy heaven fully, when we are
completely united with the Father after death.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER EIGHT

Acts 8: 1-8 The church grows

Footnotes:

8: 1 All were scattered...except the apostles...this observation leads
some modern scholars to conclude that the persecution was limited to
the Hellenist Christians and that the Hebrew Christians were not
molested, perhaps because their attitude toward the law and temple
was still more in line with that of their fellow Jews. Whatever the
facts, it appears that the Twelve took no public stand regarding

Stephen's position, choosing, instead, to await the development of events.

8:3 Saul...was trying to destroy the church...like Stephen, Saul was able to perceive that the Christian movement contained the seeds of doctrinal divergence from Judaism. A pupil of Gamaliel, according to 22, 3, and totally dedicated to the law as the way of salvation (Gal 1: 13-14), Saul accepted the task of crushing the Christian movement, at least insofar as it detracted from the importance of the temple and the law. His vehement opposition to Christianity reveals how difficult it was for a Jew of his time to accept a messianism that differed so greatly from the general expectation.

Acts 8: 1-8

1 Now Saul was consenting to his execution. On that day, there broke out a severe persecution of the church in Jerusalem, and all were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 Devout men buried Stephen and made a loud lament over him. 3 Saul, meanwhile, was trying to destroy the church; entering house after house and dragging out men and women, he handed them over for imprisonment. 4 Now those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. 5 Thus Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. 6 With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing. 7 For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people, and many paralyzed and crippled people were cured. 8 There was great joy in that city.

REFLECTION:

The preaching about the Good News began in Jerusalem. As the Christians moved because of persecution, they spread the Word wherever they went. Philip went to Samaria. Without fear, he brought the Gospel message to the people. Those who were outcasts received the word of God. Philip preached with power and authority given to him by Christ. The miracles Philip performed were signs that Jesus had power over sin, sickness, and evil spirits. God worked through Philip. The Samaritans felt joy when Philip preached. Deep spiritual joy comes with faith in Jesus Christ. It is a sign of his presence.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is it important for us to be able to address God as "abba;" that is, daddy, papa?

How does Philip's preaching inspire contemporary preachers of the Word?

How do you see as your calling to present the Word of God to the people of God?

CHAPTER NINE
GOD'S WILL BE DONE

HALLOWED BE In the *Lord's Prayer* we ask that the Father's
THY NAME name will be "hallowed." This means that his
Ps 99 name should be made holy. We pray that the
Ex 3:13-15 time will come quickly, when the Father will be recognized
as God and everyone will praise him.

THY KINGDOM We then ask "thy kingdom come."
The

COME Kingdom of God is in the hearts of all
baptized

1 Cor 15:24-28 persons. When we come to baptism, we put off our
old selves and put on the new person, Jesus Christ. We join the
kingdom of God when we confess that Jesus is Lord of our lives.

THY WILL BE DONE *Thy will be done*, is the third request we make
Lk 22:39-46 of the Father. Here we ask that we be given the
strength to give up our need to control our lives. We beg the Father to
help us to seek and to do his will rather than our own.

NOW AND AT THE The petitions, "hallowed by thy
name," "thy

END OF TIME kingdom come," have two
meanings. We pray

22 Repent of this wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord that, if possible, your intention may be forgiven. 23 For I see that you are filled with bitter gall and are in the bonds of iniquity." 24 Simon said in reply, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

REFLECTION:

Hearing the Good News about Jesus and believing in him is only the beginning. To live a Christian life, the believer must receive the Spirit. The Apostles in Jerusalem heard of Philip's work for God's kingdom. They came to make stronger what Philip had started. They came to give the further gift of the Holy Spirit.

Simon the magician did not understand how the Spirit came to the people through the Apostles. He did not realize that the Apostles were people appointed by God to give his gift of the Spirit. The power the Apostles had was from God; it was not their own power. When God chooses to show his power through a person he does it for the good of the whole Church. We are given gifts to be shared with others as well. Are we willing to accept them?

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How does one recognize the gifts God gives to each one of us as his current day Apostles?

How do you preach the Word of God to the people that they share in these gifts given by the Spirit?

Often we are afraid to accept the gifts God gives us. How can we assure our communities that we need to be open to these gifts?

CHAPTER TEN ASKING FOR OUR DAILY BREAD

DAILY BREAD
is, "Give
Ex 16:11-31
we ask the

The next part of the *Lord's Prayer*
us this day our daily bread." Here

Lord for the things we need in order to
live. In
The Old Testament when the Jews were wandering in the desert, they
could find no food. The Lord provided them with manna to eat. Every
night the manna would fall from heaven and the next morning the
people would go out and gather it up. The people had just enough to
live on for that day only.

ASK FOR THE
the Lord to
MATERIAL THINGS
each day.

In the *Lord's Prayer* we are asking
give us what we need to live on for

WE NEED
hands of

We place ourselves completely in the

Mt 6:26-34 the Creator. We recognize that everything we have comes
from God and we show our faith in when we ask for what we need.

NEW MANNA
in the *Lord's*
Mt 15:32-38
the material
Jn 6:31-15
with us

When we ask for our "daily bread"
Prayer, we are not just asking for

the
things we need. Jesus chose to remain
under the appearance of bread and wine,
appearance of food. If we want to grow
in our
spiritual life and if we are to avoid spiritual death we must receive the
food of the Risen Jesus in the Eucharist.

ASKING FOR THE
us the
SPIRITUAL THINGS
life of faith.

We go to the Father and ask him to give
spiritual help we need to live our

WE NEED
need to

We ask God to give us the strength we
be leaders in the

Church. We receive our daily
bread in prayer and in receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus in the
Eucharist.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TEN

Acts 9: 1-31 Paul becomes a follower of Jesus

Footnotes:

9, 1-19: This is the first of three accounts of Paul's conversion with some differences of detail owing to Luke's use of different sources. Paul's experience was not visionary but was precipitated by the appearance of Jesus, as he insists in 1Cor 15:8. The words of Jesus, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" related by Luke with no variation in all three accounts, exerted a profound and lasting influence on the thought of Paul. Under the influence of this experience he gradually developed his understanding of justification by faith (see the letters to the Galatians and Romans) and of the identification of the Christian community with Jesus Christ. That Luke would narrate this conversion three times is testimony of the importance he attaches to it. This first account occurs when the word is first spread to the Gentiles. At this point, the conversion of the hero of the Gentile mission is recounted. The emphasis in the account is on Paul as a divinely chosen instrument.

9, 2: *The Way*: a name used by the early Christian community for itself. The Essene community at Qumran used the same designation to describe its mode of life.

9,8: *He could see nothing*: a temporary blindness symbolizing the religious blindness of Saul as persecutor.

9,13: *Your holy one*: literally, "your saints."

9,19-30: This is a brief resume of Paul's initial experience as an apostolic preacher. At first he found himself in the position of being regarded as an apostate by the Jews and suspect by the latter Christian community in Jerusalem. His acceptance by the latter was finally brought about through the friendship with Barnabas.

9, 20: *Son of God*: the title "Son of God" occurs in Acts only here, but of the citation of Ps 2, 7 in Paul's speech at Antioch in Pisidia (13, 33).

Acts 9: 1-31

1 Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. 3 On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" 5 He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6 Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." 7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. 8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. 9 For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank.

10 There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." 11 The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is there praying, 12 and (in a vision) he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay (his) hands on him, that he may regain his sight." 13 But Ananias replied, "Lord, I have heard from many sources about this man, what evil things he has done to your holy ones in Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to imprison all who call upon your name." 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites, 16 and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name." 17 So Ananias went and entered the house: laying his hands on him, he said, "Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Spirit." 18 Immediately things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized, 19 and when he had eaten, he recovered his strength.

He stayed some days with the disciples in Damascus, 20 and he began at once to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21 All who heard him were astounded and said, "this not the man who in Jerusalem ravaged those who call upon this name, and came here expressly to take them back in chains to the chief priests?" 22 But Saul grew all the stronger and confounded (the) Jews who lived in Damascus, proving that this is the Messiah. 23 After a long time had passed, the Jews conspired to kill him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. Now they were keeping watch on the gates day and night so as to kill him, 25 but his disciples took him one night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket. 26 When he arrived in Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. 27 Then Barnabas took charge of him and brought him to the apostles, and he reported to them how on the way he had seen the Lord and that he had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 He moved about freely with them in Jerusalem, and spoke out boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 He also spoke and debated with the Hellenists, but they tried to kill him. 30 And when the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him on his way to Tarsus. 31 The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace. It was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the holy Spirit it grew in numbers.

REFLECTION:

God has the power to change a person's heart. Jesus appeared to Saul and turned his whole life around. Saul understood that Jesus is Lord and that the Church is the body of Christ. The Lord chose Saul for a particular job in the church. Saul would share in the sufferings of Christ as he preached the Good News. Saul became the Apostle Paul because the Lord appeared and chose him. The Holy Spirit was at work among the people. The Spirit increased the size of the community and gave it peace in spite of persecution. How are we chosen for a particular job in the church? What's drawing you to the Table of the Lord?

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

What is our daily bread?

What is the message to us about the conversion of Saul?

How does Jesus decide whom he will call to take the Word to the people?

CHAPTER ELEVEN FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

FORGIVE US Forgiveness is at the heart of Christianity. It is
AS WE FORGIVE a difficult virtue for us to practice. In the Mt 6:14-15 prayer we ask our Father to forgive us only "as" we forgive our brothers and sisters. If we forgive others then he should forgive us. If we are cold to others and do not forgive them, then we ask our Father to treat us in the same way. Choosing not to forgive only hurts us, it allows anger, resentment, and hatred to eat away at our hearts. Choosing to forgive heals our wounds, gives us new life, and allows us to accept our Father's word of forgiveness addressed to us.

LEAD US NOT In the next part of the *Lord's Prayer* we say,
INTO TEMPTATION "lead us not into temptation." The traditional
Jn 17:15 English translation seems to say that God leads
2 Thes 3:2-3 us into temptation. A better translation of the Greek would be, "Do not allow us to fall away during the time of testing." We ask that God will stand by us and protect us. We ask that he will not allow us to give up our faith or our calling when we struggle with the power of evil and the power of Satan.

KEEP THE FAITH The struggle between the kingdom of God and
IN THE LAST DAYS the power of evil will grow stronger at the end of time. The "temptation" will be to abandon our faith in the of the struggle. We ask that in the final struggle the Father will give us the gift to remain faithful to him no matter what happens.

DELIVER US FROM The final request we make to our Father is that
EVIL he "deliver us from evil." There are three sources of evil. Satan is a source of evil. The "world" is a source of evil. The "world" here means the tendency to judge our success by material goods, by our

place in society, by power, and by being in control. Moreover, we are a source of evil. We can choose to do evil without pressure from Satan or the world. In this part of the prayer we ask our Father to deliver us from these sources of evil.

THE KINGDOM, THE words of
POWER, AND THE GLORY praise. We say, "For the kingdom, and the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever Amen." These words are not found in Scripture but were added later on as a way to complete the prayers of petition added by people after the "deliver us from evil." With these words we offer praise and honor to the Father and recognize him as the source of all good.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER ELEVEN

Acts 10, 9-23; 34-48: The Spirit sends Peter to non-Jewish people

Footnotes:

10: 9-16 The vision is intended to prepare Peter to share the food of Cornelius' household without qualms of conscience. The necessity of such instructions to Peter reveal that at first not even the apostles fully grasped the implications of Jesus' teaching on the law. In Acts, the initial insight belongs to Stephen.

10:17-23 The arrival of the Gentile emissaries with their account of the angelic apparition illuminates Peter's vision: he is to be prepared to admit Gentiles, who were considered unclean like the animals of his vision, into the Christian community.

10:34-35 The revelation of God's choice of Israel to be the people of God did not mean he withheld the divine favor from other people.

10:36-43 These words are more directed to Luke's Christian readers than to the household of Cornelius, as indicated by the opening words, "You know." They trace the continuity between the preaching and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth and the proclamation of Jesus by the early community. The emphasis on this divinely ordained continuity (41) is meant to assure Luke's readers of the fidelity of Christian tradition to the words and deeds of Jesus.

10:38 Jesus of Nazareth...God's revelation of his plan for the destiny of humanity through Israel culminated in Jesus of Nazareth. Consequently, the ministry of Jesus is an integral part of God's revelation. This viewpoint explains why the early Christian communities were interested in conserving the historical substance of the ministry of Jesus, a tradition leading to the production of the four gospels.

10:39 We are witnesses...the apostolic testimony was not restricted to the resurrection of Jesus but also included his historical ministry. This witness, however, was theological in character; the Twelve, divinely mandated as prophets, were empowered to interpret his sayings and deeds in the light of his redemptive death and resurrection. The meaning of these words and deeds was to be made clear to the developing Christian community as the bearer of the word of salvation.

10: 44 Just as the Jewish Christians received the gift of the Spirit, so too do the Gentiles.

Acts 10: 9-23, 34-48

9The next day, while they were on their way and nearing the city, Peter went up to the roof terrace to pray at about noontime. 10 He was hungry and wished to eat, and while they were making preparations he fell into a trance. 11 He saw heaven opened and something resembling a large sheet coming down, lowered to the ground by its four corners. 12 In it were all the earth's four legged animals and reptiles and the birds of the sky. 13 A voice said to him, "Get up, Peter. Slaughter and eat." 14 But Peter said, "Certainly not, sir. For never have I eaten anything profane and unclean." 15 The voice spoke to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you are not to call profane." 16 This happened three times, and then the object was taken up into the sky. 17 While Peter was in doubt about the meaning of the vision he had seen, the men sent by Cornelius asked for Simon's house and arrived at the entrance. 18They called out inquiring whether Simon, who is called Peter, was staying there. 19 As Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said (to him), "There are three grown men here looking for you. 20 So get up, go downstairs, and accompany them without hesitation, because I have sent them." 21 Then Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your being here?" 22 They answered, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing

man, respected by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to summon you to his house and to hear what you have to say.”
23 So he invited them in and showed them hospitality.

34 Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, “In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. 35 Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. 36 You know the word (that) he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, 37 what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and (in) Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. 40 This man God raised (on) the third day and granted that he be visible, 41 not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name.

44 While Peter was still speaking these things, the holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word. 45 The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also, 46 for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God. Then Peter responded, 47 “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the holy Spirit even as we have? 48 He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

RELECTION:

God’s promise of salvation had been given to the Jewish people. Jesus preached in the Jewish countryside. Peter and the other Apostles thought the *Good News* as to preached only to the Jews. God used a vision to tell Peter to preach to the non-Jews as well. The unclean animals were a sign of the “unclean” people who were not Jewish. When Peter was told in the vision to eat the unclean animals, he understood that the Holy Spirit was telling him to preach the Gospel to every human being. Christianity was for everyone. There was to be no racism in the Church.

The Spirit directed Peter to go to Cornelius who was an officer in the Roman Army. Peter gave a speech telling the important things about Jesus. Peter told about Jesus' preaching, about the way he acted with power, and about his resurrection and appearances to the Apostles. Peter told Cornelius that Jesus was the one sent by God to save us from our sins and from death. Peter's speech tells who Jesus was and what he did.

Cornelius had faith. As Peter spoke, the Spirit entered the hearts of all present. The people praised God. This was a sign that God had claimed them as his own people. Peter baptized them, making them members of the Christian Community.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

What are the implications for us today about Peter's vision telling him to preach the Good News to all peoples?

Why is forgiveness at the center of Christian living?

Peter told the people about the life of Jesus. What does this signal to us as we minister to God's people?

CHAPTER TWELVE THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the
holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell;
The third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven
And sits at the right hand of God, The Father Almighty;
From there He will come to judge The living and the dead.
I believe in the holy Spirit, The Holy Catholic Church,
The communion of saints, The forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body, And life everlasting, Amen.

A CREED IS In the early Church a Creed was called a "rule of
STATEMENT OF faith." It was used to judge whether or not a person

WHAT THE or a sister Church was in union with the whole
COMMUNITY Church. If the person or sister Church
BELIEVES believed all statements of the Creed, they were in union
with the whole Church. If they did not believe all the statements, then
they did not fully understand the faith and were considered outside the
Church.

THE CREED WAS The creed is a public statement of what the Church
USED TO TEACH understands about faith. The members of the
Church say the Creed in public in order to show that they believe what
the Church believes. In the early Church, the Creed was taught to all
of those who wanted to be baptized. Each section of the Creed was
studied. After the people learned the Creed and understood what the
different sections meant they went to the priest and confessed the
Creed before the members of the Church. Then they were accepted
into the Church and were baptized.

UNITY IS The unity of the Church is based on the fact that we
EXPRESSED IN have all received the same Holy Spirit. The
Spirit
THE EUCHARIST causes us to confess the same Lord Jesus Christ and
AND THE CREED the one God and Father of all. This unity is
expressed
1 Cor 11:17-32 in the Eucharist here we received the One Body-the
1 Thes 1:4-10 Body of Christ. It is also expressed in the unity of
1 Thes 2:13-17 belief confessed in the Creed.

AUTHENTIC The Holy Spirit raises up leadership in the
persons of
TEACHING the bishops to authentically guide the Church. They
Mt 16: 13-20 have the authority and responsibility to teach the
truths of faith. Over the centuries these truths have found their way
into Creeds.

BACKGROUND The Creed we will study is the *Apostles' Creed*.
It
OF THE was written in the present form around the year 675.
APOSLTES It contains sections of a much earlier Creed which
CREED was used at Rome. It is made up of teachings about the
faith which have been handed down from the times of the Apostles.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWELVE

Acts 13: 1-3, 42-52 Paul and Barnabas go to preach the word.

Footnotes:

13, 1-3: The impulse for the first missionary effort in Asia Minor is ascribed to the prophets of the Antiochene community, under the inspiration of the Spirit. Just as the Jerusalem community had earlier been the center of missionary activity, so too Antioch becomes the center from which the missionaries Barnabas and Saul are sent out.

13,46: The refusal to believe frustrates God's plan for his chosen people; however, no adverse judgment is made here concerning their ultimate destiny. Again, Luke, in the words of Paul, speaks of the priority of Israel in the plan for salvation (see 10,36).

13, 51: (see Mt 10,14) Shake the dust from your feet...this gesture indicates a complete disassociation from such unbelievers.

Acts 13: 1-3; 42-52

1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Syneon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who was a chosen friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then, completing their fasting and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent them off.

42 As they were leaving, they invited them to speak on these subjects the following sabbath. 43 After the congregation had dispersed, many Jews and worshipers who were converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to remain faithful to the grace of God.

44 On the following sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45 When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said. 46 Both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first, but since you

reject it and condemn yourselves to unworthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I have made you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

48The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this and glorified the word of the Lord. All who were destined for eternal life came to believe, 49 and the word of the Lord continued to spread through the whole region. 50 The Jews, however, incited the women of prominence who were worshipers and the leading men of the city, stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their territory. 51 So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. 52 The disciples were filled with joy and the holy Spirit.

REFLECTION:

The Spirit chose Paul and Barnabas to be missionaries. They were sent to people who had not heard about Jesus. Paul and Barnabas were representatives of the Church of Antioch. They were helped by the prayers of all the Christians at Antioch. They traveled to different cities. They always preached to the Jewish people first. They used the Old Testament to show that Jesus was the one sent by God. Some believed in Jesus; others did not.

When many Jews turned away, Paul said he would bring the Good News to the Gentiles. The Jewish leaders stirred up the crowd against Paul and Barnabas. Both of them began to suffer because they preached about Jesus. They accepted the hardships with joy. What message can we glean from this experience of Paul and Barnabas as we work to bring God's message to the people. How will we react when we are rejected by other Christians?

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How would you instruct people who are interested in becoming members of the Church about the elements found in the Apostles' Creed?

How would you react if someone in another church challenges your authority and your ministry?

How do we find our vocation in this life?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN ONE GOD, POWER, AND CREATOR

OUR GOD IS ONE GOD At the beginning of the Apostles' Creed, we say that we believe in God. God is at the heart of our faith, God is at the center of the life of the Church, and God is at the center of our lives. God is one God. We do not believe in many gods. In the early days of the Church, the people came in contact with those who believe in many gods. The Church has always understood that there is only one God who is Lord of all things.

GOD HAS POWER OVER ALL THINGS He is the *Father almighty*. God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is his favored Son. We are God's favored children because we are sisters and brothers of Jesus. God is the giver of life. God is called "almighty" because God was complete power over all things. In the early days some people believed that there was a "god of good" and "a god of evil." These gods fought constantly. The Church has always taught that there is one God, who is all powerful. Our God has complete control over all things.

GOD IS THE CREATOR God is the "creator of heaven and earth." The Father made all things from nothing. God is the source of all things. God fashioned them in and through the Son. Everything in the universe finds its beginning in the Father and is filled with God's loving presence.

WE ARE CREATURES All things depend on God for their life. Without God's continued creative presence creation would come to an end. It is important for us to consider that God is the creator and we are the creatures. We are completely dependent upon God for everything. Our calling in life is to take the gift of life and use it to praise, worship, and serve the Lord our God.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Acts 1, 1-12: Some listen to Paul; others oppose him

Footnotes:

17,3: *This is the Messiah, Jesus, whom I proclaim to you:* he is the anointed one, the one sent by God to save the people from their sins.

17, 6-7: The accusations against Paul and his companions echo the charges brought against Jesus in Lk 23,2.

17, 7: There is another king, Jesus: a distortion into a political sense of the apostolic proclamation of Jesus and the kingdom of God.

Acts 17: 1-12

1 When they took the road through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they reached Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 Following his usual custom, Paul joined them, and for three Sabbaths he entered into discussions with them from the scriptures, 3 expounding and demonstrating that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead, and that "This is the Messiah, Jesus, whom I proclaim to you." 4 Some of them were convinced and joined Paul and Silas; so, too, a great number of Greeks who were worshipers, and not a few of the prominent women. 5 But the Jews became jealous and recruited some worthless men loitering in the public square, formed a mob, and set the city in turmoil. They marched on the house of Jason, intending to bring them before the people's assembly. 6 When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city magistrates, shouting, "These people who have been creating a disturbance all over the world have now come here, 7 and Jason has welcomed them. They all act in opposition to the decrees of Caesar and claim instead that there is another king, Jesus. 8 They stirred up the crowd and the city magistrates who, upon hearing these charges, 9 took a surety payment from Jason and the others before releasing them.

10 The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas to Beroea during the night. Upon arrival they went to the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These Jews were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they

received the word with all willingness and examined the scriptures daily to determine whether these things were so. 12 Many of them became believers, as did not a few of the influential Greek women and men.

REFLECTION:

Paul was sent to preach about Jesus. He usually began his preaching at the town synagogue on the holy day, the sabbath. In order to show that Jesus was the one sent by God, Paul used Old Testament passages. These words from the Scripture told about the "one" God would send. Some people believed Paul. Others fought against him and tried to arrest him. If the people of a town refused to believe, Paul went to another town. The Good News about Jesus caused division in communities. Even today the one who preaches about Jesus often suffers.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why did God make us?

Why is it important that we understand that God is the creator and we are creatures?

What keeps us from being discouraged about doing God's work?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN JESUS: GOD AND MAN

JESUS IS LORD In the second part of the Creed, we say that we believe in "Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord." Mk 8:27-30 Jesus is the Lord of all things and he is the Lord of our lives. Jesus is our God. He became human in order to free us. He began the Kingdom of God on earth and he defeated once and for all the power of evil.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS In the third part of the Creed, we say that Jesus was "conceived by the Holy Spirit," and "born of the Virgin

GOD Mary.” There are many ideas to talk about in this part of the Creed. This is the first time that the Spirit is mentioned. The Spirit is God. It is through his power that Jesus was conceived. The Spirit is equal to the Father and to the Son.

JESUS IS GOD AND MAN Another idea to be considered is that Jesus is completely God and completely human. In the early days there were people who said that Jesus was not God. He was just a good man whom God chose as a prophet. There were those who said that Jesus was not really human. They said that he was God with the appearance of being human. In order to fight both of these wrong ideas the early Church went to the Scriptures. In them we find that Jesus had no human father. Jesus was conceived with Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus came into the world by the power of God. We also see from Scripture that Jesus had a real Mother. Jesus was really human. He received his flesh and blood from Mary, his mother.

THE VIRGIN Mary gave birth to Jesus in a natural way. She felt the pain of childbearing. Jesus felt the shock of coming into the world like any other child. The Church has always believed that after the birth of Jesus, Mary remained a virgin.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Acts 19, 1-7: The baptism of John and Jesus

Footnotes:

18, 24-24: Apollos appears as a preacher who knows the teaching of Jesus in the context of John’s baptism of repentance. Aquila and Priscilla instruct him more fully.

19, 1-6: Upon his arrival in Esphesus, Paul discovers other people at the same religious stage as Apollos, though they seem to have considered themselves followers of Christ, not of the Baptist. On the relation between baptism and the reception of the Spirit, see the note on 8, 16.

Acts 19: 1-7 1 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior of the country and came (down) to Ephesus where he found some disciples. 2 He said to them, “Did you receive the holy

Spirit when you became believers?" They answered him, "We have never even heard that there is a holy Spirit." 3 He said, "How were you baptized?" They replied, "With the baptism of John." 4 Paul then said, "John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul laid (his) hands on them, the holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. 7 Altogether there were about twelve men.

REFLECTION:

Paul found some people in the City of Ephesus who said that they were disciples. Paul asked them some questions. He found out that they did not know about Jesus and the Spirit. Upon hearing about Jesus they believed. They received baptism in the name of Jesus. This baptism united them in Jesus Christ. They received the gift of the Spirit. Baptism and the coming of the Spirit made these a Christian community. The gift of God, the Spirit, makes the Church. And, our role in this Church is to bring God's word to all people and to baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is it important to recognize that Jesus was both divine and human?

What happens if we see Jesus as only God or only as human?

Why is it important for us to receive the Spirit?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN SUFFERING, DEATH, & RESURRECTION

JESUS SAVED US The third section of the Creed continues with Mt. 27: 11-56 the ways in which Jesus saves us. Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried." In the early days of the Church, there were those who said that Jesus only

appeared to be human. They said that he could not really suffer and did not really die. It was all play acting.

HE FREELY ACCEPTED PAIN AND DEATH In the Creed we have already said that Jesus was really human. Now we testify to the world Heb 12: 1-4 that he freely chose to suffer and die for us. Jesus was afraid of suffering and death. He felt their pain. An ordinary death would have been enough for him to have saved us. But he chose the humiliating death on the cross so that he could overcome our deep selfishness with this sign of his selfless love.

HE REALLY DIED After his suffering and death Jesus was buried. Mt. 27: 57-66 This is added into the Creed in order to say more strongly that he really died. When he died, Jesus went into the unknown, the same unknown that we will face. He died, was placed in a grave, and abandoned.

JESUS SET PEOPLE FREE FROM THE LAND OF THE DEAD In the fourth section of the Creed, we say, "he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead." *Hell* does not mean the place of the damned. Here it means the place of the dead. Jesus went to the place of the dead to tell them that they had been saved. Everyone who had followed their religion in good faith was saved through the power of Jesus' death.

JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD After three days Jesus rose from among the dead. Because he was willing to surrender himself completely to the power of death, his Father raised him from the dead. The Father gave Jesus complete power over death. The unknown became known for us. Those who lived in the land of the dead were brought into the land of new life by Jesus.

JESUS CHRIST IS LORD The fifth section of the Creed says, "he ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father almighty." Jesus was not only raised up from among the dead, but he was also given complete authority over creation, sin, sickness, Satan, and death. Jesus, the risen God-man, is Lord.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Acts 20, 17-38: Paul says good-bye

Footnotes:

20,16-35: Apparently aware of difficulties at Ephesus and neighboring areas, Paul calls the presbyters together at Miletus, about thirty miles from Ephesus. He reminds them of his dedication to the gospel (18-21), speaks of what he is about to suffer for the gospel (22-27), and admonishes them to guard the community against false prophets, sure to arise upon his departure (28-31). He concludes by citing a saying of Jesus (35) not recorded in the gospel tradition. Luke presents this farewell to the Ephesian presbyters as Paul's last will and testament.

20, 28: Overseers... see the note of Phil 1,1. The church of God: because the clause "that he acquired with his own blood" following "the church of God" suggests that "his own blood" refers to God's blood, some early copyists changed "the church of God" to "the church of the Lord." Some prefer the translation "acquired with the blood of his own," i.e., Christ.

Acts 20, 17-38

17 From Miletus he had the presbyters of the church at Ephesus summoned. 18 When they came to him, he addressed them, "You know how I lived among you the whole time from the day I first came to the province of Asia. 19 I served the Lord with all humility and with the tears and trials that came to me because of the plots of the Jews, 20 and I did not at all shrink from telling you in public or in your homes. 21 I earnestly bore witness from both Jews and Gentiles to repentance before God and to faith in our Lord Jesus. 22 But now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem. What will happen to me there I do not know, 23 except that in one city after another the holy Spirit has been warning me that imprisonment and hardships await me. 24 Yet I consider life of no importance to me, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I have received from the Lord Jesus, to bear witness to the gospel of God's grace."

25 "But now I know that none of you to whom I preached the kingdom during my travels will ever see my face again. 26 And so I solemnly declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, 27 for I did not shrink from proclaiming to you the entire plan of God. 28 Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, in which you tend the church of God that he acquired with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure savage wolves will come among you, and they will

not spare the flock. 30 And from your own group, men will come forward perverting the truth to draw the disciples away from them. 31 So be vigilant and remember that for three years, night and day, I unceasingly admonished each of you with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to that gracious word of his that can build you up and give you the inheritance among all who are consecrated. 33 I have never wanted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. 34 You know well that these very hands have served my needs and my companions. 35 In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" 36 When he had finished speaking he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 They were all weeping loudly as they threw their arms around Paul and kissed him, 38 for they were deeply distressed that he had said that they would never see his face again. Then they escorted him to the ship.

REFLECTION:

Paul gave the final instruction to the leaders of the community at Ephesus. Paul had worked hard for the spread of the faith. He tried his best to lead everyone he met to follow Christ. Paul said he was willing to suffer any hardship in order to spread the Good News.

In his farewell speech Paul encourages the leaders. He tells them to remain faithful to the true teaching he gave them. He tells the leaders to guard and serve the people. Paul reminds them that God will protect them and make their community strong. There was deep love and strong affection between Paul and the leaders. Jesus came to make everyone brothers and sisters. The love we have for each other is the mark of every Christian community.

In today's world the need for love is paramount. Wars, famine, AIDS epidemic, homelessness, lack of medical assistance, global pollution and greed are among the many issues facing people worldwide. What can we do to be a part of the solution to these and other issues facing humanity?

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How are we "compelled by the Spirit" to go out among the people to bring the *Good News* to all?

Paul tells his followers to be watchful. What does this mean to us the 21st century?

Why is it important that Jesus really suffered, died, and rose from the dead?

CHAPTER SIXTEEN WE CAN CHOOSE TO COOPERATE WITH THE SPIRIT

JESUS WILL COME AGAIN; HE WILL JUDGE THE DEAD. In the sixth section of the Creed, we say that Jesus "will come to judge the living and the dead." There are two ideas in this section. The first is that Jesus will come again. The second is that he will judge all who have died and all who are alive when he comes. We will be judged by how we have treated one another. Remember we are called to faith of action; that is, living the gospel message.

WHEN JESUS COMES AGAIN THE VICTORY WILL BE COMPLETE. The work of Jesus is not finished. The victory over the powers of evil, sin, sickness, and death has been won by Jesus. But the victory is not complete. The kingdom of God has not fully overcome the power of evil. Each person must continue to allow Jesus to become present in their hearts so that Jesus can become more present in the world. Jesus will come again, when his work is completed through us.

THE JUDGEMENT IS THE PERSON IN OUR HEARTS. The judgment that is given is not a sentence handed down, but rather it is someone we have in our hearts. At baptism we are called to put off our old ways, sin, and put on the new way, Jesus. The Spirit come into our hearts and we begin to live the life of God. We are constantly being changed by this Spirit into the image and likeness of Jesus.

THOSE WHO HAVE THE SPIRIT ARE PART OF THE KINGDOM. At the end of our present way of life we will either have the Spirit in us or we will not. When all those who possess the Spirit will be part of the kingdom. Those who do not possess the Spirit will have no place in the kingdom of God.

THOSE WHO HAVE THE SPIRIT ARE FAVORED CHILDREN OF Jn 3: 1-2 Gal 4: 1-7

Everyone who possesses the Spirit will be caught up in the joy and happiness of being with the Father forever. They will enjoy the same place in heaven that Jesus has. They will live in the presence of a loving Father and they will come to know and love God forever.

WE CAN CHOOSE TO COOPERATE WITH THE SPIRIT OR REJECT HER

We receive the Spirit at baptism. She comes to live in us and make us children of God. She gives us the same relationship to the Father that Jesus has. Yet this gift of the Spirit is not forced on us. We are free. We can reject the Spirit or we can also say "yes" to the Spirit's invitation to be children of God and to grow in the relationship of favored child. When we cooperate with the Spirit and allow her to change us, then our judgment is already being settled.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Acts 21, 17-26: Paul arrives in Jerusalem

Footnotes:

21, 17-26: The leaders of the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem inform Paul that the Jews there believe he has encouraged the Jews of the diaspora to abandon the Mosaic law. According to Acts, Paul had no objection to the retention of the law by the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem and left the Jews of the *diaspora* who accepted Christianity free to follow the same practice.

21, 23-26: The leaders of the community suggested that Paul, on behalf of four members of the Jerusalem community, make the customary payment for the sacrifices offered at the termination of the Nazirite vow (see Nm 6, 1-24) in order to impress favorably the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem with his high regard for the Mosaic law. Since Paul himself had once made this vow, his respect for the law would be on public record.

21, 24: Pay their expenses...according to Nm 6, 14-15 the Nazirite had to present a yearling lamb for a holocaust, a yearling ewe lamb for

a sin offering, and a ram for a peace offering, along with food and drink offerings, upon completion of the period of the vow.

21, 25: Paul is informed about the apostolic decree, seemingly for the first time (see the notes on 15, 13-35). The allusion to the decree was probably introduced here by Luke to remind his readers that the Gentile Christians themselves were asked to respect certain Jewish practices deriving from the law.

Acts 21: 17-26

17 When we reached Jerusalem the brothers welcomed us warmly.
18 The next day, Paul accompanied us on a visit to James, and all the presbyters were present. 19 He greeted them, then proceeded to tell them in detail what God had accomplished among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 They praised God when they heard it but said to him, "Brother, you see how many thousands of believers there are from among the Jews, and they are all zealous observers of the law. 21 They have been informed that you are teaching all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to abandon Moses and that you are telling them not to circumcise their children or to observe their customary practices. 22 What is to be done? They will surely hear that you have arrived. 23 So do what we tell you. We have four men who have taken a vow. 24 Take these men and purify yourself with them, and pay their expenses that they may have their head shaved. In this way everyone will know that there is nothing to the reports they have been given about you but that you yourself live in observance of the law. 25 As for the Gentiles who have come to believe, we sent them our decision that they abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage." 26 So Paul took the men, and on the next day after purifying himself together with them entered the temple to give notice of the day when the purification would be completed and the offering made for each of them.

REFLECTION:

The Spirit guided Paul to Jerusalem. Paul knew that suffering waited for him. He gladly faced the dangers for the sake of Jesus. James and the presbyters recognized that God worked through Paul. They were happy to hear that God's kingdom was spreading among the non-Jews.

Each community has its own way of preaching the Good News. James did things among the Jewish people that Paul did not do among the non-Jews. In spite of the differences they preached the same Good News. They rejoiced in each other's success. Various Christian denominations preach the Good News. Can we rejoice in this fact?

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How do you reconcile within yourself that there are many ways to honor God and do God's work among the people?

What is meant by the notion that "within diversity you can have unity?"

Which is most important for Christians; that we have the same Spirit or that we follow the same customs, rituals, and creeds?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
THE SPIRIT AMONG US

WE BELIEVE IN ONE GOD: FATHER, SON, & SPIRIT In the seventh section of the Creed, we say that we, believe in the Holy Spirit. Here again, the Church says that the Holy Spirit is God. This part of the Creed completes the testimony about God. We believe in one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each is divine, equal, and no one came before the others. Each is different. Yet, they are one.

THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVE LIFE AND LEADS US The Spirit of God lives in our hearts. She is the Spirit of life and of truth. She teaches us about Jesus. The Spirit changes us into members of the Body of Christ, which is the Church. Through her power we share in Jesus' power over all things. The Spirit unites us with each other and with the Risen Christ. She calls us to serve in the Church in different ways. Our job is to respond to that and generously serve God's people.

THE CHURCH IS THE CONTINUING PRESENCE OF In the eighth section of the Creed, we say we believe in the "holy Catholic Church." The Church is the continuing presence of Jesus in

JESUS CHRIST the world. Jesus, through the power of the Spirit creates a community of people who believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. Through this community Jesus continues to give us a share in his power and frees us from the power of evil.

THE CHURCH IS FOR ALL PEOPLE We say that the Church is "Catholic." *Catholic* means that it is universal and it is for all peoples in all times. There are many "Catholic" denominations. Jesus died for everyone and he wants everyone to be saved. He sent the Spirit to call each person of every generation to confess that Jesus is Lord.

THE SPIRIT LIVES IN THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH We say that the Church is "holy" because it shares in the life of God. The Spirit moves every person to say: "Jesus is Lord." When we do so, the Spirit lives in us and constantly changes us into the living Body of Christ. We who confess Jesus as Lord are living the life of the Spirit, which is the life of the Church.

WE ARE UNITED WITH THE GOOD PEOPLE OF THE PAST The ninth section of the Creed says we believe in "communion of saints." All of our ancestors who have confessed that "Jesus is Lord" are living members of the Church. They are real people with real power to pray for us. They are interested in us and help us to live better lives.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Acts 26, 1-29: Paul defends himself before the Roman ruler

Footnotes:

26, 2-23: Paul's final defense speech in Acts is now made before the king. In the speech Paul presents himself as a zealous Pharisee and Christianity as the logical development of Pharisaic Judaism. The story of his conversion is recounted for the third time in Acts in this speech.

26, 14: It is hard for you to kick against the goad...this proverb is commonly found in Greek literature and in this context signifies the senselessness and ineffectiveness of any opposition to the divine influence in his life.

26, 16: The words of Jesus directed to Paul here reflect the dialogues between Christ and Ananias (9, 15) and between Ananias and Paul (22, 14-15) in two previous accounts of Paul's conversion.

26, 18: To open their eyes...though no mention is made of Paul's blindness in this account, (cf 9, 8-9.12.18;22, 11-13), the task he is commissioned to perform is the removal of other people's spiritual blindness.

26, 23: That the Messiah must suffer: see the note on (Lk 24, 26).

26, 26: Not done in a corner...for Luke, this Greek proverb expresses his belief that he is presenting a story about Jesus and the church that is already well known. As such, the entire history of Christianity is public knowledge and incontestable. Luke presents his story in this way to provide "certainty" to his readers about the instruction they have received (Lk 1, 4).

26, 27-28: If the Christian missionaries proclaim nothing different from what the Old Testament prophets had proclaimed, then the logical outcome for the believing Jew, according to Luke, is to become a Christian.

Acts 26: 1-29

1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You may now speak on your own behalf." So Paul stretched out his hand and began his defense. 2 "I count myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am to defend myself before you today against all charges made against me by the Jews, 3 especially since you are an expert in all Jewish customs and controversies. And therefore I beg you to listen patiently. 4 My manner of living from my youth, a life spent from the beginning among my people and in Jerusalem, all (the) Jews know. 5 They have know about me from the start, if they are willing to testify, that I have lived my life as a Pharisee, the strictest party of our religion. 6 But now I am standing trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors. 7 Our twelve tribes hope to attain to that promise as they fervently worship God day and night; and on account of this hope I am accused by Jews, O king. 8 Why is it thought unbelievable among you

that God raises the dead? 9 I myself once thought that I had to do many things against the name of Jesus the Nazorean, 10 and I did so in Jerusalem. I imprisoned many of the holy ones with the authorization I received from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. 11 Many times, in an attempt to force them to blaspheme; I was so enraged against them that I pursued them even to foreign cities. 12 "On one such occasion I was traveling to Damascus with the authorization and commission of the chief priests. 13 At midday, along the way, O king, I saw a light from the sky, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my traveling companions. 14 We all fell to the ground and I heard a voice saying to me in Hebrew, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goad.' 15 And I said, 'Who are you, sir?' And the Lord replied, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 Get up now, and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness for what you have seen (of me) and what you will be shown. I shall deliver you from this people and from the Gentiles to whom I send you, 18 to open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may obtain forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been consecrated by faith in me.'"

19 "And so, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. 20 On the contrary, first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem and throughout the whole country of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached the need to repent and turn to God, and to do works giving evidence of repentance. 21 That is why the Jews seized me (when I was) in the temple and tried to kill me. 22 But I have enjoyed God's help to this very day, and so I stand here testifying to small and great alike, saying nothing different from what the prophets and Moses foretold, 23 that the Messiah must suffer and that, as the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

24 While Paul was so speaking in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, "You are mad, Paul; much learning is driving you mad." 25 But Paul replied, "I am not mad, most excellent Festus; I am speaking words of truth and reason. 26 The king knows about these matters and to him I speak boldly, for I cannot believe that (any) of this has escaped his notice; this was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe in the prophets? I know you believe." 28 The Agrippa said to Paul, "You will soon persuade me to play the Christian." 29 Paul replied, "I would pray to God that sooner or later not only you but

all who listen to me today might become as I am except for these chains.”

REFLECTION:

Paul was put on trial because of his teaching. The Jews accused him of preaching against their religion. They said he stirred up trouble among the people. Paul demanded to be judged by the Roman rulers because he was a Roman citizen. In his defense at the trial Paul told how Jesus chose him to be an Apostle. Paul explained the message he preached. Even in his personal defense Paul tried to make people believe in Jesus. Paul was filled with the desire that everyone come to know Jesus. In our efforts we are often judged by others that our preaching is too difficult to follow. What will we do in the face of these judgments? Will stick to our beliefs and preach God’s word as it is meant to be preached?

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why was Paul not afraid to speak before the king?

How do you understand that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God, yet we worship one God?

In preaching God’s word to the people we will face many difficult choices. Pastors in many Christian denominations have been asked to leave because they dared to teach God’s word as it was intended. What will you do if faced with this decision?

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN POWER TO FORGIVE SINS & OUR RESURRECTION

GOD LOVE US In the tenth section of the Creed, we say that we
WITH NO believe in “the forgiveness of sins.” God loves us
STRINGS without any strings attached. When we say “no” to
ATTACHED his love we sin. But God keeps loving us and wants to
forgive us. When we repent and say that we are sorry he forgives us.
Our sins are removed not just covered over. Once again God grants
us the same relationship with him that Jesus has. God continues to
love us completely.

THE CHURCH HAS We believe that Jesus gave the Church the power to
THE POWER TO forgive sin. When we go to the priest and ask for
FORGIVE forgiveness, the Risen Lord forgives our sins and
Jn 20: 19-23 brings us back to full union with the Father and with his living *body the Church*.

AT THE In the eleventh section of the Creed, we say that we
RESURRECTION believe in "the resurrection of the body." When
Jesus
WE WILL BE comes in power and our risen bodies will be different
COMPLETE from the bodies we now have. St. Paul gives us the
HUMAN PERSONS example of a seed that is buried and grows into a
1 Cor 15: 35-44 plant. The plant is different from the seed. But the
seed and the plant depend on each other. It will be like that with our risen bodies. We will be the same person after we rise. We will still be spirit and flesh joined in one person. But we will be different.

OUR LIFE IS The last section of the Creed says that we believe in
GIVEN TO US "life everlasting." From the first moment we are
FOREVER being formed in the wombs of our mothers we are
Rom 6: 3-11 given the gift of life. This gift is given by the Spirit.
The gift of life cannot be taken away. The gift is forever. The purpose of our lives is complete union with God. "Life everlasting" means that we expect to enjoy God in complete happiness forever.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Acts 28, 16-31 Paul preaches at Rome

Footnotes:

28, 16: With Paul's arrival in Rome, the programmatic spread of the word of the Lord to "the ends of the earth" (1, 8) is accomplished. In Rome, Paul is placed under house arrest, and under this mild form of custody he is allowed to proclaim the word in the capital of the civilized world of his day.

28, 17-22: Paul's first act in Rome is to learn from the leaders of the Jewish community whether the Jews of Jerusalem plan to pursue their case against him before the Roman jurisdiction. He is informed that no such plan is afoot, but that the Jews of Rome have heard the

Christian teaching denounced. Paul's offer to explain it to them is readily accepted.

28, 25-28: Paul's final words in Acts reflect a major concern of Luke's writing: how the salvation promised in the Old Testament, accomplished by Jesus, and offered first to Israel (13, 26), has now been offered to and accepted by the Gentiles. Quoting Is 6, 9-10, Paul presents the scriptural support for his indictment of his fellow Jews who refuse to accept the message he proclaims. Their rejection leads to its proclamation among the Gentiles.

28, 30-31: Although the ending of Acts may seem to be abrupt, Luke has now completed his story with the establishment of Paul and the proclamation of Christianity in Rome. Paul's confident and unhindered proclamation of the gospel in Rome forms the climax to the story whose outline was provided in 1,8: "You will be my witness in Jerusalem ... and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 28: 16-31

16 When he entered Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him. Testimony to Jews in Rome 17 Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had gathered he said to them, "My brothers, although I had done nothing against our people or our ancestral customs, I was handed over to the Romans as a prisoner from Jerusalem. 18 After trying my case the Romans wanted to release me, because they found nothing against me deserving the death penalty. 19 But when the Jews objected, I was obliged to appeal to Caesar, even though I had no accusation to make against my own nation. 20 This is the reason, then, I have requested to see you and to speak with you, for it is on account of the hope of Israel that I wear these chains." 21 They answered him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, nor has any of the brothers arrived with a damaging report or rumor about you. 22 But we should like to hear you present your views, for we know that this sect is denounced everywhere."

REFLECTION:

Paul arrived in Rome after a hard and dangerous journey. His ship was wrecked and he suffered much. At least he was in Rome, the center of the world. Paul was under arrest but he could still preach the Good News to all who came to him. Paul tried again to win over the local Jewish leaders. He was eager for them to believe in Jesus.

Paul used the Old Testament to show that Jesus was the one sent by God. Some believed and some did not. Paul tells the leaders that he will take the Good News to the non-Jews.

This is the end of the book of the *Acts of the Apostles*. The same Spirit who gave understanding and courage on Pentecost still guides the Church today. What Peter and Paul and the others began by God's power continues today. Today new people are chosen to preach and teach. They too depend on God's strength and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Paul used the Old Testament to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah promised by God. What passages and arguments did he glean from the Old Testament to try and convince the Jews that indeed Jesus was the Messiah?

How does God love us? How does God forgive us? How does this teach us how to love and forgive each other?

We have seen in the *Acts of the Apostles* that Paul preached the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. Looking back over his teaching, give a summary of the important points common to all the talks. Should these points be included in our witnessing to Jesus?

CHAPTER NINETEEN SALVATION HISTORY

GOD'S SEARCH Christianity is a religion that is based on the history of

FOR US God searching for his people. God has a plan for us.
Ex 14: 10-31 God wants to enter into a close personal relationship with us. God wants us to share in his life forever. In order to come closer to us God has from time to time entered into history. God has given us a fuller share in his life.

GOD SHOWED God told us about himself through the creation.

God

HIS POWER IN showed us that he was powerful. God made all thing

CREATION from nothing and gave order and beauty to the creation. God made us in his own image and likeness. God gave us a share in his power over creation. Even after the first human beings sinned God did not forget them. God promised to send a person who would have the power to free everyone from sin and death.

GOD CREATED A In order to prepare for the coming of the "one-who-

PEOPLE AND would save-the-people." God created a people for MADE A TREATY himself through Abraham. He then entered into a WITH THEM treaty with the descendants of Abraham who were the Jewish people. God taught them that he was their only God and they were his people. God made a covenant (a treaty of friendship) with them. His powerful presence lived among his people in the covenant.

JESUS WAS GOD When the time was right, God sent the "one-who-PRESENT AMONG would save-the-people," Jesus. He was the human

THE PEOPLE Son of God. Through his suffering, death, and Heb 1: 1-4 resurrection, he restored us to the full image and likeness of God. Jesus was the presence of God among the people.

THE HOLY After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to his SPIRIT IS Father, he sent the Spirit to live in the heart of SENT INTO each person. Those who repent of their sin and are OUR HEARTS baptized are filled with the Spirit. The Spirit makes the Risen Jesus present in our hearts and in the world. All who have the Spirit make up the Body of Christ on earth. They are the church. The Risen Body of Christ in the Church is God present among us today.

THE SPIRIT IS The Holy Spirit will be with the Church until the end

WITH US of time when Jesus will come again. At that time the UNTIL CHIRST Body of Christ, the Church, will be complete. At the COMES AGAIN Second Coming all who have the Spirit will be united with Jesus. Until that time comes each person who has the Spirit must cooperate with her in order to build up the Body of Christ on earth.

EACH PERSON It will become clear that God has a plan for us and

MUST SUPPORT the plan is gradually developing. It doesn't come all

THE PLAN in one moment in time; it continually grows as we grow. The purpose of the plan is that everyone be united in God. Each baptized person has a contribution to make to the plan of God.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER NINETEEN

Ephesians 1, 3-14: God's plan for us

Footnotes:

1, 3-14: While a Pauline letter usually continues after the greeting with a prayer of thanksgiving, as in 15-23 below, Ephesians first inserts a blessing of God for the blessings Christians have experienced, as in 2 Cor

1, 3-4 and 1 Pt 1, 3-12. The blessing here, akin to a Jewish *berakah*, is rich in images almost certainly drawn from hymns and liturgy.

1, 3: In the heavens...literally, "in the heavenlies" or "in the heavenly places," a term in Eph for the divine realm.

1, 9: Mystery...as in Rom 16, 25; Col 1, 26.27 and elsewhere, a secret of God now revealed in the plan to save and sum up all things in Christ(10).

1, 12: We who first hoped...probably Jewish Christians; possibly the people of Israel "we who already enjoyed the hope of Christ," or perhaps present hope in contrast to future redemption.

1, 13: Sealed...By God, in baptism.

1, 14: First installment...down payment by God on full salvation.

Ephesians 1: 3-14

3 Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heaven, 4 as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love 5 he destined us for adoption to

himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, 6 for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. 7 In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace 8 that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, 9 he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him 10 as a plan from the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth. 11 In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, 12 so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ. 13 In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy Spirit, 14 which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

REFLECTION:

God has respect for what he has made. God made us as human persons and deals with us as human persons. God gradually showed himself to us. God told us about his desire to free us from sin and death. The plan of God came to be known through people like Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. Finally, when the human race was ready, the Father sent his Son to gather together people of every language, race, culture, and country. Jesus Christ is bringing about the final step in God's plan through the working of the Spirit. In Scripture you just read, we are all called to listen to God's word and to be in tune with God's plan for each one of us. In reflecting on this, seek an understanding of your place in this plan.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How has God entered into our history?

What part do you play in the plan of God?

What does Paul mean when he says that the Spirit is a "pledge?"

CHAPTER TWENTY REVELATION

FRIENDS TELL EACH OTHER ABOUT Friendship is a very important part of everyone's life. It is caused by love and respect between two

THEMSELVES persons. Each one loves the other and wants to share his/her life with the other person. Each person wants to tell his/her friend about his/her history and about who he/she is. And each one wants to learn about the other. The love and trust between friends make them want to know more about the other. As each comes to know more about the other, they begin to take on some of the ideas and "ways of doing things" of one another.

GOOD FRIENDSHIP A good friendship takes years to develop. Each friend has to be faithful to the other. Each one has to put up with the faults of the other. After years of friendship the friends get to know each other so well that they can tell what each other likes and dislikes. Friendship should lead to deeper love and trust between friends. It should also lead to a deeper knowledge of each other.

GOD WANT FRIENDSHIP WITH US Ps 36: 11-13 Ex 33: 12-17 God wants to be friends with us. God wants to tell us about (Father, Son, Spirit). God wants to do this because God loves us. God wants to share his life with us forever. Since we cannot see God we depend on God to tell us about himself. It takes time to come to know God. It takes a lifetime for each one of us to come to know him. It takes the lifetime of the human race for God to tell us all there is to know about our triune God.

WHEN WE BECOME FRIENDS OF GOD WE ARE CHANGED Wis 7: 27-28 As we become closer friends with God, we come to know more about him because God tell us about himself. As history moves on and more people become friends of God, then the human race comes to know more about him. When God tells us about himself and we become friends with him, we begin to change. We become like him.

REVELATON MEANS THAT GOD IS SHARING HIS LIFE When God tells us about himself he is revealing himself to us. The word *revelation* means that God, because he loved us, freely chose to tell us about himself and share his life with us. God has revealed himself

to us in many ways. God revealed himself when he made the world. God told us more about himself when he made human beings. He told us even more about himself when he chose a people to be his own and made a covenant with them. God told us all about himself in his Son, Jesus Christ, who became human like us.

JESUS IS THE COMPLETE REVELATION Jesus Christ is the living presence of God among us. He was sent to tell us about God and to show us how to be children of God. Jesus is the complete revelation of God. Jesus has sent the Spirit into our hearts to teach us about himself until he comes again in glory at the end of time.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY

Exodus 33, 7-11: God speaks with Moses

Footnotes:

33, 7-11 The meeting tent is mentioned here by anticipation; its actual construction is described in the following chapters.

Exodus 33, 7-11

7 The tent, which was called the meeting tent, Moses used to pitch at some distance away, outside the camp. Anyone who wished to consult the Lord would go to this meeting tent outside the camp. 8 Whenever Moses went out to the tent, the people would all rise and stand at the entrance of their own tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. 9 As Moses entered the tent, the column of cloud would come down and stand at its entrance while the Lord spoke with Moses. 10 On seeing the column of cloud stand at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise and worship at the entrance of their own tents. 11 The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one man speaks to another. Moses would then return to the camp, but his young assistant, Joshua, son of Nun, would not move out of the tent.

REFLECTION:

Moses was the leader of the Jewish people when God freed them from the slavery of Egypt. He was their leader as they journeyed to the

land that God promised them. Moses knew that he and his people were completely dependent on God. He knew that God cared about the people and had a plan for them. Often Moses went to meet the Lord God. There was personal communication between God and Moses. God instructed Moses and revealed himself to him. As we read the passage from Exodus how does this touch our lives thousands of years later?

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How does God continue to reveal himself?

Do we have a way of communicating with God as Moses did?

Why do we say that "Jesus" is the complete revelation?

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE
THE INCARNATION

GOD'S PRESENCE God wanted to be present among his people.

BECOMES We can see God's presence becoming stronger

STRONGER AMONG as we look over the history of God's search for

US us. God was present in his most important creatures, human beings. God was present in the covenant with the Jewish people. As God entered into human history we were drawn closer to him.

JESUS SHARED OUR As the right moment in history a union was HUMANITY: WE SHAREmade between God and humankind. Jesus HIS DIVINITY Christ was born in the small town of Lk 2: 1-14 Bethlehem. He was the fullness of God's presence among us. He was God who shared our humanity, so that we could share his divinity.

JESUS CHRIST IS In Jesus Christ we see the two forces in

THE UNION OF THE DIVINE AND THE HUMAN
creation coming together. On the one hand we have human beings who were struggling on their own to find God. On the other hand we have God searching for human beings. In Eph 2: 1-10 and Gal 4: 1-7 Jesus the human and the divine come together. They are united. Jesus lifts up humanity. He gives human life a clear purpose. He frees humanity from the power of sin and death. He gives each human person a share in the everlasting life of God.

THE LOVE OF THE FATHER IS GIVEN TO ALL OF US
Jesus was the Son of God. He was conceived by the Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He was human like us in all things except that he did not sin. Jesus made it possible for all of us to be sons and daughters of the Father. What Jesus was because he was the Son, we have been given as adopted sons and daughters. When God became human in Jesus he made it possible for us to be equal to Jesus-to be his brothers and sisters. Jesus enjoys the love of the Father because he is the Son. Those who have become the brothers and sisters of Jesus enjoy the same love as a free gift.

A HELPLESS BABY IS OUR GOD
God in the person of Jesus is born among us as any other human being is born. He comes into the world as a helpless baby. He needs to be cared for, he needs to be loved, he needs to be taught the language and culture of his people. Jesus is born in poverty in a remote part of Israel. Few people take notice of his arrival. Yet this helpless baby is our God. And in him we become friends, we are reconciled, with God.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Luke 1, 26-38: God becomes human for us

Footnotes:

1, 26-38: The announcement to Mary of the birth of Jesus is parallel to the announcement to Zechariah of the birth of Jesus. In both the angel

Gabriel appears to the parent who is troubled by the vision and then told by the angel not to fear. After the announcement is made the parent objects and a sign is given to confirm the announcement. This particular focus of the announcement of the birth of Jesus is on his identity as Son of David (32-33) and Son of God (32.35).

1, 32: Son of the Most High...1, 76 where John is described as "prophet of the Most High." "Most High" is a title for God commonly used by Luke.

1, 34: Mary's questioning response is a denial of sexual relations and is used by Luke to lead to the angel's declaration about the Spirit's role in the conception of Jesus takes place through the holy Spirit, the power of God, and therefore Jesus has a unique relationship to Yahweh: he is Son of God.

1, 36-37: The sign given to Mary in confirmation of the angel's announcement to her is pregnancy of her aged relative Elizabeth. If a woman past the childbearing age could become pregnant, why, the angel implies, should there be doubt about Mary's pregnancy, for nothing will be impossible for God.

Lk 1, 26-38

26 In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, 33 and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" 35 And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. 36 And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; 37 for nothing will be impossible for God." 38 Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. My it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

REFLECTION:

When the time was right God entered history as a human person. God chose the virgin Mary to be the mother of Jesus. Mary's child was from God. Her child was the saving king God promised. He would save the people from their sins. In this child God and humanity were united. He was the Son of God and son of Mary. He was completely divine and completely human.

Mary answered "yes" to the Angel's request from God that she be the mother of this Son. Because she said "yes" God became human. Jesus united us with God and gave us a share in the divine life. When we, following Mary's example, say "yes" to God's invitation to serve him, we make it possible for Jesus to become present in the world. Through us his power can touch other men and women.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How does Jesus make God present in our world?

Once Jesus was born as a living person, was the Incarnation finished? Was the union between God and the human race complete?

How does this union in Christ continue?

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO THE HOLY SPIRIT

WIND, FIRE, LIGHT, WATER The Scripture uses many images for the Spirit. The Spirit is like the wind; she can be gentle or forceful. She is always present and she goes where she wills. The Spirit is also like fire; she purifies and gives energy and light. The Spirit is compared to water; she cleanses, gives new life, and sustains that life. These images show the creative power of God the Holy Spirit working for us.

THE SPIRIT POINTS TO JESUS The Spirit never calls attention to herself. All of her work points to Jesus. The Spirit is sent to help us understand who Jesus is and to help us understand

Jn 16: 13-14 our relationship with the Father. She changes the hearts of men and women and gives them the desire to be united to Jesus. The Spirit alone makes it possible for them to say a prayer of praise to the Father in Jesus' name.

THE SPIRIT From the beginning of time the Spirit has abided in
UNITES the creation. It is the work of the Spirit to give life to
CREATION all created things. The Spirit unites the creation, all things visible and invisible, to the death and resurrection of Jesus. The work of the Spirit is to fashion all things into the perfect image and likeness of the Father which is the Risen Christ.

THE SPIRIT When Jesus poured the Spirit into the hearts of his
CREATES THE disciples the Church was born. It is the work of the
CHURCH Spirit to create the community of the Church. The
1 Cor 12: 1-11 Spirit is poured into the hearts of individuals today. Each individual receives special gifts for the building up and strengthening of the Church community. They become gifts of the Spirit to the other members.

GIFTS MUST Every gift that we receive comes to us through the
BE TESTED Church community. Every gift is given to us in order
1 Jn 4:1 to build up the community of believers. The gifts we are given and the urges of the Spirit we receive must be tested. If they bring unity and peace to the members of the Church then they are from the Spirit. If they bring division and unrest to the community then they are not from the Spirit.

THE SPIRIT At baptism the Spirit helps us to claim our giftedness
OF TRUTH as members of the Church. The Spirit fashions us
Acts 17:28 into the community of the Church and frees us from fear and worry. It is the work of the Spirit to create in our hearts a spirit of prayer and confidence in our selves and in God. The Spirit teaches us, through the members of the Community, that it is true that the Father loves us, that we are his favored children, and that we are united to him through the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Spirit teaches us that it is true that we live in the presence of the Father in the Trinity at all times.

AS GIFTS OF THE Spirit makes Jesus present in the Church community.
the Spirit makes Jesus present in the world. It is only
SPIRIT WE CALL through the exercise of gifts of the Spirit that men
OTHERS TO and women in the world can know Jesus' love, hear
ACCEPT THEIR the word of forgiveness, receive healing, and become sons and
GIFTEDNESS daughters of the Father. The Spirit in our giftedness calls every
person to confess that Jesus is Lord and in so doing to accept
themselves as gifts of the Spirit.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

Romans 8, 26-30: The Spirit brings salvation to us

Footnotes:

8, 28-30: These verses outline the Christian vocation as it was designed by God: to be conformed to the image of his Son, who is to be the first born among many brothers(29). God's redemptive action on behalf of the believers has been in process before the beginning of the world. Those whom God chooses are those he foreknew (29) or elected. Those who are called (30) are predestined or predetermined. These expressions do not mean that God is arbitrary. Rather Paul uses them to emphasize the thought and care that God has taken for the Christian's salvation.

8, 28: We know that all things work for good for those who love God...
a few ancient authorities have God as the subject of the verb, and some Translators render: "We know that God makes everything work for good For those who love God..."

8, 29: Image...while man and woman were originally created in God's image (Gn 1, 26-27), it is through baptism into Christ, the image of God (2 Cor 4, 4; Col 1, 15) that we are renewed according to the image of the Creator (Col 3, 10).

Roman 8: 26-30

26 In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. 27 And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will. 28 We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those justified he also glorified.

REFLECTION:

The strength we have comes as a gift from God. In adopting us as his sons and daughters the Father raised us out of our weakness. The Spirit gives us the strength and knowledge we need to live as adopted children. God's life in us, the abiding gift of the Spirit, gives us confidence to claim that we are sons and daughters of the Father.

Jesus Christ is the perfect joining of divinity and humanity. We are called to live a life like Jesus. The Spirit brings about the uniting of the human and the divine in us. Once we have accepted the Spirit we live in the divine life forever.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

What is God's plan for us that the Spirit is bringing about?

Why do some people call this the age of the Spirit?

How do we know that we are really adopted sons and daughters of God?

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE THE PRESENCE OF THE RISEN LORD

JESUS IS PRESENTThe Lord Jesus Christ has chosen to remain in
IN THE CHURCH the world as a risen person. He is present in full

authority and power in his Church. He acts through the sacraments. It is through the sacraments in the power of the holy Spirit that Jesus continues to bring people to the Father.

JESUS IS FREE OF MATERIAL THINGS The Lord is not with us as he was 2000 years ago. He is risen and is now free from the power of death forever. He is free from the law of bodily breakdown and decay. From the Scripture we know that his body can go through walls, it can appear and disappear, it can be everywhere. Jesus' body has been changed. It has been spiritualized.

JESUS IS NOT A GHOST Jesus is not a ghost. He ate with his disciples and Thomas touched his wounds. He is a complete person with spirit and flesh. His body is now different from the time when he walked the earth. Through the power of the Spirit we come in contact with the risen person of Jesus in the Word the sacraments and in each other.

PRESENT IN THE WORD The Risen Jesus is really present in the Word. The Old Testament and the new Testament put us in direct contact with the Risen Lord. Through them Jesus continues to lead and teach his people. When we listen attentively to the Word and study the Scriptures we are present to Jesus. In the Liturgy we give a place of honor to the Scriptures and reverence them because of the real presence of Jesus.

PRESENT IN THE SACRAMENTS Jesus is really present in the sacraments of the Church. Through the sacraments he gives us life and sustains it, he forgives, he heals, he feeds us with his body and blood. In the sacraments Jesus is present and acting for us. In the Liturgy we reverence the real presence of Jesus in his Body and Blood under the appearance of bread and wine.

PRESENT IN EACH OTHER The Risen Lord is also present in the hearts of all baptized. Each person who has received the Spirit in baptism is becoming the image and likeness of the Risen Jesus. In the church we receive the gift of life from each member of

the community. In the Liturgy we reverence our brothers and sisters because they make the Risen Lord present to us.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

Luke 24, 13-32: Two disciples meet the Risen Lord

Footnotes:

24, 13-35: This episode focuses on the interpretation of scripture by the risen Jesus and the recognition of him in the breaking of the bread. The references to the quotations of scripture and explanation of it (25-27), the kerygmatic proclamation (34), and the liturgical gesture (30) suggest that the episode is primarily catechetical and liturgical rather than apologetic.

24, 13: Seven miles...literally "sixty stades." A stade was 607 feet. Some manuscripts read "160 stades" or more than eighteen miles. The exact location of Emmaus is disputed.

24, 16: A consistent feature of the resurrection stories is that the risen Lord was different and initially unrecognizable (37; Mk 16, 12; Jn 20, 14; 21, 4).

24, 26: That the Messiah should suffer...Luke is the only New Testament writer to speak explicitly of a suffering Messiah. The idea of a suffering Messiah is not found in the Old Testament or in other Jewish literature.

Luke 24, 13-32

13 Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus,

14 and they were conversing about all the thing that had occurred.

15 And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them,

16 but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.

17 He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast.

18 One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?"

19 And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,

20 how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him.

21 But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place.

22 Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning

23 and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive.

24 Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see."

25 And he said to them "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!

26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"

27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther.

29 But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

30 And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them.

31 With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.

32 Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning (within us) while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?"

REFLECTION:

Jesus came to his disciples in a new and different way after the resurrection. They were expecting the same Jesus of Nazareth that they had known before. The person who came to them on the road was indeed the same Jesus but now he was the Risen Lord. There is no clear scientific way to explain this new way Jesus had of being present. His resurrected body was not like anything else in creation. The disciples came to realize that this person was indeed Jesus, present to them in a new way. They rejoiced in his new presence. How do we rejoice in his presence to us today?

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

When the disciples encountered this person on the their way to Emmaus, why did they not recognize it was Jesus?

Each time we break the bread at Mass we are truly in the presence of Jesus. How is this explained to people who are not members of the Church?

We encounter God every time we listen to or read Scripture. Jesus used Scripture to help the disciples recognize him. How will you work to influence your people to find the Risen Lord in the Word revealed to us?

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR TRADITION

JESUS SENT THE HOLY SPIRIT INTO THE CHURCH The foundation of the Church is Jesus Christ. When he ascended to the Father he sent the Spirit to be with his Apostles and disciples. The people came together and formed a community of individuals who possessed the Spirit was the Church.

JESUS WAS THE CENTER OF THE LIFE OF THE EARLY CHURCH The members of the Church believed in the Risen Christ. Jesus was at the center of their lives and at the center of life of the community. He invited each member of the community to follow him. He invited each member to be united in friendship to God. The members of the community responded to his invitation. They made Jesus present in their everyday lives.

THE GOSPELS ARE ACCOULTS WRITTEN BY THE COMMUNITY Some of the members of the community were moved to write down what the community believed about Jesus. They wrote the 27 books of the New Testament. It is important to understand that these books are not simply historical records of what Jesus said and did. They are records written by people who had faith in the Risen Lord Jesus.

THE GIFT OF INSPIRATION The New Testament is the inspired word of God. The inspiration of the New Testament is

IN THE COMMUNITY made up of two gifts of the Spirit. Through one gift the Spirit moved the community to follow Jesus and to believe in his resurrection. The Scriptures are recollections of what the early Church believed about Jesus.

THE GIFT OF INSPIRED Through the second gift of the Spirit WRITING GIVEN TO individuals in the community were moved to CERTAIN MEMBERS OF write down accounts of what the early Church THE COMMUNITY believed about Jesus. They did not write down Jn 21: 24-25 everything that the early Church believed. They wrote down what the Spirit moved them to write. The New Testament scriptures are the Word of God because under the guidance of the Spirit the authors wrote no more and no less than God wanted to tell us about himself.

THE OLD TESTAMENT The Church also understands that the books of WAS INSPIRED the Old Testament are the Word of God. They were inspired by the Spirit in the same way that the books of the New Testament were. The Church, the community of believers, authentically explains the Old Testament and the New Testament under the guidance of the Spirit.

THE LIVING TRADITION The Spirit living in the early Christian community IS HANDED DOWN taught the people about Jesus and gave them THROUGH THE YEARS a unity of belief about the Risen Lord. The unity 2 Tim 1: 6-14 given by the Spirit was handed down from that Jn 14:26 generation to the present. The same Spirit lives in the hearts of all baptized people today. The Spirit works for unity and keeps the belief in Jesus alive and pure. The Spirit is the living tradition of the Church.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

1 Corinthians 15, 1-8: The Good News Paul handed on

Footnotes:

15, 1-11: Paul recalls the tradition (3-7), which he can presuppose as common ground and which provides a starting point for his argument. This the

fundamental content of all Christian preaching and belief (1-2.11).

15, 3-7: The language by which Paul expresses the essence of the "gospel" (1) is not his own but is drawn from older credal formulas. This credo highlights Jesus' death for our sins (confirmed by his burial) and Jesus' resurrection (confirmed by his appearances) and present both of them as fulfillment of prophecy. In accordance with scriptures: conformity of Jesus' passion with the scriptures is asserted in Mt 16, 1; Lk 24, 25-27. 32.44-46. Application of some Old Testament texts (Psa 2, 7; 16,8-11) to his resurrection is illustrated by Acts 2, 27-31; 13, 29-39; and is 52, 13-53, 12 and Hos 6, 2 may also have been envisaged.

1 Corinthians 15, 1-8

1 Now I am reminding you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand. 2 Through it you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

3 For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; 4 that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures;

5 that he appeared to Kephias, then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

7 After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one born abnormally, he appeared to me.

REFLECTION:

Paul did not preach a message he made up himself. The people of Corinth believed everything that Paul preached. They knew that Paul was as Apostle chosen by the Risen Lord. They knew that Paul's Good News was the same Good News preached throughout the world. All who are baptized believe that Jesus died for our sins, rose to new life, and remains with his Church. This is the faith handed on since the time of the Apostles.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How does the Church keep the same faith in Jesus Christ from age to age?

Why are the Scriptures important to the Church?

What is tradition?

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE THE SACRAMENTS

A SACRAMENT A sacrament is a sign that can do what it says it REALLY DOES WHAT IT SAYS IT CAN DO can do. Jesus Christ is a sacrament. He is the sacrament of the Father. He is the complete presence of God in the world. Jesus is the sign of unity between God and humankind. Because of Jesus human beings can now be "at one" with God. We can now share God's life just as Jesus shared our life.

THROUGH THE SACRAMENTS JESUS HAS POWER OVER ALL THINGS The Church is the sacrament of Jesus Christ. Jesus is present in his full risen power in the Church. The Church is the sign that Jesus is continuing to work in the world. It is a sign that

Acts 2: 32-33 Jesus has power over sin, sickness, Satan and death. Jesus, who is present in the Church, gives the Sign of the Church real power. He really frees us from the power of sin, sickness, Satan, and death. When the Church acts to free us from these things it is really Jesus Christ who is acting.

BAPTISM The seven sacraments are signs of the actions of Jesus in the Church. Each sacrament is a sign of Jesus acting in a particular way. The sign of Baptism is flowing water. This water is a sign of washing and of new life. When the sign is given, Jesus washes away our sins and unites us to himself. He gives us new life in his Body.

CONFIRMATION In Confirmation the sign is the anointing with oil. It is a sign of being set apart---being made holy. When the sign is given, the Spirit fills us with her life and makes us holy in the service of the Lord.

EUCCHARISTIn the Eucharist the sign is the eating of the Lord's Body and the drinking of his Blood. It is the sign of life giving food. When the sign is given, we receive the Risen Lord. He is the source of life.

RECONCILIATIONIn Reconciliation the sign is the forgiveness of sins by the priest. The sign means that when a repentant sinner asks for forgiveness the sins are really forgiven. When the sign is given, Jesus forgives our sins.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK In Anointing of the Sick the sign is the healing oil. It is a sign of healing the physical and spiritual sickness of a person. When the sign is given, Jesus heals the individual.

MATRIMONY In Matrimony the sign is the public pledge of fidelity. This is a sign of the ever growing love between two persons. It is a sign of faithful love. When the sign is given, Jesus unites the couple in faithful love.

HOLY ORDERS In Holy Orders the sign is the laying on of hands. It is the sign that Jesus as head of the Church continues his presence in the Church. When the sign is given, Jesus leads, serves, teaches, nourishes, and unites his Church.

WE CAN ACCEPT OR REJECT THE OFFER OF FRIENDSHIP IN THE SACRAMENTS In each sacrament the Risen Lord personally invites us to come closer to God. Through the sacraments, friendship with God is made and deepened. We are free to accept the invitation of Jesus for closer friendship with God. Through the power of the Spirit we respond to Jesus' offer of friendship.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

Matthew 28, 16-20: Jesus promises to be with his disciples

Footnotes:

28, 16-20: This climatic scene has been called a "*proleptic parousia*" for it gives a foretaste of the final glorious coming of the Son of Man (26, 64).

Then his triumph will be manifest to all; how it is revealed only to the disciples, who are commissioned to announce it to all nations and bring them to belief in Jesus and obedience to his commandments.

28, 16: The eleven...the number recalls the tragic defection of Judas Iscariot. To the mountain...ordered them...since the message to the disciples was simply that they were to go to Galilee (10), some think that "the mountain" comes from a tradition of the message known to Matthew and alluded to here. For the significance of the mountain, see the note on 17, 1.

28, 17: But they doubted...the Greek can also be translated, "but some doubted." The verb occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in 14, 31 where it is associated with Peter's being of "little faith." For the meaning of that designation, see the note of 6, 30.

28, 18: All power...me...the Greek word here translated "power" is the same as that found in the LXX translation of Dn 7, 13-14 where one "like a son of man" is given power and an everlasting kingdom by God. The risen Jesus here claims universal power, i.e., in heaven and on earth.

28, 19: Therefore...since universal power belongs to the risen Jesus (18), he gives the eleven a mission that is universal. They are to "make disciples of all nations." While "all nations" is understood by some scholars as referring only to all Gentiles, it is probable that it included the Jews as well. "Baptizing them:" baptism is the means of entrance into the community of the risen one, the Church. "In the name of the Father...holy Spirit...this is perhaps the clearest expression in the New Testament of Trinitarian belief. It may have been the baptismal formula of Matthew's church, but primarily it designates the effect of baptism, the union of the one baptized with the Father, Son, and Spirit.

28, 20: All that I have commanded you...the moral teaching found in this gospel, preeminently that of the Sermon on the Mount (chs 5-7). The commandment of Jesus are the standard of Christian conduct, not the Mosaic laws as such, even though some of the Mosaic commandments have now been invested with the authority of Jesus. Behold I am with you always: the promise of Jesus' real though invisible presence echoes the name Emmanuel given to him in the infancy narrative; see the note on 1, 23.

Matthew 28: 16-20

16 The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them.

17 When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted.

18 Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

REFLECTION:

Jesus' work of salvation did not end when he returned to the Father. He continues to work through the preaching of his disciples. Through them, the power of death and resurrection spreads to all people. His disciples do not work alone. The Risen Lord is with them. He is present and acting through their words and deeds.

He is present and acting today in the sacraments of the Church. As an ordained minister you will be called on to participate in the various sacraments of the church. In doing so you will be God's instrument on earth.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is the Church called a sacrament?

What mission does Jesus give to us as his disciples?

Why did Jesus choose to remain present in "signs?"

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

THE CHURCH IS A COMMUNITY OF FAITH

THE CHURCH IS We go to Church to be near God. We feel that **MORE THAN AN** the Church is a holy place. It is there that God **INSTITUTION** is present. It is a place to pray and to make peace with God. In a general way we understand that the Church is more than just a building. We say, "The Church teaches us." We talk about the "Church throughout the world." Even in these ways of speaking the Church seems to be simply a visible institution. But it is more than that!

THE CHURCH IS The Church is a community that is both visible
HUMAN AND and invisible. It is human and divine. It is made
DIVINE up of men and women who confess that Jesus is Lord. Yet
they are men and women who are sinners and who are imperfect.
Jesus who calls these men and women makes them worthy to be
members of the Church. He also makes it possible for the Spirit to
dwell in their hearts. This community of believers is united and led by
the Spirit sent by Jesus.

A QUESTION OF When entering the community we re called to give
CONTROL up our very selves. The question of who will be in control
of our lives is at the heart of becoming a member of the community of
faith. In order to protect ourselves we strive to be in control of our
lives. We seek security, freedom, and independence. We desperately
look for happiness and try to escape from loneliness by building our
own kingdom of things and relationships.

WE FIND OURSELVES Jesus asks us to follow him and to place our
IN LETTING GO trust in him. He asks us to die to our need to be
Mt 10: 37-39 independent. We are afraid to do this because it
seems to mean that we will lose everything. However, when we place
our trust in him, he gives us all that we strive for. It is by letting go of
ourselves that Jesus gives us ourselves.

PEOPLE SEEK HELP The community of faith is a community of
people
FROM JESUS who seek the help of the Lord in surrendering their
own desires and wills to the will of God. They wish to give up striving
and defending their very selves. They confess Jesus as Lord of their
lives and are brought into the life of the Trinity: the life of the Church.

DAILY CROSS Men and women of the faith community must
Lk 9: 23-25 work very hard at taking up the daily cross of simply being
present to Jesus. By doing so they can be free to allow him to change
and direct their lives as he sees fit. Jesus can continue to mold them
into the gifts needed by other members.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

1 Thessalonians 1, 1-10: A people of faith

Footnotes:

1, 3: Faith ... love ...hope...this, along with 5, 8, is the earliest mention in Christian literature of the three "theological virtues" (see 1 Cor 13, 13). The order here stresses eschatological hope, in line with the letter's emphasis on the Lord's second, triumphal coming, or *parousia*.

1, 6: Imitators...the Pauline theme of "imitation" is rooted in Paul's view of solidarity in Christ through sharing in Jesus' cross and in the Spirit of the risen Lord.

1 Thessalonians 1, 1-10

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace.

Thanksgiving for their faith

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly

3 calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father, 4

knowing, brothers loved by God, how you were chosen. 5 For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the holy Spirit and (with) much conviction. You know what sort of people we were (among) you for your sake.

6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the word in great affliction, with joy from the holy Spirit,

7 so that you became a model for all the believers in Macedonia and (in) Achaia.

8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth not only in Macedonia and (in) Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

9 For they themselves openly declare about you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God

10 and to await his Son from heaven, whom he raised from (the) dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath.

REFLECTION:

Paul is happy with the way his friends are living. The good reports he hears makes him sure that the holy Spirit is at work. The people join together because Jesus is the most important person in their lives. The people recognize God's call. They had given their lives to him. The Spirit had changed their hearts. Verses 9 and 10 tell what they

believed. They believed that Jesus died, rose, and will come again. He saved us from sin and death. We live this same faith.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is the Church a community?

Where does faith come from?

Why is it important that we freely choose friendship with Jesus?

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN
THE CHURCH IS A COMMUNITY OF LOVE

GOD IS SELF-GIVING From the beginning God has tried to teach us about himself. God is completely self-giving and generous. There is no selfishness in God. Creation is the reflection of his love. And humanity in the person of the Risen Jesus is the perfect sign of his life.

WE ARE SELF-CENTERED For our part, when we come into the world we are very different from God. We are self-centered. We see all things and relationships as being good if they serve our needs. We tend to be selfish in using the things of creation and we tend to put a price tag on love when we enter into a relationship.

JESUS TEACHES US ABOUT GOD'S LOVE Jesus, when he hung on the cross, taught us about God's love. To have been born, lived his life, and dies in a quiet way would have been enough to show us God's love. But in order to overcome the deep self-centeredness of humanity, Jesus died the humiliating death of a criminal. He chose to suffer and accept humiliation so that we might see the depth of God's unselfish love.

GOD LOVED US FIRST Even in our selfishness, and the sin that flows from it, it is God who searches for us through all ages. He loved us first and reaches out to us in the person of Jesus. God wants us to accept the friendship he offers. When we respond to the Spirit's urging to accept the offer of friendship we become like Jesus. We take on the image and likeness of God. We commit ourselves to the life of self-giving love.

THE LOVE OF GOD The love of God in our hearts makes us outgoing.

MAKE US OUTGOING First of all we are outgoing to God. We stop being self-centered and we enter into a living friendship with God. This friendship makes it possible for us to direct our love to the men and women around us. When we love them, we love God. When we do not love them, we do not love God.

LOVE IS FOUND IN DEEDS In the community of the Church love is found in deeds, not in words. It is easy to say, "I love you."
1 Cor 13 It is easy to tell people that God loves them. If love is simply a word that we use, then our love is cheap. It is not what you say that counts; it is what you do that counts. If we live in a community of love, then that love has to be spelled out in our lives. We must show each other that God is the most important person in our lives. And we must treat each man and woman as a special gift of the Spirit.

LOVE IS THE SOURCE OF UNITY IN THE CHURCH Love is the source of unity in the Church. This unity is on two levels. God loves us and when we respond to that love we are united to him in the person of Jesus. On the second level, the loving friendship with God unites us to all men and women of faith. It is in the Church, the community of love, that Jesus continues to overcome the dividing forces of selfishness.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

John 15, 8-17: Live in love

Footnotes:

15, 13: For one's friends...or: "those whom one loves." In 9-13a, the words for love are related to the Greek *agapao*. In 13b-15, the words for love are related to the Greek *phileo*. For John, the two roots seem synonymous and mean "to love."

15, 15: Slaves. . .friends...in the Old Testament, Moses, Joshua and David were called "servants" or "slaves of Yahweh"; only Abraham was called a "friend of God."

John 15, 8-17 8 By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. 9 As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.

10 If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete. 12 This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. 16 It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. 17 This I command you: love one another.

REFLECTION:

God is the source of all love. In his life and teachings, Jesus showed God's love for every person. God's love is self-giving and free of all selfishness. As an expression of this love Jesus gave himself completely on the cross. God calls us to love as Jesus loved. The love Christians show for their brothers and sisters is to be a sign of God's presence among them. Self-giving and completely unselfish love are to be the outstanding marks of a Christian's love. We are called to that type of love as we walk our faith journey with one another.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is it important that we are called "friends" by Jesus?

How is love the source of unity?

What does "self-giving love" mean?

CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT THE CHURCH IS A COMMUNITY OF HOPE

MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH WAIT TO ENJOY THE RESURRECTION	MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH WAIT TO ENJOY THE RESURRECTION	MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH WAIT TO ENJOY THE RESURRECTION
MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH WAIT TO ENJOY THE RESURRECTION	MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH WAIT TO ENJOY THE RESURRECTION	MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH WAIT TO ENJOY THE RESURRECTION

The Church is not complete. Those who have been joined to Jesus in baptism wait for complete union with him when he comes again. All the members of the Church are on a journey to meet the Lord Jesus Christ.

They all wait for the day when they will enjoy the fullness of the resurrected life.

THE CHRISTIANS The early Christian community lived in confident

WERE EAGER TO expectation that Jesus would come again soon.

SEE JESUS For them the Risen Lord was present in their lives

1 Th 4:13 and they longed to see him face to face. They

prayed

1 Th 5:11 the words of the *Our Father*, "Thy kingdom come," with an eager sense that Jesus would soon come again.

HOPE MADE THEM This spirit of confident expectation and eager longing

FREE FROM FEAR to see Jesus gave them a great freedom to witness to

AND WORRY Jesus and to the Gospel values. Since they had already given their lives to Jesus, they did not fear criticism, or persecution, or death. They were free from worry and anxiety because Jesus had sent the Spirit into their hearts as the guarantee that he would be with them forever.

THE SPIRIT IS Today we are the community of confident expectation.

OUR GUARANTEE All baptized persons who have accepted Jesus as Lord

2 Cor 5: 1-10 of their lives have received the Spirit as a guarantee that they will enjoy life with the Father forever. So will those who believe in a God and live a good life. The work of the Spirit is to confirm in our hearts that we are given eternal life, made sons and daughters of the Father, and have been forgiven and accepted by Jesus. The Spirit of Hope makes it possible for us to live from this starting point.

HOPE GIVE US The hope of the community of believers, of the Church, is

COURAGE AND not a way to escape the hard times that come into all of

STRENGTH our lives. The Spirit of hope strengthens us so that we

Phim 3: 10-21 can face the problems of everyday life with the confidence that Jesus will be with us. The Spirit give us the courage and freedom to witness to Gospel values without fear.

WE WANT TO The joy and freedom of the members of the community

SEE JESUS of hope comes from knowing that we have already died
FACT TO FACE and given control of our lives to Jesus. The Church is not

Phim 1: 18-26 complete until Jesus comes again and we see him face to face. The Spirit invites us to live our lives as if we will soon see Jesus face to face. He causes us to eagerly pray, "Come Lord Jesus."

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT

Romans 8, 18-25: We live in hope

Footnotes:

8, 18-27: The glory that believers are destined to share with Christ far exceeds the sufferings of the present life. Paul considers the destiny of the created world to be linked with the future that belongs to the believers. As it shares in the penalty of corruption brought about by sin, so also will it share in the benefits of redemption and future glory that comprise the ultimate liberation of God's people (19-22). After patient endurance in steadfast expectation, the full harvest of the Spirit's presence will be realized. On earth believers enjoy the firstfruits, i.e., the Spirit, as a guarantee of the total liberation of their bodies from the influence of the rebellious old self (23).

Romans 8: 18-25

18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us.

19 For creation awaits with eager expectation in the revelation of the children of God; 20 for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope

21 that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.

22 We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now;

23 and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also groan

within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.
24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees?
25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance.

REFLECTION:

The Christian is now united with God in the Spirit. Yet the Christian waits for the day of face to face union with the Father. We wait for Jesus to come in glory. Jesus promised this. The Spirit keeps this promise alive in our hearts. When Jesus' victory over sin and death is complete, all creation will be united to God. Every evil and sadness will be gone. The Spirit gives us confidence as **we wait for Jesus' return.**

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

What does a Christian hope for?

What does "freedom" mean in the scripture passage?

How does hope help us to face real problems?

CHAPTER TWENTY NINE

THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST

THE SPIRIT FORMS THE CHURCH From the day of Pentecost until the present day the Spirit has gathered together all baptized persons and formed

them into the community of the Church. The Church has always searched for words to describe the unity among its members and the unity of all members with their Risen Head, Jesus Christ. Some letters of St. Paul compare this unity to the human body.

EACH PART OF THE BODY HAS A ROLE TO PLAY The human body is made up of many parts. Each part

has a role to play in the support of the body. Each part

is dependent on the other parts for life. When one part suffers the whole body suffers. When one part does not function properly the whole body is affected. The various parts of the body are organized and guided by the head.

ALL BAPTIZED Jesus is risen in each member of the body, those here on
MAKE UP THE earth and those who have gone before us. Together, all
BODY OF CHRIST baptized make up the Mystical Body of Christ. In the
Rom 12: 408 Mystical Body no one can claim a merely individual relationship with Jesus. Every grace, every healing, every word of forgiveness, every increase of knowledge of the Lord, comes to us through another member of the Body of Christ. And we receive every grace, not for ourselves, but in order to build up the other members of the Body.

JESUS IS REALLY Jesus is present as the Risen Head of the Body. Just
PRESENT IN THE as he is really present in the Eucharist and in his Word,
MEMBERS OF THE so too he is really present in the members of his
CHURCH Mystical Body. He nourishes the members of his Body,
1 Cor 10: 15-17 he forgives them, he heals them, and he guides them to a closer relationship with his Father through the Eucharist and his Word. When we receive his Body in the Eucharist we are receiving the Risen Life of all the members of the Church, those here on earth and those who have gone before us. When we are listening to his Word we are led to respond to the present needs of his Body.

THE BODY OF The Body of Christ is a very close community. When a
CHRIST IS A member is suffering, Jesus in the member calls those of
CLOSE us who are strong to give assistance. When we are weak,
COMMUNITY Jesus in the other members comes to our assistance. Every
Col 1: 24-29 member of the Body is a gift to every other member. As we receive each other as gifts and care for one another, the Church becomes the Risen Body of the Lord.

OUR LIFE IS The image of the Church as the Body of Christ very
IN THE TRINITY clearly teaches us that we have our life only in the life of God---only in the Trinity. The Risen Jesus is the Son of the Father. When we are baptized and become members of his Risen Body we become what he is. We become sons and daughters of this

Father. The Spirit guarantees in us that our place is with Jesus in the Trinity.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY NINE

1 Corinthians 12, 12-31: The Church is like a single body

Footnotes:

12, 12-26: The image of a body is introduced to explain Christ's relationship with believers (12).

Verse 13 applies this model to the church: by baptism all, despite diversity of ethnic or social origins, are integrated into one organism.

Verses 14-26 then develop the need for diversity of function among the part of a body without threat to unity.

12, 27-30: Paul now applies the image again to the church as a whole and its members (27). The lists in vv 28-30 spell out the parallelism by specifying the diversity of functions found in the church (cf Rom 12, 6-8; Eph 4, 11).

12, 28: First, apostles...apostleship was not mentioned in vv 8-10, nor is it at issue in the se chapters, but Paul gives it pride of place in his listing. It is not just one gift among others but a prior and fuller gift that includes the others. They are all demonstrated in Paul's apostolate, but he may have developed his theology of charisms by reflecting, first of all on his own grace of apostleship.

1 Corinthians 12, 12-31

12 As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jew or Greek, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

14 Now the body is not a single part, but many. 15 If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong any less to the body. 16 Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye,

where would the hearing be? If the whole body was hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you." 22 Indeed, the part of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, 23 and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, 24 whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. 26 If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.

27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. 28 Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts.

REFLECTION:

The Church is Jesus Christ present to the world. A human being makes use of his body to communicate and to be present to others. In somewhat the same way Jesus Christ uses his body, the Church, to be present in the world. All parts of our body add something to our presence. In my hand shaking the hand of another I am really present.

Each baptized person makes Jesus Christ present in the world. Each person does this with personal gifts of the Spirit. In all baptized people Jesus Christ becomes more clearly present and understandable. In their individual showing forth of the Lord the members of the community build up each other's faith. As a unified group the community becomes more closely conformed to Jesus. The community is bound together by the Spirit in Jesus for the glory of the Father.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

We currently see many divisions in the Body of Christ.

What can we do to heal the divisions so that the Body of Christ can be reunited?

Why are there different callings in the Body of Christ?

As a member of the Body of Christ, how do you see your role in this unity?

CHAPTER THIRTY THE CHURCH IS THE PEOPLE OF GOD

GOD CREATED A PEOPLE The image of the Church as the people of God comes from the Old Testament when God created a new people from among various wandering tribes. He Gn 12: 1-3 called Abraham to be the founder of the new people. Because of Abraham's willingness to answer the call, God promised him that his offspring would have a land of their own. When the people were sold into bondage in Egypt God sent Moses to lead them through the desert to the promised land. The people of Israel became God's people.

MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH ARE THE NEW PEOPLE OF GOD Jesus suffered, died, and rose from the dead in order to invite all people to join the new people of God---the Church. People of every nation, race, and color make up the Church. No one is excluded from membership. At 1 Cor 1: 1-3 the same time no one is worthy of membership. Because of his love for each human being, God calls each one of us to be members of the Risen Nation. No one can earn membership, it is a gift.

A PILGRIM PEOPLE Just as the people of Israel spent time in the desert on their way to the promised land, so too, we the members of the Church are a people making our way. We are a pilgrim people making our way to the promised land of the resurrection. Each day God invites us to come closer to him. He invites us to become better signs of his love for all the people in the world.

WE ARE A PEOPLE OF FAITH, LOVE, We, the people of God, are a people of faith. We must surrender our need to control our lives

and allow God AND HOPE alone to lead us. We are a people of love, because as individuals we must be at the service of one another in order to make the journey, and as a "people" we must be at the service of all people. We are a people of hope, because our goal is to be united with the Lord when he comes again.

DEMANDS OF THE JOURNEY As with any people on a journey we must live a simple life style. We use the things of creation to make Jesus present among the "people" and to make him present to the world. At times we find the journey harsh and difficult. And at times we fall by the wayside. Yet God always remains faithful to us. He forgives and heals us, and he send the Spirit to abide with us and guide us on our way.

EVERYONE IS ON THE ROAD TO RESURRECTION The image of the people of God would also include all those people who are not specifically Christian but who have said "yes" to God's invitation to friendship. These people are included in the larger Church. They too are on the road to the promised life of the resurrection.

OUR PURPOSE IS UNION WITH GOD The goal of our journey is union with God. The Spirit is constantly calling us to respond to God's love. The Spirit unifies the people who respond and prepares them for complete union with God when Jesus comes again.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER THIRTY

1 Peter 2, 9-10: You are God's people

Footnotes:

2, 9-10: The prerogatives of ancient Israel mentioned here are now more fully and fittingly applied to the Christian people: "a chosen race" indicates their divine election; "a royal priesthood" to serve and worship God in Christ, thus continuing the priestly functions of his life, passion, and resurrection; "a holy nation" reserved for God, a people he claims for his own in virtue of their baptism into his death and resurrection. This transcends all natural and national divisions and unites the people into one community to glorify the one who led them from the darkness of paganism to the light of

faith in Christ. From being “no people” deprived of all mercy, they have become the very people of God, the chosen recipients of his mercy.

1 Peter 2, 9-10

9 But you are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises” of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were “no people” but now you are God’s people; you “had not received mercy” but now you have received mercy.

REFLECTION:

Before the coming of Jesus the earth was full of many different people. There nothing to unite them. Jesus called all people to unite in worship of the Father. He called all people to look beyond their differences and see him as Lord. He called each person to share in God’s life through baptism. Those who answer this his call make up God’s own people. They are a people joined together in worship and service of God by the Spirit.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why are the people of God called a “pilgrim” people?

How would you characterize your current journey as a pilgrim person?

How does the idea of “the people of God” unite all members of the Church?

Pastoral Formation Program V.II
...Jesus stood up and exclaimed,
“Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink.”
 (John 7: 37-38)
VOLUME TWO

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Introduction: Volume II

This book introduces you to ministry in the church and the many aspects that make up ministry. It begins with the commitment to service to others. It continues on to deal with the involvement of the people as members of a faith centered community. In the first five chapters of this volume you will begin to come to grips with the notion of building a faith community and the many challenges that lie ahead as you work together with the people to develop a living, dynamic faith community.

The next twenty chapters are devoted to the “initiation sacraments” of the Church. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are fully developed for you. We come into the world needing to be touched by God’s grace. We need to be given a share in God’s life. Baptism and confirmation give us that new life. We become members of the Body of Christ, which is the Church. After praying over these chapters you will come a deeper understanding of these sacrament of initiation. Finally, we take a in depth view of the sacrament of the Eucharist. This completes the Christian initiation. Those who have been risen to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation participate with the whole community in the Lord’s own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist. The last five chapters devote themselves to the person/God Jesus.

Scripture is cited in each chapter in the margin headings. You should take the time to look these up and read them in light of the material being presented. Questions are provided for each chapter. You are asked to respond to the questions and begin to generate questions yourself. For years the Holy Scriptures have been studied and they continue to yield new ideas as we open ourselves to the holy Spirit. Complete your answers and email them to your faculty mentor. He/she will react to your responses and provide feedback in a timely manner. We hope you will find these materials to be challenging and rewarding as you start your studies. We ask for your feedback so that we can make these materials even better in the coming years. Enjoy your journey!

All scripture passages were taken from the New American Bible: The Catholic Study Bible, 1990 by Oxford University Press, Inc., 200 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

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CHAPTER ONE MINISTRY ROOTED IN SERVICE

SERVICE AND MISSION and

Lk 9: 1-6

serve is the

Mt 28: 16-20

Ministry in the church is rooted in service

mission. The person we are sent to

suffering Jesus and the person who commissions us in the Risen Jesus. On the cross Jesus taught us that he was from above and below. He joined the human and the divine in such a way that he made our becoming divine possible. On the horizontal plane of the cross the human Jesus embodies suffering humanity. On the vertical plane of the cross the divine Jesus has the authority to overcome suffering and despair. The continuous joining of humanity and divinity occurs when the Risen Jesus send men and women to touch his hurting Body.

JESUS NEEDS US

Mt 25: 31-46

When Jesus came among us he came as a child who needed everything. This helpless baby could do nothing for himself. He needed to be fed, changed, and touched. He learned human love only at the hands of another human being. Throughout the world people need to hear the Gospel message, they need to receive the food of eternal life, they need to experience love and compassion. When we minister to others we are ministering to Jesus who continues to need to be touched, cared for, and taught.

ONLY WE CAN TOUCH

HURTING PEOPLE

Mk 14: 32-42

When Jesus saved us from sin and death he did so

by suffering an unjust defeat on the cross. He was stripped of his clothing, ridiculed by the crowds, and in the end abandoned by his disciples. Terrified and questioning, he needed people to comfort him and be with him as he passed through death. We minister to the hurting Jesus. We touch people who

need forgiveness, physical healing, mental healing, healing from addictions, and healing of childhood physical and sexual abuse. We bring friendship to those who are abandoned and lonely, and courage to those who are afraid of death or overwhelmed with guilt. All suffering people are the hurting Jesus who needs to be touched, held, and comforted.

THE MINISTERS ARE MINISTERED TO

When a person prays for help or when a church community needs to get something done, Jesus answers by sending a human being to do the work. He doesn't appear in person. The only "Jesus" people see is the face of Jesus in the minister or person he sends. When we respond to Jesus in need we discover that we are ministered to as well. We become the helpless Jesus who needs to be touched and healed. We come to others needing to learn from them. Ministers and others must allow themselves to be touched and taught.

ONE WHO SERVES

The key to lay or ordained ministry is an attitude of service. To see ministry as a way to control, be in charge of, or dominate others is unacceptable and contrary to the teaching of the Lord. The model for ministry is Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. Taking the last place is the attitude of the minister or lay person towards those he/she serves.

WORKING TOGETHER IS ESSENTIAL 1 Cor 12: 12-27

Ministry is a team effort. Men and women, lay and ordained, are called and sent by Jesus to minister to his Body. No one person has all the skills necessary to provide for the needs of the community. In fact, everyone who is called is called because they have short-comings as well as gifts. In this way they are need to work together calling on the strengths of each person in the community. Working together to meet the needs of the hurting Jesus best testifies to the power of the Risen Lord.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER ONE

John 13: 1-17 Jesus washes the feet of the disciples

Footnotes:

13, 1-20: Washing of the disciples' feet. This episode occurs in John at the place of the narration of the institution of the Eucharist in the synoptics. It may be a dramatization of Lk 22, 27: "I am your servant." It is presented as a "model" (pattern) of the crucifixion. It symbolizes cleaning from sin by sacrificial death.

13, 1: Before the feast of Passover: this would be Thursday evening, before the day of preparation; in the synoptics, the Last Supper is a Passover meal taking place, in John's chronology, on Friday evening. To the end: or, completely.

13, 2: Induced: literally, "The devil put into the heart that Judas should hand him over."

13, 5: The act of washing another's feet was one that could not be required of the lowliest Jewish slave. It is an allusion to the humiliating death of the crucifixion.

13, 10: Bathed: many have suggested that this passage is a symbolic reference to baptism. The Greek root involved is used in baptismal contexts in 1 Cor 6,11, et al.

13, 16: Messenger: the Greek has *apostolos*, the only occurrence of the term in John. It is not used in the technical sense here.

John 13, 1-17

1 Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end. 2 The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper, 3 fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, 4 he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." 8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well." 10 Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all." 11 For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean." 12 So when he had washed their feet (and) put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? 13 You call me 'teacher' and 'master' and rightly so, for indeed I am. 14 If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. 15 I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. 16 Amen, Amen, I say to

you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it.

REFLECTION:

Jesus deliberately chose a model that caused his apostles to change the way they understood the role of teacher in Israel. He stripped the role of teacher of all the trappings of power and prestige. He demonstrated that to be a respected teacher meant getting one's hands dirty in the service of others.

In this passage Jesus teaches us that ministry demands that we identify the needs of the community and respond to those needs. It means that we have to be alert to the practical needs of real people. Jesus demands that his disciples follow his example. Blessed are those who understand his teaching about ministry and implement it. Blessed are those who are able and willing to meet the needs of others with joy and love in their hearts.

QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How do we convince people that they truly have gifts that need to be shared with others in the community?

What does it mean that Jesus uses a model for ministry?

How do you identify people who have the potential to be ministers?

CHAPTER TWO

MINISTRY IN ACTION

ORDER BEGINS IN THE
TRINITY
Jn 8: 28-29

The service of order is a necessary, foundational element in the Church. Order has its roots in the activity of the Trinity. In the inner life of the Trinity the Father's communication is the Son. The Spirit guarantees the truth of the communication. When God chooses to communicate outside the Trinity the communication is Jesus the Christ. The Spirit verifies this communication among the Father, Jesus, and us. The observable order is that the Father initiates the communication, the Son is the communication, and the Spirit verifies the communication.

THE HOLY SPIRIT
GUARANTEES ORDER
Jn 5: 30

Jesus was sent not to do his own will but to do the Father's will. The Incarnation, the hidden life, the ministry, and finally the crucifixion and death were all signs of the Son's obedience to the Father. At the resurrection Jesus sent the Spirit upon the disciples to guarantee that the order of the Father's will would continue to be done.

BISHOPS CALL AND
SEND IN THE NAME
OF JESUS
Jn 20: 19-23
Acts 15: 22-29

Jesus selected the Apostles and their successors, the bishops, to exercise the service of order in the Church. He guaranteed that the Spirit would be with them as they led the Church. The service of order is exercised by the bishops who possess the Spirit in such a way that when they speak in union the authentic voice of God is heard. The call to ministry comes from Jesus through these bishops. Those who respond are sent to do the work of the Father.

EACH MEMBER IS
RESPONSIBLE FOR
THE APOSTOLATE
Jn 15: 16-17

Every baptized person has a right and obligation to minister. No one can be a back pew Catholic. To be baptized is to become an apostle. Baptism establishes us as members of the Body of Christ. Each baptized person is responsible for the functioning of the Body. If the Body is functioning poorly or has needs that are not being met, it is not simply the responsibility of the ordained and commissioned lay leadership to do something about it. Each person in the Body must take responsibility to deal with the problems that arise.

MINISTRY OF TRUTH
AND ACTION
Eph 4:25

A person takes responsibility in two ways. First, every one in the community must speak his/her mind honestly, no matter the opposition. This is the ministry of "truth." It is the only way in which the Spirit continues to inform the Church. Secondly, each person must be available to do what he/she can to make the community function well. This ministry of "action" allows the Spirit to attend to the needs of the members of the Body of Christ.

**PUBLIC COMMITMENT
TO THE GOSPEL**

Confirmation commissions a Christian to be a witness to the Gospel. At the time of Confirmation an individual is called by the bishop and sent on a mission. He/she publicly receives the grace to activate the rights and obligations given at Baptism. At Confirmation each person accepts the responsibility and receives the grace to witness to the Gospel in “word and deed.” Even people who are unable to be physically active must cultivate a desire to serve in the apostolate. They bring the good news to others through prayer. To deny the gifts given to us by the Spirit is unacceptable. We must act on those gifts and use them to bring others to the Lord.

**THE BISHOP CALLS
US TO MINISTRY**

Some members of the community are called to assist the bishop in the work of caring for the physical and spiritual needs of the local Church. These public ministers can be lay or ordained. All are called by the Church in the person of the bishop. The bishop provides order among these ministers and they in turn provide order among those who exercise the ministry of witness by virtue of baptism and confirmation.

**THE BISHOP
PROVIDES ORDER**

Lay minister, deacons and priests are called by the bishop to do a particular service in the Church. There are no self-appointed ministers. All ministry is directed and coordinated by the bishop. The bishop must ensure that there is a good working relationship among the community of ministers, commissioned and ordained.

**OBEDIENCE TO
THE BISHOP**

Ministry is always difficult because we do not set our own goals and execute our own ideas. Just as Jesus came not to do his will but that of the Father, so too those who enter into formal ministry must be obedient to the bishop. After discharging our responsibility by representing clearly our prayerfully considered ideas and opinions we must

leave the final decision and direction to the bishop. Moreover, when we minister in public, it is necessary that the bishop's decisions become our own.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWO

Mark 14: 32-42 Jesus does the will of the Father

Footnotes:

14, 32-34: The disciples who had witnessed the raising to life of the daughter of Jairus (5, 37) and the transfiguration of their Master (9, 2) were now invited to Witness his degradations and agony and to watch and pray with him.

14, 36: Abba, Father: an Aramaic term, here also translated by Mark, Jesus' special way of addressing God with filial intimacy. The word "abba" seems not to have been used in earlier or contemporaneous Jewish sources to address God without some qualifier. Not what I will but what you will: note the complete obedient surrender of the human will of Jesus to the divine will of the Father. Jn 4, 324; 8, 29; Rom 5, 19; Phil 2, 8; Heb 5, 8.

14, 38: The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak: the spirit is drawn to what is good yet found in conflict with the flesh, inclined to sin; cf Ps 51, 7-12. Everyone is faced with this struggle, the full force of which Jesus accepted on our behalf and through his bitter passion and death, achieved the victory.

Mark 14, 32-42

32 Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 He took with him Peter, James and John, and began to be troubled and distressed. 34 Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch." 35 He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass by him; 36 he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will." 37 When he returned he found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38 Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." 39 Withdrawing again, he prayed, saying the same thing. 40 Then he returned once more and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open and did not know what to answer him. 41 He returned a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough. The hour has come. Behold, the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. 42 Get up, let us go. See, my betrayer is at hand."

REFLECTION:

Jesus struggled with the will of the Father. He asked that he not have to undergo death. He will to live and find another way to accomplish the work of God. Yet he chose to do the Father's will and not his own. Obedience is difficult because it means that our will must die so that God's will can rise. No one wants to die. We all want things to go our way. When we are faced with the crunch of obedience we have the same feelings that Jesus had in the garden. We too ask the Father that this might pass. Nevertheless, the only way to the resurrection is to submit to the death of obedience. Moreover, in the Church we believe that God's will is manifested through human beings---the bishops. Obedience demands faith that the Spirit guide these leaders who often seem as weak and fallible as we are. It is through this discipline of obedience that the Church as continued to grow and is able to bring the Good News to people all over the world.

QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is Jesus afraid of death?

Why is order a foundational element in the Church?

How do you talk to your people about obedience in the Church?

CHAPTER THREE PRINCIPLES FOR MINISTRY

TAKE TIME FOR SELF
Lk 11: 1-4

All of those who answer the call to ministry, ordained or non-ordained, must be aware of their own needs and be willing to address them. Ministers need to set time aside in their lives for play, family and friends, study, rest, and prayer. In you do not provide time for these types of activities you are headed for burnout. This does no one any good and in fact it will impact on your people in a negative way if you are unable to function because you did not take care of yourself.

BE GENEROUS

Undertaking the work of ministry demands generosity on the ministers' part. The needs of the local community are great and ministers will have to be generous with their time. The demands of the apostolate often arise at inconvenient moments and the demands are constant. The people who are served are in need on weekdays, weekends, and holidays. In fact during holiday seasons the needs of people may be more pressing.

HAVE SOMETHING TO GIVE

However, generosity means first of all that ministers have something to give. To tirelessly work for Christ, while romantic, is not very helpful to spiritual, physical, and mental health. If ministers are worn out by the apostolate they only succeed in destroying themselves. In the end those ministered to will not be helped and in fact may be abandoned. Pacing yourself is extremely important and must be a priority in your ministry.

KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS

1 Cor 9: 19-2
1 Cor 12: 27-30

One of the most difficult things for ministers to grips with is limitation. A single minister cannot come to everything for everyone. Shared ministry is the real key to meeting the needs of the people in the community, Each one of us are called to be members of the Body of Christ, the Church. By this commissioning we are all called to do our part for that Body.

TAKE TIME TO PLAY

Jn 12: 1-8

In order to generously serve people well, ministers need to take time for themselves in play, recreation, and time out from their duties. They need to allow their spirits to be re-created by regular time for rest and enjoyment. When they get caught up in doing things---implementing programs, being constantly on call, always saying "yes" to every request or at least feeling guilty if they say "no," then they have taken on too much responsibility for the apostolate. They have begun to rely on their own power rather than on God's power. It is of the utmost importance for ministers to be in touch with their limits.

TAKE TIME TO STUDY Generous service demands a commitment to study, Ministers need to keep up on developments in theology, scripture, liturgical changes, as well as their field of ministry. Scripture study is a lifetime assignment. Ministers owe it to the people they serve to be knowledgeable in their field and in the teaching of the Church. In today's Church to minister is to set aside time for regular study and continuing education.

TAKE TIME TO PRAY
Eph 6: 10-20 Being generous with Jesus in personal prayer is the single most important thing ministers can do for the apostolate. Ministry is rooted in prayer. Through prayer Jesus calls and shapes ministers. He gives them a vision of the apostolate and energizes them to do the work. He alone makes it possible for them, limited persons, to work with other limited persons in the apostolate. In prayer ministers will find the spirit of freedom which allows them to set limits so that they don't take too much responsibility for the work.

SEE A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR REGULARLY Along with prayer there is a need for good spiritual direction. Those in the active apostolate need to have someone they can talk to about their prayer life and their apostolic work. A spiritual director is one who is able to listen. He/she can help ministers listen to themselves and to God. A good director will invite them to reflect on their prayer and apostolic life so that the ministers can sort out their priorities and work in harmony with other ministers.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER THREE

Mark 1, 35-39: Jesus takes time for himself

Footnotes:

1, 35: Rising very early. As more demands were made on his time Jesus had to be sure he had necessary time for himself. He rose before the others in order to have some peace and quiet. And, Jesus put distance between himself and the people. He found that peace and quiet in deserted places. Finally, he prayed to

the Father. It is in prayer that he receives affirmation and strength. The Father's Spirit descends upon Jesus and comforts him.

1, 36-37: Simon pursued Jesus. The ministry was relentless. Upon waking Simon and the others rush to find Jesus because so many people are waiting for him. There is always more for Jesus to do than he can do.

Mark 1: 35-39

35 Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and those who were with him pursued him 37 and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you." 38 He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come." 39 So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

REFLECTION:

As Jesus faces the overwhelming task of ministering to the crowd of people that never seems to give him any peace he realizes that he must take time for himself. He needs quiet in his life. If he is to minister well he must take time away from the ministry. Jesus felt the limitation of not being able to heal everyone. He had limited time and human strength. He was not physically able to satisfy all the demands people placed on him. Accepting this limitation, he made sure that there was time for the Father to minister to him.

In ministry there is always more to be done than can be done. We feel the same limitations that Jesus felt. People have high expectations of us and this leads them to place unrealistic demands on us. Like Jesus, the answer to the problem is not to do more for people, rather it is to take time for study, prayer, and play. Being faithful to these things allows us to accomplish, with good quality, a great deal. It also allows Jesus to work through our limitations.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is it important for you to seek spiritual direction as you begin ministering?

What is a good balance among family, work, and ministry obligations?

Why is it important to understand that one cannot do it all?

CHAPTER FOUR WORKING TOGETHER

JESUS MINISTERS THROUGH THE COMMUNITY Eph 4: 1-16

Formal ministry in the Church is a call to work together. The contribution of each minister is important. Each person brings a unique insight and talent to the ministering community and enables that community to function. Nevertheless, it is equally important that each person consciously accepts the reality that the work belongs to Jesus who accomplishes the work through the whole community of ministers. Each opinion or insight, while valuable, is not the only one. When all the opinions are expressed, then the community under the leadership of the bishop takes responsibility for

the particular ministry. The work of the Body is more important than the work of the individual. There can be no room for competition and jealousy in the community of ministers.

EACH MEMBER MUST
CLAIM THE VISION
1 Thes 5: 14-25

Each member of the ministering community needs to take some responsibility for the vision of the parish, diocese, and national church and take initiative in the areas of ministry they are assigned to. Ideas, insights, and assessment of needs in the community arise in a person because of the activity of the Spirit. Only by presenting these to the community can they be acted upon. Only by presenting a plan of action can the community be served.

MINISTRY REQUIRES
DIRECTNESS AND
COURAGE
Eph 4: 25-32

When serving the community ministers need to be honest and direct with one another. They need to see themselves as gifts of the Spirit and as such they bring a unique insight to service of the members of the Body. Each person is required to courageously speak his/her mind so that the community can have the benefit of the Spirit giving direction. At the same time each member must see that his/her opinion is one among many. For true discernment to take place all of the opinions must be stated even though no one of them may prevail.

MINISTRY CAN MEAN
WORKING WITH
THOSE WE DISLIKE
Col 3: 12-17

Ministry involves rubbing shoulders with many different people. Some colleagues will be liked and some will be disliked. Ministers have to make a sincere effort to work together. They need to learn to interpret the actions and words of others in the best possible light. When ministers have been hurt they need to forgive. When they have hurt others they need to seek forgiveness.

MINISTERS ARE
CALLED TO
ACCEPT THEIR
IMPERFECTIONS

People who are called to ministry are made imperfect on purpose. They have been created in such a way that they need God and need the other members of the community. If they were perfect they would be “gods” unto themselves and they would not need anyone. Those who are called to

ministry are called because they are imperfect and will not be able to do the ministry by themselves. Imperfect people working together are a powerful sign of God's power.

CALLED TO SERVE

Jn 13: 12-16

Lk 17: 7-10

The ministers' attitude must be that of Jesus as he washed the feet of his apostles at the Last Supper. Ministers are called to be servants. They do the Lord's bidding and serve the needs of their brothers and sisters. Their reward as servants is to have done what was expected of them.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER FOUR

Luke 10, 1-12; 17-20: Jesus sends the seventy-two

Footnotes:

10, 1-12: Only the Gospel of Luke contains two episodes in which Jesus sends out his followers on a mission; the first (9, 1-6) is based on the mission in Mk 6, 6b-13 and recounts the sending out of the Twelve; here in vv 1-12 a similar report based on Q becomes the sending out of seventy-two in this gospel. The episode continues the theme of Jesus preparing witnesses to himself and his ministry. These witnesses include not only the Twelve but also the seventy-two who may represent the Christian mission in Luke's own day. Note that the instructions given to the Twelve and to the seventy-two are similar and that what is said to the seventy-two in v 4 is directed to the Twelve in 22, 35.

10, 1: Seventy-two: important representatives of the Alexandrian and Caesarean text types read "seventh," while other important Alexandrian texts and Western readings have "seventy-two."

10, 4: Carry no money bag...greet no one along the way: because of the urgency of the mission and the singlemindedness required of missionaries, attachment to material possessions should be avoided and even customary greetings should not distract from the fulfillment of the task.

10, 5: First say 'Peace to this household:' see the notes on Lk 2, 14 and Mt 10,13.

10, 6: A peaceful person: literally, "a son of peace."

10, 18: I have observed Satan fall like lightning: the effect of the mission of the

seventy-two is characterized by the Lucan Jesus as a symbolic fall of Satan. As the kingdom of God is gradually being established, evil in all its forms is being defeated; the dominion of Satan over humanity is at an end.

Luke 10: 1-12; 17-20

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. 2 He said to them, “The Harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. 3 Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. 4 Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. 5 Into whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this household.’ 6 If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. 7 Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves his payment. Do not move about from one house to another. 8 Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is sent before you, 9 cure the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God is at hand for you.’ 10 Whatever town you enter and do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, 11 ‘The dust of your town clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you.’ Yet know this: the kingdom God is at hand. 12 I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than that town.

17The seventy-two returned rejoicing, and said, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name.” 18 Jesus said, “I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky. 19 Behold, I have given you the power ‘to tread upon serpents’ and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you. 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

REFLECTION:

Jesus sends the disciples to declare that the Kingdom of God is at hand. He sends them in pairs with the instruction to take nothing of their own. He wants them to experience his power working through them. When they return they rejoice in the fact that they cast out evil spirits and healed people. Jesus is quick to point out that he alone has the power to do things and they would not have been successful unless his power had been with them.

All ministers are called and sent by the Risen Jesus in the person of the bishop. Their mission is to bring the good news to the world. They must be sure that their message is as free as possible of their own cultural trappings---in other words---they should bring nothing with them but the Gospel. They must present the message in a gentle and inviting way allowing the power of Jesus to do the work of conversion.

A group of ministers working together best reflects the ministry of the early Church. Ministers are able to support one another in their life of prayer and evangelization. And they are able to be more effective since no one person has all the abilities to meet the needs of the community.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit your response to one page per question).

Why are personal imperfections as important as abilities to recognize in oneself?

What are the obstacles of working together in ministry?

How would you envision team ministry working in your faith community?

CHAPTER FIVE PURPOSE OF MINISTRY

MINISTERS ANNOUNCE
THE VICTORY
Mt 28: 16-20

The twofold purpose of ministry is to announce the good news of Christ's victorious resurrection and to apply that victory to the human race. Through ministers the Risen Christ continues to announce the kingdom of God and implement it through the Church. It is the kingdom that breathes life into the Church and gives direction to the kingdom. He continues to care for and interact with human beings through the sacraments. The ordained ministers of the Church, and by extension the lay ministers, make it possible for the work of the kingdom to

continue. Through these people the Risen humanity of Jesus touches us. At their hands Jesus brings healing and forgiveness, he frees captives and preaches the good news to the poor. In the ministers of the Church Jesus remains with us until he comes again.

HOPE IS THE SOURCE
OF MINISTRY
Pt 3: 13-17

Our ministry is a labor of hope. Since it is not possible for us to transform our lives or to transform the creation around us we have to rely on the promise of the Risen Christ. Our hope is that Jesus will work the necessary change in us so that can become free and resurrected persons. We hope that through us Jesus will touch the creation and make all things new. This takes time. Jesus will bring about the fullness of the kingdom in his own time and under his own terms. Our part is to confidently trust that the Spirit of the resurrection is at work in us and in creation even though Jesus' plan unfolds in ways we do not expect.

RESUSCITATION IS
NOT THE
RESURRECTION

The resurrection is the good news of the kingdom. The glory and promise of the resurrection is that Jesus was not merely resuscitated; he was transformed. When the doctors bring in an electric shock machine and jolt the heart to see if they can get it started again. If they succeed they bring the person back to life. The person is resuscitated. He/she can once again breathe and the heart can function without the use of a machine. We can say that the person died and came back to life. But we would never say that the person is living a risen life.

LAZARUS HAD TO DIE

When Jesus went to visit Lazarus and found him dead in the tomb after four days he was sad and he prayed to his Father. Then Jesus said to Lazarus, "Rise up." Although Lazarus came back from the dead he did not live a risen life. Jesus resuscitated him. He gave him breath and heartbeat so that he could continue to live his earthly life. Lazarus had to die again.

JESUS CONQUERED
DEATH

1 Cor 15: 1-8

When Jesus died his heart stopped beating and he stopped breathing. His body was placed in a tomb and remained there for three days. On the third day he was raised from the dead by the Father. But Jesus was raised to the life of the resurrection. By obediently dying he conquered death for everyone. Death no longer had power over him. He was raised to new life. His body was changed. It had new properties. Jesus could appear and disappear. He could walk through walls. He ate with his disciples and they recognized him after he rose from the dead. His material risen body was like his earthly body yet it was no longer bound by our rules of space and time. It was no longer limited.

WE WILL BE RISEN
FLESH

1 Cor 15: 20-28

1 Cor 15: 35-44

When Jesus was raised from the dead he was given complete authority to implement the kingdom on earth. The power of evil, death, and sin would not be able to stand against his authority. Jesus sent his Spirit of freedom into the hearts of people to invite them to share in his resurrection. His bodily resurrection was a pledge that we too would rise from the dead. Our resurrection will not be a resuscitation. We will not be floating spirits but risen flesh. Jesus' pledge is that we will be changed into his likeness. We will not be bound by the limits of space and time nor will we be terrorized by sin and death. We will see God and our family and friends face to face.

WE WILL ENJOY THE
DIRECT VISION OF
GOD

Ps 42: 1-2

Ps 63: 1-6

Within each one of us there is a desire to know God and to be loved by God. This desire cannot be fulfilled by anything in this life. When we rise from dead we will enjoy a direct vision of God. Our the desire to know God will be satisfied and we will experience God's great love for us. In our new life we will learn more and more about God. We will grow in our love for God and for our risen brothers and sisters. This direct vision of God is called the Beatific Vision.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER FIVE

Matthew 13, 24-50: Jesus teaches about the kingdom of heaven

Footnotes:

13, 24-30: This parable is peculiar to Matthew. The comparison in v 24 does not mean that the “kingdom of heaven may be likened” simply to the person in question but to the situation narrated in the whole story. The refusal of the householder to allow his slaves to separate “the wheat” from “the weeds” while they are still growing is a warning to the disciples not to attempt to anticipate the final judgment of God by a definitive exclusion of sinners from the kingdom. In its present stage it is composed of the good and the bad. The judgment of God alone will eliminate the sinful. Until then there must be patience and the preaching of repentance.

13, 25: Weeds...darnel, a poisonous weed that in its first stage of growth resembles wheat.

13, 30: Harvest...a common biblical metaphor for the time of God’s judgment.

13, 31-33: See Mk 4, 30-32; Lk 13, 18-21. The parables of the mustard seed and the yeast illustrate the same point: the amazing contrast between the small beginnings of the kingdom and its marvelous expansion.

13, 32: See Dn 4, 7-9, 17-19 where the birds nesting in the tree represent the people of Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom.

13, 33: Except in this Q parable and in 16, 12, “yeast” (for leaven) is, in New Testament usage, a symbol of corruption (see 16, 6-11; Mk 8, 15; Lk 12, 1; 1 Cor 5, 6-8; Gal 5, 9). Three measures...an enormous amount, enough to feed a hundred people. The exaggeration of this element of the parable points to the greatness of the Kingdom’s effect.

13, 36: Dismissing the crowd...the return of Jesus to the house marks a break with the crowds, who represent unbelieving Israel. From now on his attention is directed more and more to his disciples and to their instruction. The rest of the discourse is addressed to them alone.

13, 44-50 The first two of the last three parables of the discourse have the same point. The person who finds buried “treasure” and the “merchant” who finds a “pearl of great price” sell all that they have to acquire these finds; similarly, the one who understand the supreme value of the kingdom gives up whatever he

must to obtain it. The “joy” with which this done is made explicit in the first parable, but it may be presumed in the second also. The concluding parable of the fishnet resembles the explanation of the parable of the weeds with its stress upon the final exclusion of evil persons from the kingdom.

Matthew 13: 24-50

24 He proposed another parable to them. The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed a seed in his field. 25 While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. 26 When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. 27 The slaves of the householder came to him and said, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field?’ 28 He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ His slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ 29 He replied, ‘No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. 30 Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, “First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.”’

31 He proposed another parable to them. “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. 32 It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the ‘birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.’ ”

33 He spoke to them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened.”

34 All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables. He spoke to them Only in parables, 35 to fulfill what had been said through the prophet:

“I will open my mouth in parables,
I will announce what has lain hidden from
the foundation (of the world).”

36 Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples approached him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” 37 He said in reply, “He who sows good seed is the Son of Man, 38 the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. 40 Just as weeds are collected and burned (up) with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears ought to hear. 44 ”The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and

hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys the field. 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. 46 When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it. 47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. 48 When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. 49 Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into a fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

REFLECTION:

The kingdom of heaven is a mystery. In order to understand this mystery we must listen in faith to the words of Jesus. The parables he spoke to the people were lessons we all need to heed. He wanted them to understand what his message is and used this way to get the message to the people, including the disciples. By praying we can come to recognize the presence of God's kingdom in our hearts. We will understand what Jesus does for us and we will be filled with the desire to work for his kingdom.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why did Jesus use parables to get his message across to the people and disciples?

How do we learn about the kingdom of heaven?

How will you use these parables in your ministry?

CHAPTER SIX BAPTISM

THROUGH BAPTISM WE
BECOME MEMBERS OF
THE CHURCH
Eph 2: 19-22

Baptism with water is the sign of the Spirit's activity. The Risen Jesus in the Church chose water as a sign because it is so much a part of our daily lives. We are born again in the waters of Baptism. Through this sacrament Jesus selects us to be members of his Body-the Church. We enter into a community of people chosen by Jesus who apostolate is to teach one another about God by sharing the gift of ourselves. In Baptism Jesus chooses us to be a gift of the Spirit to our brothers and sisters because each one of us by sharing

ourselves can reveal something about God that cannot be revealed by anyone else.

THE STARTING POINT
FOR LIFE
Jn 17: 22-24

Baptism provides us with a fresh starting point in life. We become the favored child of God. We have the right to crawl in his lap and say the familiar form of father---“abba.” Sharing the life of the Spirit makes us brothers and sisters of Jesus. Through baptism Jesus selects us to be his friends. We become his equal before “our” Father.

WE ARE
RESURRECTED
Col 2: 122
Cor 5: 17-21

With the waters of baptism Jesus pours the Spirit of the resurrection into our hearts. He plants in us the seeds of eternal life. We grow to understand that our purpose is to be with him forever. Through the Spirit of the resurrection Jesus frees our hearts from fear, worry, doubt, and despair. The Spirit heals and strengthens us. We understand that we can overcome all things with the help of him who strengthens us. We are becoming resurrected persons.

BAPTISM OF DESIRE
BAPTISM OF BLOOD

Besides sacramental baptism there are two other types of baptism. The Church recognizes baptism of desire and baptism of blood. In the early Church some candidates for baptism died before they were able to receive the baptism of water. These people had the desire for baptism. This was enough for them to be received into friendship with God. The other type of baptism, baptism of blood, was recognized by the early Church when some people confessed “Jesus as Lord” and were martyred before they could be baptized with water. Their confession of Jesus and generous acceptance of death for his name gave them friendship with God.

WE ARE BAPTIZED
EVERY DAY
2 Cor 4:16

Although our baptism occurs on a certain day, that event only represents the beginning of our life of baptism. We are baptized every day in the water of the Spirit. Holy water in Church and at home reminds us of the need for daily renewal of our baptism and celebration of our new resurrected life as a favored child of God.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER SIX

Titus 3, 1-8: God invites us to a new way of living.

Footnotes;

3, 1-8: The list of Christian duties continues from 2, 9-10, undergirded again in 2, 11-13 by appeal to what God in Christ has done (4-7; cf 2, 11-14) The spiritual renewal of the Cretans, signified in God's merciful gift of baptism (4-7), should be reflected in their improved attitude toward civil authority and in their Christian relationship with all (1-3).

3, 1: Magistrates and authorities...some interpreters understand these terms as referring to the principalities and powers of the heavenly hierarchy... To be open to every good enterprise: this implies being good citizens. It could also be translated "ready to do every sort of good work" (as Christians); cf 14.

Titus 3: 1-8

1 Remind them to be under the control of magistrates and authorities, to be obedient, to be open to every good enterprise. 2 They are to slander no one, to be peaceable, considerate, exercising all graciousness toward everyone. 3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, deluded, slaves to various desires and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful ourselves and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared, 5 not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, 6 whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our savior, 7 so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. 8 This saying is trustworthy.

REFLECTION:

Baptism marks a turning point in our lives. It establishes a new relationship between us and God. We receive his love into our hearts. This new relationship

shows up in the way we live our lives. Foolishness, envy, hatred, and slavery to evil desires are not fitting in the life of an adopted child of God. Our lives must grow each day in gentleness, kindness, and love. Our love of God and neighbors must increase. And we must devote ourselves to constant prayer asking God for the support and direction we need to carry out our mission of being a disciple of the Lord.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is baptism called a “bath of rebirth?”

In what ways is baptism just a beginning for each of us?

What did the scripture reading say to you?

CHAPTER SEVEN BAPTISM IS A TIME FOR JOY

BAPTISM IS A TIME
FOR JOY
Phil 4: 4-9

A baptism is a joyful occasion for all the members of the Church. It is a time for celebration. The community welcomes a new member. The person to be baptized expresses, through parents and godparents, the desire to turn his/her life over to the Lord. He/she comes to the Christian community and asks for a new birth. The ministers of baptism dress in brightly colored vestments in order to show the joy of the community in receiving a new follower of Christ.

PRIESTS AND
DEACONS

ADMINISTER THE
SACRAMENT
Acts 8: 26-38

The priest or deacon is the usual minister of the sacrament of baptism. They are the official ministers and they are the sign of Jesus Christ present among the people. Jesus invites the person to accept a life of friendship with God. When the person is baptized Jesus removes sin and begins to heal the effects of original sin. He/she welcomes a new brother or sister into the community of believers.

GOD'S LOVE
DEMANDS A
PERSONAL
RESPONSE

Faith is necessary for baptism. Simply going through the rite of baptism is not enough to establish friendship with God. The person receiving baptism needs to believe in God and have a desire to serve the Lord. He/she is freely responding to God's love. Each person has to choose to become a member of the community of believers.

THE PARENTS AND
GODPARENTS
EXPRESS
THE CHILD'S
DESIRE FOR
BAPTISM

Lk 2: 22-38

A child is born into a family of believers. He/she is presented to the Church for baptism by the family so that he/she may become a believing Christian. The child cannot at the moment of baptism say "yes" to God's invitation of friendship. The parents and godparents in the place of the child declare their own faith and express the child's desire for baptism and friendship with God. Their testimony of faith supplies for the faith of the child.

JESUS WANTS
EVERYONE TO
BE SAVED
1 Tim 2: 1-6
Acts 10: 9-36

Jesus died and rose from the dead so that everyone could be free from sin and death. When a child is baptized, the community of believers states publicly that it is the will of God that this child should be saved from sin and death. The child receives the seeds of the resurrection. He/she enters into a relationship with God and with the members of the community. As the child grows he/she will be given the chance to deepen that relationship with Jesus and the members of the Church.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER SEVEN

John 3, 1-6: Baptism gives new life

Footnotes:

3, 1: A ruler of the Jews: most likely a member of the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin.

3, 3: Born: see the note on 1, 13. From above: the Greek adverb *anothen* means both “from above” and “again.” Jesus means “from above” (see 31), but Nicodemus misunderstands it as “again.” This misunderstanding serves as a springboard for further instruction.

3, 5: Born of water and spirit: In order to united to God we must be baptized with water and receive the Spirit into our hearts. Christians live their lives under the guidance of the Spirit.

John 3: 1-6

1 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him.” 3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being from above. 4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can a person once grown old be born again?” Surely he cannot reenter his mother’s womb and be born again, can he?” 5 Jesus answered, “Amen amen, say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and spirit. 6 What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit.

REFLECTION:

Jesus Christ made a difference in human life. He freed us from being slaves to sin. In order to live the new life that Jesus gives us we must be born again. Baptism gives us that new birth. It gives us the gift of the Spirit who is the source of our new life. Through baptism we become children of God. We become new persons. When we cooperate with the Spirit we can be free from selfishness and fear. And, we become members of a faith community who have pledged to help us on our faith journey.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is baptism compared to being born?

Why is the community present at a baptism?

What needs to be done to prepare a community for its role in supporting newly baptized members?

CHAPTER EIGHT WE BECOME MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

PARENTS TEACH
THE FAITH
Eph 6: 1-4
1 Sam 3: 1-9

When parents bring a child to Church for baptism the minister reminds them of their duty to teach the Catholic faith. They will need to teach the faith by word and example. If a child is to become a follower of Jesus, he/she must see the living faith in his/her parents. Parents are the first and most important teachers of their children.

GODPARENTS MUST
TEACH THE FAITH
AND HELP THE
CHILD TO GROW

Parents select godparents from among their friends and relatives. At least one of the godparents must be Catholic. The godparents have the duty to help teach the child the faith both by word and example. If the parents should die, the godparents have the responsibility to see that the child is instructed in the faith. They have a duty to pray for the child and give counsel as he/she grows up. Through their love and care the godparents teach the child that he/she is loved and accepted by the community.

THE CHILD BECOMES
A MEMBER OF THE
FAITH COMMUNITY
Lk 8: 19-21
Heb 2: 10-13

During baptism ceremony the godparents represent other members of the community. The child is baptized into the community united in faith. The child becomes a new brother or sister in Christ. All members of the local Church share in the duty of bringing up their new brother or sister as a Christian.

BAPTISM IS GIVEN
DURING THE
EUCCHARIST
1 Jn 5: 5-8

When possible baptism should be celebrated during the Eucharist. This will help demonstrate to all the members of the community that they have an obligation to teach about Jesus. At the Eucharist the local Church celebrates the death and resurrection of Jesus. In baptism the child will die and be born again into the life of the Risen Lord. He/she will become a member of the worshipping community. Since the Eucharist is the center and foundation of each community of faith, Baptism, which gives new life and membership, should be celebrated while the Church is gathered to proclaim the source of its life and unity---the death and resurrection of Jesus.

THE CHILD IS SET
APART
Jer 1: 4-5

After the parents and godparents have publicly accepted their responsibilities to teach the child the faith by word and example, the minister officially welcomes the child into the community of believers. He/she makes the sign of the cross on the child's forehead and invites the parents and godparents to do the same. This is a sign that the child is saved by Jesus' death and resurrection. He/she is claimed by

Jesus and his Church and set apart as a candidate for baptism.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER EIGHT

Matthew 28, 18-20: Baptism is for all people

Footnotes:

28, 18: All power...me: the Greek word here translated "power" is the same as that found in the LXX translation of Dn7, 13-14, where one "like a son of man" is given "power" and an everlasting kingdom by God. The risen Jesus here claims universal power, i.e., in heave and on earth.

28, 19: Therefore: since universal power belongs to the risen Jesus (18), he gives the eleven a mission that is universal. They are to "make disciples of all nations." While "all nations" is understood by some scholars as referring only to "all Gentiles," it is probable that it included the Jews as well. Baptizing them: baptism is the means of entrance into the community of the risen One, the Church. In the name of the Father...holy Spirit: this is perhaps the clearest expression in the New Testament of Trinitarian belief. It may have been the baptismal formula of Matthew's church, but primarily it designates the effect of baptism, the union of the one baptized with the Father, Son, and Spirit.

28, 20: All that I have commanded you: the moral teaching found in this gospel, preeminently that of the Sermon on the Mount (chs 5-7). The commandments of Jesus are the standard of Christian conduct, not the Mosaic law as such, even though some of the Mosaic commandments have now been invested with the authority of Jesus. Behold, I am with you always: the promise of Jesus' real though invisible presence echoes the name of Emmanuel given to him in the infancy narrative.

Matthew 28: 18-20

18 Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

REFELCTION:

From the earliest days the Church has baptized in Jesus' name. Those who believe the good news about Jesus received baptism. By doing so publicly they became a disciple of Jesus. Each one of us was baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Spirit. We share in the life of the Trinity and we form the Body of Christ on earth. The Church does not baptize on its own. The Risen Lord is present in the community of those who believe. It is his action that brings us into his body and lets us participate in his risen life.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How does the community prepare itself with the parents to be the teachers of those children baptized into the faith community?

Why is it important that baptism be done at the Eucharist?

What kind of preparation would you provide to the parents, godparents, and the community prior to a baptism?

CHAPTER NINE
PRAYERS IN THE CEREMONY OF BAPTISM

THE GOSPEL AND HOMILY

After the child has been received into the community the priest or deacon proclaims a passage from the Gospel. This passage usually refers to baptism. The minister explains the scripture and gives a brief homily on baptism. In this part of the ceremony the members of the community are instructed and encouraged by the Word of God. It is a good time to remind people that their baptism is going on today. Each day Jesus through the Scriptures invites them to a deeper relationship. His invitation demands a response.

PRAYER OF THE
FAITHFUL
Jn 17: 20-21

The minister asks the people present to pray for the child. All the members of the community are responsible for the child's instruction and maturity in faith. The community prays that the child will receive the new life of the Spirit. It prays for the parents and godparents that they will have the strength and courage to teach the child the faith by word and example. And it prays for the child's family that the Lord will protect and bless them with his love.

LITANY OF THE SAINTS
Rev 7: 9-10

After the members of the community who are present have prayed for the child the minister leads the community in calling upon the members of the community who have died to pray for the child. The community who has real power through their prayers. They are concerned and caring members of the Church who are with the Lord. It is good that the community takes time to seek their support on behalf of the newly baptized.

THE POWER OF EVIL AND
THE KINGDOM OF GOD
ARE IN CONFLICT

Lk 10: 17-20

Eph 6: 10-17

After the sin of the first ancestors Satan had his way on earth. He established his own kingdom. When a person is born he/she is born into a world which is strongly influenced by a history of sin and the power of evil. The struggle between the power of evil and the Kingdom of God is still going on and it will go on till the end of time.

THE PRAYER OF
EXORCISM

Col 2: 9-15

Satan and the power of evil have been conquered once and for all. Jesus, through his cross and resurrection, has the final victory over Satan. Through baptism a child begins to share in this victory of the Risen Lord. He/she shares in Jesus' power over evil. The priest or deacon says a prayer over the child which claims him/her for the Kingdom of God. It is the prayer of the community that the child will be protected from all harm.

OIL OF CATECHUMENS

Ps 133

Immediately after the prayer of exorcism the minister anoints the child on the chest with the oil

of catechumens. "Catechumen" is the name used by the early Church for those people who had asked for baptism and were being instructed in the faith. The oil is used to mark the candidate as one preparing for baptism.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER NINE

John 7, 37-39: Jesus offers life-giving water

7, 37-39: Promise of living water through the Spirit.

7, 38: Living water...not an exact quotation from any Old Testament passage; in the gospel context the gift of the Spirit is meant; cf 3, 5. From within him...either Jesus or the believer; if Jesus, it continues the Jesus-Moses motif (water from the rock, Ex 17, 6; Nm 20, 11) as well as Jesus as the new temple (cf Ez 47, 1). Grammatically it goes better with the believer.

7, 39: No Spirit yet...in this gospel, the sending of the Spirit cannot take place until Jesus' glorification through his death, resurrection, and ascension; cf 20, 22.
John 7: 37-39

37 On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and exclaimed, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: 'Rivers of living water will flow from within him.' " 39 He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive. There was, of course, no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

REFLECTION:

In his preaching Jesus used many different words to describe what he is trying to do for us. "Living water" or "life-giving water" is one way of describing the gift Jesus gives the believer. He gives the believer a new way of living. He offers a life free from sin and death. This is a life of love guided and strengthened by the Spirit. This new life comes to the Christian in the water of baptism. The water of baptism is living water because through it the Spirit comes to live within the Christian. The Spirit makes each baptized person a child of the Father.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why does Jesus compare himself to water?

Why is there both a prayer of the faithful and a litany of the saints at a baptism?

What preparation must be made to instruct the faithful of their responsibilities to the newly baptized child/person?

CHAPTER TEN
LIFE GIVING WATER

THE WATERS OF
BAPTISM CLEANSE
SIN
Kings 5: 1-15

The minister leads or carries the child to the place where the baptism will take place. FROM He/she prays a blessing over the water. This blessed water is the sign of the sacrament. It is the sign of the Spirit's activity. It is the sign of baptism because it is so much a part of our daily lives. We use it to cleanse and purify ourselves and things around us. The cleansing waters of baptism wash away all sin. They are a bath that heals the effects of original sin. They make it possible for us to experience ourselves as healed, forgiven, and loved.

THE WATERS OF
BAPTISM GIVE NEW
LIFE
Rev. 22: 1-2

give
lives.
spirits.
God. We
unconditional love as
our new life in
brothers and sisters of
before the Father.

Water is the source of life.
All the communities are built around supplies of water. Without it people die and towns and cities blow away. The water of baptism give new life to our spirits. They us a wonderful new starting point for our The life of God, the Spirit, waters our We are given a relationship with each experience God's favored children. We take up the Trinity. We become Jesus---equal to him

IN BAPTISM WE DIE
TO SELFISHNESS
AND RISE IN
JESUS CHRIST

water and
lives. Baptism
the resurrection. We take
over evil, sin, and death.
destroy our deep seated
able to change and be
constructing security for

Water can destroy as well as give life. It has tremendous force. When we are near water we have a fear of it for we suspect that it can kill us. In baptism we are put to death with Jesus. We are destroyed by the given a new life that Jesus makes us people of part in Jesus' victory The waters of baptism selfishness. We are free of the need of ourselves.

WE LIVE IN THE
TIME OF ABUNDANT
WATER
Ezk 47: 1-12

and the
nature
poured out in
the life-giving
God surrounds

Jesus chose water as the human sign of union with God because water covers most of the Earth. The time of abundant water is the time of the pouring out of the Spirit. When the land has plenty of water, the flowers grow, the trees bear fruit, Crops are full. Just as water is abundant in so too the water of the Spirit has been abundance in our time. The Spirit is water that makes all things new.

us in the love of his Spirit. God desires that every man and woman become part of the this family---the people of the resurrection.

THE MINISTER CALLS
THE SPIRIT UPON
WATER
Gn 1: 1-2

The priest or deacon prays a blessing over the water and calls upon the Spirit to stir and fill it with the power of God's new life. While praying the blessing, the minister and others place their hands in the water as a sign of the Spirit's activity.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPER TEN

Mark 1, 9-11: The baptism of Jesus

Footnotes:

1, 8-9: Through the life-giving baptism with the holy Spirit (8), Jesus will create a new people of God. But first he identifies himself with the people of Israel in submitting to John's baptism of repentance and in bearing on their behalf the burden of God's decisive judgment (9; cf4). As in the desert of Sinai, so here in the wilderness of Judea, Israel's sonship with God is to be renewed.

1, 10-11: "He saw the heavens...and the Spirit...upon him: indicating divine intervention in fulfillment of promise. Here the descent of the Spirit on Jesus is meant, anointing him for his ministry; "A voice....with you I am well pleased:" God's acknowledgement of Jesus as his unique Son, the object of his love. His approval of Jesus is the assurance that Jesus will fulfill his messianic mission of salvation.

Mark 1: 9-11

9 It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. 10 On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. 11 And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

REFLECTION:

The baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of his public life. His baptism tells us something about his ministry. He is selected by the Father to be the one-sent-by-God-to-save-the-people. In baptism he anoints us with the gift of the Spirit. Through the waters of baptism we begin our lives as God's children. Each day the continuing grace of baptism changes us. We become more like him. Through the hard work of his preaching, death, and resurrection Jesus makes it possible for us to overcome the power of selfishness in our hearts.

Jesus received baptism from John in order to willingly join himself to us in our sinful condition. He took our deep-seated selfishness and sin upon himself so that he could make it possible for us to change. When we cooperate each day with the Spirit of baptism we are changed into generous people of the resurrection.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why did Jesus allow himself to be baptized by John?

How did that action impact humanity?

How did the Father affirm Jesus and how does God affirm us?

CHAPTER ELEVEN
WE ARE CALLED TO THE WATER OF LIFE

BAPTISMAL
PROMISES

After the blessing of the baptismal water, the parents, godparents, and all the members of the community are asked to renew the baptismal promises they made many years ago. These promises are made on behalf of the child. They are divided into two sets of three questions. The first set of questions asks us to make a break with our old lives. The second set asks us to publicly testify to our faith.

BREAK WITH SINFUL
PAST
1 Cor 5: 6-8

Baptism demands a change in our way of life. When we come to baptism, we have to put off the old life of sin and put on the new life of Jesus. In this part of the ceremony we are asked to make a complete break with our lives of sin and with Satan. Each person publicly says that he/she wants to change. He/she wants to break away from sin.

PROFESSION
OF FAITH

In the second set of questions the parents, godparents, and people publicly profess their faith. The questions come from the Apostles' Creed. By saying "yes" to the questions, the community testifies that they want to live their lives for Jesus. It is a public statement of what they believe. The priest or deacon declares that this is the faith of the Church and the members of the community are proud to believe it. Then everyone present says "amen" to this statement.

GOD USED WATER TO
SAVE HIS PEOPLE

The Old Testament tells of several times when God used water to save his people. He made a passageway through the Red Sea so that his people could get away from the Egyptians (Ex 14: 21-31). As the people wandered through the desert, he gave them water from a rock (Ex 17: 1-7). Later in Israel's history, the prophets described the blessings

of God's final deliverance as abundant water (Is 41: 17-20);

Ezk 47: 1-9). When Jesus came, he spoke of giving people "living water" which is the gift of the Spirit (Jn 4:10; 7: 37-38). Today god continues to act with power through the waters of baptism.

THE CHILD IS BAPTIZED WITH WATER & IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT

After the profession of faith, the minister asks the parents again if they want the child to be baptized. When they say "yes" the minister begins the baptism. He/she takes water and baptizes the child saying, "N..., I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The minister pours the water over the head of the child as he says each name. The is done in a total immersion pool if that is used in the ceremony,

A CHRISTIAN NAME IS GIVEN AS A SIGN THAT THE CHILD BELONGS TO GOD
Mt 16: 13-20

The priest addresses the child with his/her new Christian name. In the scripture, a new name is given to Abram when he accepts God's invitation to be the father of Israel. This marked a change in Abram. He now belonged to the Lord. In baptism the child receives a name and is claimed by God. He/she is made a new creation and is given a new purpose in life.

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT IS FOREVER

We are baptized in the name of the Father because it is through baptism that we become children of God. We are baptized in the name of the Son because in baptism we die and rise with Jesus. We are baptized in the name of the Spirit because in baptism the Spirit testifies in us and in God that our new relationship with God is true. Through baptism we enter into a relationship with God the Father, Son and Spirit. This relationship is forever.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER ELEVEN

Roman 6, 1-5: We die and rise with Christ

Footnotes:

6, 1-11: To defend the gospel against the charge that it promotes moral laxity (cf 3, 5-8), Paul expresses himself in the typical style of spirited diatribe. God's display of generosity or grace is not evoked by sin but, as stated in 5, 8, is the expression of God's love, and this love pledges eternal life to all believers (5, 21). Paul views the present conduct of the believers from the perspective of God's completed salvation when the body is resurrected and directed totally by the holy Spirit. Through baptism believers share the death of Christ and thereby escape from the grip of sin. Through the resurrection of Christ the power to live anew becomes reality for them, but the fullness of participation in Christ's resurrection still lies in the future. But life that is lived in dedication to God now is part and parcel of that future. Hence anyone who sincerely claims to be interested in that future will scarcely be able to say, "Let us sin so that grace may prosper."

6, 1-5: "His death"... sin is a turning away from God. Jesus did the very opposite when he accepted his death. He carried out the will of the Father completely. He overcame sin once and for all by his self-giving love...."was raised": when Jesus was raised from the dead, he gave us a new way of life; a life free from sin and its consequences. Jesus gave his life completely to his Father...."in newness of life": baptism changes us. It does more than take away past sin. Through baptism we become a favorite child along with Jesus. We are able to begin to live with the freedom of true children of the Father.

Roman 6: 1-5

1 What then shall we say? Shall we persist in sin that grace may abound? Of course not! 2 How can we who die to sin yet live in it? 3 Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. 5 For if we have grown into union with him through death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.

REFLECTION:

In this letter Paul tells his readers that they are different because of their faith in

Jesus. When Jesus died and rose from the dead he freed us from the slavery of selfishness and sin. His death gives us the strength to die to our sinful desires. Through baptism we are united to Jesus who died “once and for all” so there would be victory over sin. His death and resurrection gives us the power to break with sin and live a Christian life. Baptism is the sacrament in which we are united to the saving power of Jesus. We are given new life.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

What does “in newness of life” mean to us?

How is baptism like the death and resurrection of Jesus?

What is the baptized child’s new purpose in life?

CHAPTER TWELVE THE SYMBOLS OF BAPTISM

OIL OF CHRISM
1 Sam 9: 26; 10: 1
Jn 13: 12-16

In the last part of the baptismal ceremony there are three signs: the oil of chrism, a new garment, and the lighted candle. After the baptism is over, the minister anoints the child on the crown of the head with the oil of chrism. The oil of chrism is used to consecrate and make holy. Jesus was the Messiah, the anointed one. He was a priest, a prophet, and a king. When we are baptized, we become members of Jesus Christ. Through baptism we share in Jesus' priesthood, in his role as prophet, and in his kingship.

PRIEST, PROPHET,
KING
Is 49: 1-6
1 Peter 2; 4-10

We share with Jesus his priesthood because in the Eucharist we offer with him the perfect sacrifice to the Father. We offer our whole lives to the Father, just as he did. We share in his role as prophet because through baptism we proclaim the kingdom of God to all people. We share in his kingship because we share in his victory over sin and death. Jesus is the Lord of all creation. In him we share in his power over creation, sin, sickness, and death.

NEW GARMENT
Col 3: 12-15

In the early Church, when people came for baptism, they took off their old clothes because the clothes were a sign that they were sinful and under the power of death. After they were baptized, they were given a new garment to remind them that they had become new men and women. They were free from the power of sin and death.

THE LIGHTED CANDLE
Mt 5: 14-16

On Holy Saturday night, the Easter candle is lighted in the Church to remind us that after three days in the grave the Lord Jesus rose from the dead. He is the light of the world. The father of the child lights a candle from the fire of the Easter candle. He holds it for the child. It is a reminder that the Spirit

lives in the child. The child is to be a light to the world.

EPHPEHTHA

The minister may then use the prayer of *Ephphetha*. The word “ephphetha” is from the Aramaic language and it means “be opened.” Jesus used this word when he healed the man who could not speak or hear (MK 7: 34). The minister places his/her fingers on the ears and lips of the child, and prays that he/she will soon be able to hear the word of God and proclaim it to the whole world.

THE OUR FATHER

The minister asks the assembled community to say the prayer of the baptized, the *Our Father*. Through baptism we are all made children of the Father. We are invited by Jesus to say with him the prayer he taught us. Together we go to our Father and ask for what we need.

FINAL BLESSING

The minister gives a blessing to the mother and father. He/she prays that they will be filled with God’s blessings and that they will be given the strength to bring the child up as a Christian. The minister then asks for God’s blessing on the community asking God to give the baptized community the strength to be faithful to their promises.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWELVE

John 19, 31-35: Blood and water flow from Jesus’ side

Footnotes:

19, 34-35: John probably emphasizes these verses to show the reality of Jesus’ death, against the docetic heretics. In the blood and water there may also be a symbolic reference to the Eucharist and baptism.

19, 35: He knows...it is not certain from the Greek that this “he” is the “eyewitness” of the first part of the sentence. “May (come to) believe:” possibly

implying a missionary purpose for John's gospel, a small number of quite early ones read "continue to believe," suggesting that the audience consists of Christians whose faith is to be deepened by the book.

John 19: 31-35

31 Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and they be taken down. 32 So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, 34 but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out. 35 An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may (come to) believe.

REFLECTION:

Jesus' death and resurrection saved us from sin. From the earliest days the Church saw the blood and water which flowed from Jesus' side as a sign of the grace which gives us new life. This life of the Church comes from Jesus who gave himself completely for us on the cross. Baptism brings us into the life of the Church and gives us the Spirit promised by Jesus.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why do we recite the *Our Father* as the last prayer in the rite of baptism?

Why does the Church use oil, a white garment, and a lighted candle at the end of the ceremony?

What is the connection between the crucifixion and baptism?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN CONFIRMATION

THE SPIRIT IS LIKE
THE WIND
Jn 3:8

In the Scripture the Spirit was compared to the wind. The wind is a sign of God's presence in the world. It is powerful and mysterious. It is completely free to move wherever it wants. We do not know where it comes from or where it goes. It is like God's Spirit.

THE SPIRIT IS LIKE
BREATH
Gn 2: 7

The Spirit is also compared to breath. We need breath to live. The breath we have comes from God and will go back to him. We have no control over our breath. When the time comes we surrender it back to God. The Spirit is the breath of God that dwells in us and gives us life. Without the Spirit we cannot live in the presence of God.

THE SPIRIT COMES
IN POWER
Acts 2: 1-4

Whenever the Spirit is spoken of in Scripture she always comes in great power. The Spirit's power is to change our hearts. She puts them on fire with the love of God. When the Apostles received the Spirit, they lost all of their fears and went out of their hiding place to preach and witness to the Gospel of Jesus. Every person who receives the Spirit today receives the same power to witness to the Gospel.

BAPTISM AND
CONFIRMATION

The sacrament of Confirmation gives us the full gift of the Spirit. It is the completion of the sacrament of baptism. Baptism is the sacrament of being. We become sons/daughters of God. We become resurrected persons. We become members of the Church---the Body of Christ. We are set apart as gifts of the Spirit. Confirmation is the sacrament of doing. Through this sacrament we are able to claim our relationship as favored sons/daughters, as resurrected persons, as members of the Body, and gifts of the Spirit.

WE BECOME
MISSIONARIES
Lk 4: 16-21
Lk 10: 1-9

We are sent into the world to call others to Jesus. By the way we live our lives we witness to what Jesus has done for us and what he wants to do for others. We become Christ bearers and channels of grace to every person we come in contact with. Through us Jesus is able to call unbelievers and those who left for whatever reason back to his Father.

THE SPIRIT
COMMUNICATES
GOD TO US
1 Cor 2: 10-12

The work of the Spirit is to know the depth of God. She then communicates that depth to us. Her communication is more than a spoken word of explanation. The Spirit communicates the depth of God to us in such a way that we become like God. The Spirit, because she knows the depth of God, acts as our teacher. For all eternity she teaches us by conforming us to God.

IN THE SPIRIT WE
KNOW OUR GIFT

It is the work of the Spirit in our hearts to teach us to recognize our unique gifts. She helps us to see ourselves as the primary gift of God and to see how we can use that gift to build up the members of the Church.

THE SPIRIT INVITES
US TO TRUST

The sacrament of confirmation gives us the strength we need to accept the Spirit's activity in our hearts. The Spirit who knows God, and changes us so that we become like God, invites us to live a life of uncertainty. We who like to have a clear understanding about God and like to box him in, we who want answers and cling to our preferred ideas about God are asked in Confirmation to become people who trust a Spirit who is constantly changing and deepening our understanding of God.

WE NEED TO LET GO
Mt 10: 37-39

We who seem to need to be able to answer the question, "Who am I?" are required by Confirmation to let go of the need to be certain about ourselves so that the Spirit can help us each

day to discover the depth of ourselves---the richness of the gift of God that we are.

THE SPIRIT BRING
SECURITY & INVITES
US TO EMBRACE
INSECURITY

Confirmation makes us apostles of certainty and uncertainty. We are confirmed in the experience of receive the Spirit and can be certain of her loving presence. At the same time, the

Mt. 8: 18-20

Spirit's activity will begin a process in us of coming to discover something new each day about ourselves and about God---this process brings about uncertainty and insecurity. Our security comes from the Spirit of God alive in our hearts who supports us during the insecurities of our daily journey to God.

JESUS IS OUR
ONLY SECURITY
Lk 12: 22-34

Through the sacrament of Confirmation Jesus promises to walk with us each day. He will give us the strength we need to be apostles and discoverers. While encouraging us to embrace the uncertainty of "not knowing" the Spirit will communicate the freedom of God's life to us.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Ezekiel 36, 24-28: God promises the gift of the Spirit

Footnotes:

36, 24: Take you away from among the nations: God punished his people by letting foreign countries rule over them. The foreign rulers forced many of the Jewish people to live in other countries. God promises to bring the scattered people back to their home country.

36, 25: Your impurities: God promises to wash away the filth of the people's sin. He will forgive all their sins, even the worship of false gods. God offers his people a new beginning.

36, 26: Stony hearts: The people had cut themselves off from God's friendship. In their stubbornness and pride they depended on their own strength and plans. The people's love of God had slowly died. They no longer served God or answered his call.

36, 26: Natural hearts: God promises to make the people's love for him alive again. He will change them. He will destroy the roots of their stubbornness and pride. He will give them a new desire to love and serve him.

36, 27: My Spirit: There will be a new closeness between God and his people. This closeness will make them see their lives from God's point of view. God's Spirit will lead them to love and to serve with great joy.

Ezekiel 36: 24-28

24 For I will take you away from among the nations, gather you from all the foreign lands, and bring you back to your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. 27 I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees. 28 You shall live in the land I gave your fathers; you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

REFLECTION:

The people to whom Ezekiel spoke lived in a foreign country as punishment for their sins and the sins of the whole nation. Ezekiel told them of God's promise to send blessings. Not only will they return to their homeland but God will also live in closer union with them. He will give them his own Spirit. This gift will change the people in a very deep way. They will have a deep personal knowledge of God and what he wants them to do. The message delivered by Ezekiel came true at Pentecost. The Father and the Son sent the Spirit to be with the Apostles. This gift of the Spirit continues in the Church. In the sacrament of Confirmation the Spirit comes to the believer with many gifts which show forth God's presence and help to build up the new people of God.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How does Ezekiel's message come true today?

Why is confirmation the sacrament of Christian maturity?

Why is the Spirit the most important gift to us?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
THE CEREMONY OF CONFIRMATION

THE BISHOP IS THE
MINISTER OF
CONFIRMATION

The usual minister of confirmation is the bishop who is the head of the local Church. The bishop is the sign of Jesus Christ present in full power among the members of the Church. A priest can administer the sacrament with permission of the bishop or in the case of an emergency.

THE CANDIDATE
RENEWS BAPTISMAL
PROMISES

Confirmation should be given during the celebration of the Eucharist. All the members of the Church who have received the Holy Spirit gather together to pray that the Spirit fall upon the candidates in confirmation. After the homily, the bishop asks all those present to renew their baptismal promises. Once again all the faithful declare that they renounce evil and accept Jesus as their Lord.

LAYING ON OF HANDS
Acts 8: 14-24

The bishop places hands on the head of those to be confirmed and all the priests present participate in the laying on of hands by extending their hands over the candidates. This is the traditional sign of handing on the gift of the Spirit that has been handed down from the Apostles. In the early Church the Apostles laid their hands on the baptized Christians and they received the Spirit.

SPONSOR FOR
CONFIRMATION

Each candidate has a sponsor. He/she represents the members of the Church. It is through the whole community of the Church that the Spirit comes to the candidate. The community has a responsibility to the candidate to help him/her witness to the Gospel and to support them on their journey of faith.

A SPONSOR FROM

Each candidate also has a sponsor from the

THE COMMUNITY OF
SAINTS

communion of saints. The members of the Church community who have gone before us are concerned about those of us who are members of the Church on earth. The candidate chooses a confirmation name from among those who have gone before. This saint is someone the candidate can look to for support.

THE OIL OF CHRISM IS
THE SIGN OF THE
SACRAMENT

The bishop takes the oil of chrism and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the candidate. The bishop says, "N...., be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." The oil of chrism is the sign of the sacrament of Confirmation. The oil penetrates the body of the person confirmed. This is a sign that the Spirit penetrates the individual. He/she is now set apart to witness to the Gospel and serve the Church.

EACH PERSON GETS
A MISSION TO HELP
BUILD UP THE CHURCH
1 Peter 4: 10-11

When the Spirit descended on Jesus, he received his mission from the Father. He began his public life of witnessing to the Father's love. At confirmation the Spirit gives each person a mission in the Church. He/she is affirmed as a gift of the Spirit and set apart to bring the Gospel to others. Moreover, every person is given gifts that will help him/her answer their unique call to build up the Church.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Ephesians 4, 1-7: The Spirit creates the church

Footnotes:

4: 1-16 A general plan for unity in the church. Christians have been fashioned through the Spirit into a single harmonious religious community (one body), belonging to a single Lord, and by one way of salvation through faith, brought out especially by the significance of baptism. But Christian unity is more than adherence to a common belief. It is manifested in the exalted Christ's gifts to individuals to serve so as to make the community more Christlike.

4: 4-6 The "seven unities" (church, Spirit, hope; Lord, faith in Christ, baptism;

one God) reflect the triune structure of later creeds in reverse.

4: 1 Paul was arrested for preaching the good news of Jesus. While in prison he wrote letters instructing and encouraging the Christian communities. Even while in prison Paul used the grace of being an Apostle which the Risen Lord had given him. And we are urged to live in manner worthy of the call. Each Christian is called to be different and to live as God's son/daughter. The life of the entire Christian community is a sign to the rest of humanity that those who confess Jesus as Lord are the new Chosen People. All Christians live for the day when they will see the Lord face to face.

4:4 One body and one Spirit. Christians form a single group, the Church, which is the Body of Christ. This Body has a single source of life, the Spirit. The same Spirit leads and strengthens every member of the community.

Ephesians 4: 1-7

1 I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another through love, 3 striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: 4 one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore, it says: "He ascended on high and took prisoners captive; he gave gifts to men."

REFLECTION:

The Spirit builds up the Church. She touches our hearts and enables us to believe that Jesus is the Lord. The Spirit gathers all believers together and gives them the power to live together in love. It is the Spirit calling and leading each person which creates our unity under one Lord Jesus Christ.

We have our life only in the Trinity. We cannot be separated from this life in God. It is necessary for us to understand and experience that we do not have a God who stands outside of our world or our lives. Our lives are shot through with the living God. He is in us. He surrounds us. He envelops us. Through one baptism we enter into the life of the one Risen Jesus who stands before the one Father. The Church makes flesh the life of the Father, Son and Spirit. The members of the church live in the Son of God.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

What gives life to the Body of Christ?

How did Paul continue to be an Apostle in prison?

What attitude must a person have in order to receive confirmation properly?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN SEVEN GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

THE SEVEN GIFTS REPRESENT THE FULLNESS OF THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

Through confirmation we receive the gift of the Spirit. She is the fullness of gifts. She cannot be limited to seven gifts. The number seven in the scripture is used to express fullness. The Spirit, the gift of God, gives as many gifts as are needed to build up the Church. The Church has developed the idea of seven gifts of the Spirit from the book of Isaiah (11: 1-3). These gifts are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

WISDOM

The gift of wisdom is the loving knowledge of God. This gift leads us to praise and serve God in all that we do. We come to love God and desire to do his will. Our love of God is so strong that it is the center of our lives. Without the gift of wisdom we feel alone and without purpose in life. We become bored with everything.

UNDERSTANDING

Through the gift of understanding we come to appreciate the mysteries of faith more deeply. It is impossible for us to understand these mysteries on our own. The Spirit gives us the light we need to understand the faith so that we can bring it to others. Without understanding we do not care about the mysteries of God's love. We do not let them touch our hearts.

COUNSEL

Through the gift of counsel we are able to make good judgments on particular problems in our lives. We have a sense of our complete dependence on God. The gift of counsel makes it possible for us to make choices that will lead us closer to God.

Without the gift of counsel we find it difficult to make good decisions.

KNOWLEDGE

God is our creator. God makes us and all things in the world. Through the gift of knowledge God helps us to understand our relationship with him. He also helps us to see the relationship of all creatures to him. We can see immediately the relationship between a particular creature or situation which has come into our lives and our eternal friendship with God. Without the gift of knowledge we become confused. This makes us afraid, rigid, and defensive.

FORTITUDE

To confess Jesus as the Lord in today's world takes a great deal of courage. Sometimes we are laughed at and in some places people are persecuted because of this confession. The gift of fortitude gives us the courage to proclaim that Jesus is Lord. It helps us to publicly witness to the Gospel and serve the Church. Without the gift of fortitude we get discouraged and give up.

PIETY

The gift of piety is the gift of prayer that leads us to give reverence to God. The Spirit in us prays and cries out "abba" to the Father. Through this gift we recognize God as our Father and Jesus as our brother. This gift moves us to express our gratitude and respect for God. Without the gift of piety we do not consider God or our brothers and sisters important. We look down on others.

FEAR OF THE LORD

God is greater than we are. He loved us first and he wants to share his life with us. Through the gift of fear of the Lord, we realize that we do not deserve this gift of love. We are overcome by the desire to love God in return. We are given the ability to judge what things will put this loving friendship in danger. We are not afraid of judgment; we are afraid of losing our friendship with God. This gift enables us to be faithful to religious practice. Without the gift of fear of the Lord we become self-

centered and completely self-reliant. We live in fear and anxiety that we will lose everything.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1 Corinthians 12, 4-13: The Spirit gives many gifts

Footnotes:

12, 4-6: There are some features common to all charisms, despite their diversity; all are gifts (charismata), grace from outside ourselves; all are forms of Service (diakoniai), an expression of their purpose and effect; and all are workings (energemata), in which God is at work. Paul associates each of these aspects with what later theology will call one of the persons of the Trinity, an early example of “appropriation.”

12, 8-11: Every person has good desires and evil desires. Often these are mixed together. The Spirit gives some people in the community the ability to recognize clearly which desires are from God and which are not. When people received the Spirit they often began to speak in tongues. In Corinthians the gift of tongues was given to a person in order to build up personal faith. When a person spoke in tongues he/she could only be understood by those in the community who had the gift of Interpretation. The gift of tongues is considered the least of the gifts by St. Paul. It is a gift of the Spirit. It is the Spirit praying in us to the Father.

1 Corinthians 12: 4-13

4 There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; 5 there are different forms of service but the same Lord; 6 there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. 7 To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the expression of Wisdom; 9 to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; 10 to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.

12 As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

REFLECTION:

The purpose of a Christian community is to give honor and praise to God. The power of the Spirit holds the community together. In order to make the community grow and be strong the Spirit gives many different gifts. All the gifts are given to build up the community and to praise God. Every Christian receives some gift. It is the responsibility of each Christian to recognize what gifts the Spirit gives to him/her and to use these gifts for the community. As a person grows in faith it is his/her obligation to use these gifts for the welfare of the community. As one grows in faith, the responsibility to use one's gift increases. We are all called to share our gifts and together we make our earthly journey.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How would you teach your community members about the gifts of the Spirit?

How does a person recognize what gifts the Spirit has given to him/her?

What gifts do you perceive you have received from the Spirit and how are you using these gifts?

CHAPTER SIXTEEN
SIGNS OF THE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT

SIGNS OF THE
PRRESENCE OF
THE SPIRIT

The Spirit who enters the hearts of people produces signs of her presence. The Spirit bears fruit. She makes the Church grow and creates it into a sign of God's presence in the world. The confirmed Christian is a sign of the presence of God in the world by witnessing to the Word of God and by the change in himself/herself that the Spirit brings about.

LOVE

The gift of the Spirit is the gift of love. The love of the Spirit is selfless love. Her love is patient, kind, joyful, and without end (1 Cor 13). The gift of love is the full gift of the Spirit. From it flow all other gifts.

JOY

From the Spirit of love comes joy. People who have received the Spirit are filled with joy. They realize that God loves them and has saved them from their sins and from death. They are joyful even when they are persecuted for the faith because they know that God will strengthen and support them.

GENTLENESS

The Spirit is the Spirit of gentleness. She helps us to overcome anger and frustration. She gives us the power to act gently towards others. The truly strong person acts with gentleness, not with violent force.

LONGSUFFERING

The Spirit gives us the power to endure physical and spiritual suffering. The sufferings that we cannot escape can be united to the sufferings of

Jesus by the work of the Spirit. She will help us to use our suffering to build up the Church.

CHASTITY

The Spirit gives the gift of chastity. This is the gift of faithful, self-giving love. In marriage, the Spirit helps both husband and wife to be chaste by helping them to be faithful to each other. For those who are not married the Spirit helps them to grow in intimacy and love for others and at the same time keep their sexual desires in check. She makes it possible for them to dedicate themselves to the service of God and the members of the Church.

PEACE

The Spirit is the Spirit of peace. People who have received the Spirit of peace are united to God and to their fellow human beings. They are at home with themselves and others. Even during difficult times they are complete and happy because they know the Lord walks with them.

PATIENCE

The Spirit bring patience. People who have received the Spirit of patience can return good for the evil done to them. They are willing to give themselves to others even though these people cause them trouble. Their trust of the Lord allows them to work for his Kingdom without worrying about success.

KINDNESS

The Spirit is kindness. People who have received the Spirit treat themselves and others with the kindness of Jesus. They are interested in attracting members to the body of Christ. They go out of their way to help those who are most in need.

GOODNESS

The Spirit is the Spirit of goodness. People who have received the Spirit of goodness are filled with holiness. They are filled with the Spirit of prayer. They are outgoing and generous.

FAITH

The Spirit brings faith. People who have received the Spirit are filled with faith. They have entered into close friendship with God and eagerly wish to

deepen that friendship. They are ready to share that faith with others by example, by teaching, and by being a friend.

MODESTY

The Spirit gives modesty. When people have received the Spirit they come to know their own worth. They respect and love themselves as special gifts of God. This gift allows them to see that they have something worthwhile to give to the other members of the Church and the community at large.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Galatians 5, 19-24: Work of the flesh and fruits of the Spirit

Footnotes:

5, 19-23: Such lists of vices and virtues were common in the ancient world. Paul contrasts “works of the flesh (19) with “fruit” (not “works”) of the Spirit(22). Not law, but the Spirit, leads to such traits.

5,19: Works of the flesh...The word “flesh” means much more than our physical bodies. It means everything in us and in our lives which leads us away from God. Paul speaks of a struggle between flesh and spirit. The spirit is what comes from God and leads to him.

5,21: Inherit the kingdom of God...The kingdom of God is the coming of God’s power among people. The followers of Jesus wait for the day when they will be completely free from temptation and will enjoy the presence of God in complete peace.

5, 22: Fruit of the Spirit...The presence and working of the Spirit have strong effect on the Christian’s life. The divisions and sorrow caused by sin disappear. In their place, the Spirit brings the happiness and order of God’s kingdom.

Galatians 5: 19-24

19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, 21 occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ (Jesus) have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires.

REFLECTION:

The Spirit gives new life. The signs of that new life are love, joy, peace and the other fruits of the Spirit which the Christian experiences in daily life. Things are different for the people who have given their hearts to Jesus. These fruits of the Spirit grow all during their lives. Happiness and good order are the work of the Spirit, not the work of our will power. The fruits of the Spirit come to all who choose to follow Jesus Christ.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why does the Spirit bring joy?

When will we inherit the kingdom of God?

Why is peace a sign of the Spirit's presence?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN THE EUCHARIST

“EUCHARIST” MEANS THANKSGIVING

Acts 27: 33-38

The word “Eucharist” is taken from a Greek word which means thanksgiving. The Eucharist is a prayer of thanksgiving. We offer thanks to the Father, in the name of the Son, Jesus Christ, through the power of the Spirit.

WE GIVE THANKS TO THE FATHER FOR ALL HE HAS GIVEN US

2 Cor 2: 14-17

We thank the Father because he has created us, the world, and all living things. We thank God because he sent his Son, Jesus, to become human like us. Through his death on the cross Jesus forgave our sins and made it possible for us to become sons and daughters of God. We thank the Father because Jesus has chosen to remain with us in the Eucharist. He continues to forgive sins, to give us a share in his power, and to fill us with the Spirit.

“LITURGY” MEANS ACTION OF THE PEOPLE

Ps 42 & 43

The Eucharist is a liturgy. The word “liturgy” is taken from a Greek word that means “action of the people.” The liturgy of the Eucharist is a public prayer of worship, praise, and thanksgiving. All the members of the local community come together to offer praise and thanksgiving to the Father.

A BISHOP OR PRIEST PRESIDES OVER THE EUCHARIST

Gn 14: 17-20

The liturgy of the Eucharist is offered by all the members of the community of believers. The prayer of worship is led by a bishop or priest. These ministers share in the priesthood of Christ as you do. They are set apart by the community as the official presides of the community of worship.

THE LORD’S DAY

Acts 20: 7-12

From the beginning of the Church, Sunday or the Lord’s Day has been set aside as the day on which Christians come together as a community to offer

worship to the Father. The reason for this is that the Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week. It was on a Sunday that Jesus' victory over sin and death was made clear. Each Sunday Eucharist recalls that we have been saved from sin and death by Jesus. We set apart the first day of the week to celebrate our resurrection in the resurrection of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Mark 6, 30-44: Jesus feeds the crowd

Footnotes:

6, 30: Apostles...here, and in some manuscripts at 3, 14, Mark calls apostles (i.e., those sent forth) the Twelve who Jesus sends as his emissaries, empowering them to preach, to expel demons, and to cure the sick (13). Only after Pentecost is the title used in the technical sense.

6, 31-34: The withdrawal of Jesus with his disciples to a desert place to rest attracts a great number of people to follow them. Toward his people of the new exodus Jesus is moved with pity; he satisfies their spiritual hunger by teaching them many things, thus gradually showing himself the faithful shepherd of a new Israel; Ez 34, 15.

6, 35-44: See the note on Mt 14, 13-21. Compare this section with 8, 1-9. The various accounts of the multiplication of loaves and fishes, two each in Mark and in Matthew and one each in Luke and in John, indicate the wide interest of the early church in their eucharistic gatherings; and recall also the sign of bread in Ex 16; Dt 8, 3-16; Pss 78, 24-25; 105, 40; Wis 16, 20-21.

6, 40: The people...in rows by hundreds and by fifties...reminiscent of the groupings of Israelites encamped in the desert (Ex 18, 21-25) and of the wilderness tradition of the prophets depicting the transformation of the wasteland into pastures where the true shepherd feed his flock (Ez 34, 25-26) and makes his people beneficiaries of messianic grace.

6, 41: On the language of this verse as Eucharist (cf 14, 22), see the notes on Mt 14, 19-29. Jesus observed the Jewish table ritual of blessing God before partaking of food.

Mark 6: 30-44

30 The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. 31 He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." People are coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity to eat. 32 So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. 33 People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them. 34 When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. 35 By now it was already late and his disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already very late. 36 Dismiss them so that they can go to the surrounding farms and villages and buy themselves something to eat." 37 He said to them in reply, "Give them some food yourselves." But they said to him, "Are we to buy two hundred days' wages worth of food and give it to them to eat?" 38 He asked them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out they said, "Five loaves and two fish." 39 So he gave orders to have them sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 The people took their places in rows by hundreds and by fifties. 41 Then, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to (his) disciples to set before the people; he also divided the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied. 43 And they picked up twelve wicker baskets full of fragments and what was left of the fish. 44 Those who ate (of the loaves) were five thousand men.

REFLECTION:

Jesus worked many miracles in his public life. These miracles teach us about Jesus and what he did for us. The feeding of this large crowd helps us to understand the Eucharist. Jesus had compassion on the crowd and satisfied their need in a wonderful way. In the Eucharist he gives us the truly satisfying food of God's kingdom. In the Eucharist we take part in what Jesus gives us in a spirit of thanksgiving.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How are we satisfied by the food of the Eucharist?

What was Jesus modeling for the disciples when he fed the people?

How does the community participate in the breaking of the bread?

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN THE EUCHARIST AND THE PASSOVER

THE FEAST OF PASSOVER Dt 16: 1-8

Passover celebration in the time of Jesus commemorated two saving events in the history of Israel. The Jewish people were slaves to the Egyptians. The Lord God appointed Moses to be the leader of his people. He told Moses to tell the head of each household to get a lamb and kill it. They were to take the blood and place it on the doorpost of their houses. The Lord would then send his angel to kill the first-born child of the Egyptians. The angel would pass over the houses with the blood on the door post. The blood of the lamb identified the people and protected them.

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

The feast of Unleavened Bread commemorated a second saving event. In ancient Israel this was a thanksgiving feast in which the first fruits of the harvest were offered to God. Leaven was not used in the bread in order to keep the offering pure. In Jesus' time the feast celebrated the deliverance of the people from the Egyptians. God told Moses to lead his people out of the bondage of Egypt. He told them to prepare unleavened bread and use it for seven days. Those who ate leavened bread were to be excluded from the people of Israel. God told Moses to keep the feast of Unleavened Bread as a memorial of his saving power. The people of Israel passed-over from slavery to freedom.

JESUS IS THE NEW PASSOVER LAMB 1 Pt 1: 18-21 Rv 5: 6-14

In the time of Jesus the Israelites took a young lamb without any marks on it and killed it. It had to be a male lamb and none of its bones could be broken. The blood of the lamb was placed outside the door as a remembrance that God delivered them from slavery and spared their first born children. The accounts of Jesus' death remind us that Jesus is the new unblemished Passover lamb. He is the lamb of

God who gives his blood so that all men and women can be saved.

IN THE EUCHARIST
WE PASSEVER TO
NEW LIFE
1 Cor 5: 6-8

The Eucharist is a meal in which we celebrate the New Passover. Bathed in the blood of Jesus, the Passover Lamb, we are set apart as members of the new people of God. His blood marks us and protects us from evil and sin. Unleavened bread is used at the Eucharist makes it possible for us to Passover from the bondage of guilt, fear, depression, sin and death to the new risen life of freedom with Jesus.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Exodus 12, 21-28: The first Passover

Footnotes:

12, 22: Hyssop; a plant with many woody branches that made a convenient sprinkler. It was used by the elders to dip into the lamb's blood and smear the Blood around the door frame.

12, 22: Blood in the basin...The blood from the lamb became the blood of deliverance from Egyptian captivity. Those with blood on their door frame did not lose their first-born child. The blood of the Passover lamb receives its full Meaning in Jesus' blood shed for everyone.

12, 27: who passed over the houses...The Jewish feast is called Passover because it recalls that the Lord "passed over" the Jewish houses on the night of death. As the feast developed on the actual exodus from Egypt was celebrated at the same time. The people remembered how their ancestors had "passed over" to the land of freedom. In Jesus' death and resurrection we "pass over" to new freedom as the Father's adopted sons and daughters.

Exodus 12: 21-28

21Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and procure lambs for your families, and slaughter them as Passover victims. 22 Then take a bunch of Hyssop, and dipping it in the blood that is in the basin, sprinkle the lintel and the two Doorposts with this blood. But none of you shall go outdoors until morning. 23 For the Lord will go by, striking down the Egyptians. Seeing the blood on the lintel and the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over that door and

not let the destroyer come into your houses to strike you down.

24 “You shall observe this as a perpetual ordinance for yourselves and your descendents. 25 Thus, you must also observe this rite when you have entered the land which the Lord will give you as he promised. 26 When your children ask you, ‘What does this rite of yours mean?’ 27 You shall reply, ‘This is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt; when he struck down the Egyptians, he spared our houses.’ “Then the people bowed down in worship, 28 and the Israelites went and did as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron.

REFLECTION:

God has done many wonderful things for his people. The Jewish feast of Passover called to mind some of God’s greatest wonders. All of these acts of God’s power and mercy were leading up to his most wonderful act of deliverance. His Son, Jesus, delivered us from the slavery of sin and death. From the earliest days the Church recognized that the death and resurrection of Jesus gave full and true meaning to all of God’s past acts of deliverance. The past actions pointed to what Jesus would do on the cross. This final deliverance is what we celebrate in the Eucharist.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is the blood of the lamb important?

What is the freedom we celebrate in the Eucharist?

How is Jesus our Passover?

CHAPTER NINETEEN
THE EUCHARIST AS THE NEW COVENANT

THE COVENANT
WITH ISRAEL

Jos 24: 1-28

In the Old Testament God made a covenant with Israel. He claimed Israel as his people and they recognized him as their only God. God was present in the covenant. Through the covenant he created a people with whom he was at one. He was faithful to his people Israel and he promised to send them a redeemer.

THE COVENANT WAS
SEALED IN THE
BLOOD OF
ANIMALS

Heb 9 18-23

In the book of Exodus, Moses set up an altar which was the place where God was present among the people. In front of the altar he set up twelve pillars which represented the twelve tribes of Israel. He assembled the people and God entered a covenant with them. In order to seal the covenant Moses sacrificed animals on the altar of God. He took the blood of the animals and poured it on the altar, then on the people. The blood of the animals was a sign of unity between God and his people. Then Moses and the elders ate and drank in the presence of God.

THE NEW COVENANT
WAS SEALED IN THE
BLOOD OF JESUS

Heb 12: 18-25

1 Pt 1: 1-2

Jesus fulfilled the promise of God to send a savior. He did not destroy the old covenant but he fulfilled it and made it new. In Jesus, God was present among his people in the flesh. Jesus was the new covenant. He united God and humanity. When Jesus gave his life on the cross, it was a sign of the great self-giving love that God has for his people. Just as the old covenant was sealed in the blood of animals, the new covenant was sealed in the blood of Jesus.

THROUGH THE
MEAL OF THE NEW
COVENANT WE ARE

Our sins stand in the way of our friendship with God. Jesus gave his body and blood so that our sins could be removed. When we receive the body and

MADE ONE WITH GOD blood of Jesus, we are united to God in friendship. Through the Eucharist, the meal of the new covenant, Jesus makes us one with God. He makes it possible for us to remain faithful until he comes again.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER NINETEEN

Exodus 24, 1-8: The blood of the old covenant

Footnotes:

24, 4: Pillars... stone shafts or slabs, erected as symbols of the fact that each of the twelve tribes had entered into this covenant with God; not idolatrous as in Ex 23, 24, although the same Hebrew word is used in both passages.

24,4: All the words of the Lord... God gave Moses the commandments. These rules and customs described how God wanted his people to live. The people agreed to be God's people and live as he asked.

24, 5: Holocausts... The people killed some animals from their herds and offered them to God. They burned the animal to proclaim God's complete power over life and to give honor to God.

24, 8: The blood of the covenant... The ceremony of sprinkling blood on the altar (the altar was a symbol for God) and over the people was a sign of the union between God and his people. Both were bound by the agreement they had just made. The sprinkling with blood was the solemn sealing of the agreement.

Exodus 24: 1-8

1 Moses himself was told, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, with Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You shall all worship at some distance, 2 but Moses alone is to come close to the Lord; the others shall not come too near, and the people shall not come up at all with Moses."

3 When Moses came to the people and related all the words and ordinances of the Lord, they all answered with one voice, "We will do everything that the Lord has told us." 4 Moses then wrote down all the words of the Lord and, rising early the next Day, he erected at the foot of the mountain an altar and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 Then, having sent certain young men of the Israelites to offer holocausts and sacrifice young bulls as peace offerings to the Lord. 6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in large bowls; the other half he splashed on the altar. 7 Taking the book of the covenant, he read it aloud to the people, who answered, "All that the Lord has said, we will heed and do." 8 Then he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words

of his.”

REFLECTION:

The agreement or covenant between God and his people changed their lives. This group of people wandering in the desert became a new nation. They became God’s people. Through the rest of their history, the people looked back to the sprinkling with blood in order to understand who they were as a nation. Now there is a new agreement between God and us---his new people. We have a new relationship to him as adopted sons and daughters. The new covenant is sealed and made binding by the blood of Jesus. Whenever God’s new people celebrate the Eucharist they are calling to mind the new covenant of adoption in Jesus Christ’s blood.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

What was the purpose of the old covenant?

What is the purpose of the new covenant?

When establishing a new community what kind of covenant should be written?

CHAPTER TWENTY
EUCHARIST AS A MEMORIAL

A MEMORIAL
RECALLS

The Eucharist is a memorial celebration. It calls to mind the Last Supper and the sacrifice on Calvary.

A PAST SAVING
EVENT
Jos 4

The word “memorial” has a special meaning. It means more than simply remembering. For the Jewish people a “memorial” meant that they gathered together to celebrate an event in their history in which God had saved them from their enemies. The Passover is an example of a “memorial” feast. They celebrated the Passover feast as a “memorial” of the time that the Lord had saved the nation from the angel of death and from the Egyptians.

A MEMORIAL MAKES
THE GRACE OF
THAT EVENT ACTIVE
IN THE PRESENT
Nm 10: 9-10
Sir 50: 1-23

When the Israelites celebrated the feast the event of the past was recalled in detail. But more importantly the people took part in the past event. The grace of the Passover event was present to them. The Passover had power in the here and now of their everyday lives. The people were still being saved because God had given them a sign in the past that he would save them.

AT THE EUCHARIST
WE ARE PRESENT
AT THE DEATH &
RESURRECTION
OF JESUS

The Eucharist is the same kind of memorial. It calls to mind the historical events of the Lord’s passion and death. But more importantly, it makes them present in full power. Today, when we celebrate the memorial of the Eucharist, we are present at the death and resurrection of Jesus.

JESUS COMMANDED
THE APOSTLES
CELEBRATE THE
EUCHARIST AS A

As the Last Supper, Jesus commanded his Apostles, “Do this in remembrance of me.” The Apostles were to continue the ministry of Jesus until he returned. Jesus was present at the Last Supper.

MEMORIAL

Today Jesus is again present in the Eucharist. He is our God who is with us and who continues to save us through his death and resurrection. We are united to him in the Eucharist.

WE ARE VICTIMS ALONG WITH JESUS Gal 2: 19-21

At the Eucharist, all the members of the Church share in the life of Jesus. They are part of the Body of Christ which is offered to the Father. They are united to Jesus' offering of self-giving love on the cross. They have been made part of the perfect victim. All who take part in the Eucharist are victims along with Jesus.

WE OFFER THE SACRIFICE ALONG WITH JESUS Rom 12: 1-2 Heb 13: 15-16

All the members of the Church are also united to Jesus as the perfect priest. Jesus offers himself to the Father. All of those who take part in the Eucharist offer along with Jesus the acceptable sacrifice. They exercise their priesthood by offering to the Father the perfect victim.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY

1 Corinthians 11, 23-26: Paul's tradition of the Eucharist

Footnotes:

11, 23-25: This is the earliest written account of the institution of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament. The narrative emphasizes Jesus' action of self-giving (expressed in the words over the bread and the cup) and his double command to repeat his own action.

11, 24: Do this...in remembrance of me...When the Church celebrates the Eucharist it obeys the Lord's command. This remembrance is more than something we do with our minds. When we participate in the Eucharist the past saving actions become present in power within the community celebration. The Risen Christ is actively among his people.

11, 26: Proclaim the death of the Lord...The Eucharist is a celebration of our redemption. We receive the body and blood of the Lord which is given "for us." We proclaim the Lord's victory over sin and death. Indeed, we claim a share in that victory as we wait for it to be complete at his second coming in glory.

1 Corinthians 11: 23-26

23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, 24 and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

REFLECTION:

In the Church there are many different ways to celebrate the mystery of the Eucharist. Paul’s description is different from Mark’s, Matthew’s, or Luke’s. Yet in each description it is the same celebration of our redemption and new life. The Church carries on the work of Jesus Christ and brings the good news of salvation to everyone. The celebration of the Eucharist is one of the ways in that the Church, the Body of Christ, brings salvation to the people of the world.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How do we proclaim the Lord’s death at the Eucharist?

In what way are we a victim along with Jesus in the Eucharist?

What does Jesus do for us in the Eucharist?

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE
THE EUCHARIST IS A MEMORIAL OF THE LAST SUPPER

THE LAST SUPPER
IS TIMELESS

The Last Supper happened nearly 2,000 years ago. The Eucharist is a memorial of the Last Supper. Since Jesus was sent by the Father, his actions have a timeless effect. When we attend the Eucharist today we take part in the continuing Last Supper.

THE FIRST
EUCHARIST WAS
A MEAL OF
CELEBRATION
Lk 22: 14-20

The first Eucharist was a meal. The Apostles and most like others, had gathered around Jesus to celebrate the Passover with him. Jesus had looked forward to this meal. It was to be his last with his Apostles and followers until they gathered together again in his Father's presence for the heavenly feast. The spirit of the meal was one of celebration. Jesus, his Apostles, and followers were celebrating the saving power of God among the Jewish people. They were "remembering" that God had saved the people from slavery.

JESUS' BODY AND
BLOOD WAS THE
NEW PASSOVER

Jesus changed the meaning of the Passover celebration at the Last Supper. He took the bread and said, "This is my Body which is given for you." And he took the wine and said, "This is my blood, the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven." Jesus gave his body and blood as the new Passover event. Those who take part in the body and blood of Jesus are no longer subject to slavery of any kind. They are free to dance in the presence of God!

THERE WAS JOY
AND SORROW AT
THE LAST SUPPER

The Last Supper was both a joyful and a sorrowful meal for Jesus and his friends. It was joyful because it was the first time that human beings had taken part in the new Passover. Jesus made it possible for us to be united to God forever. Those who would take part in the Eucharist would be filled with the Spirit of God and would be his children forever. The Last Supper was a sorrowful meal because it pointed to the sacrifice of Calvary which was necessary to make the union between God and human beings a reality.

WE CELEBRATE THE
EUCCHARIST WITH JOY
AND HOPE-FILLEED
SORROW
Jn 16: 20-22

When we celebrate the Eucharist, we celebrate the joy of a meal. We gather around the table of fellowship and our Lord Jesus is with us. We are joyful because by taking part in his body and blood we can share in his life. We also celebrate a hope-filled sorrow. We know that we are sinners. We are still on the way to the Lord. We have to change in order to become like Jesus. We are hope-filled because Jesus is with us in the Eucharist. He is able to change in us what we cannot change on our own. He gives us the strength we need to accept the pain of change---to let go of ourselves and rise with him.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Mark 14, 17-25: The last supper

Footnotes:

14, 18: One of you will betray me, one who is eating with me: contrasts the intimacy of table fellowship at the Passover meal with the treachery of the traitor.

14, 21: The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him: a reference to Ps 41, 10 cited by Jesus concerning Judas as the Last Supper.

14, 22-24: The actions and words of Jesus express within the framework of the Passover meal and the transition to a new covenant the sacrifice of himself through the offering of his body and blood in anticipation of his passion and death. His blood of the covenant both alludes to the ancient rite of Ex 24, 4-8

and indicates the new community that the sacrifice of Jesus will bring into being (Mt 26, 26-28; Lk 22, 19-20; 1 Cor 11, 23-25).

Mark 14: 17-25

17 When it was evening, he came with the Twelve. 18 And as they reclined at table and were eating, Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." 19 They began to be distressed and to say to him, one by one, "Surely it is not I?" 20 He said to them, "One of the Twelve, the one who dips with me into the dish." 21 For the Son of Man indeed goes, as it is Written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born."

22 While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 He said to them. "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. 25 Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

REFLECTION:

Jesus willingly went to his death. He freely gave his life for the salvation of human beings. In order to allow men and women of every period in history to take part in this act of redemption, Jesus gave his Apostles and followers the Eucharist. He did this in the form of bread and wine which are his body and blood offered for us. This is the way Jesus chose to express his love for his Church. The words of Mark's Gospel tell us that he offered himself on behalf of every man and woman. The words of consecration at Mass tell us that he continues to offer himself on our behalf.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

What do the words "drink it new" mean?

Why is the Eucharist both a joyful and sorrowful celebration?

Why is it important for us to go to Eucharist frequently?

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO THE BREAD AND WINE

BREAD WAS A
SOURCE OF
STRENGTH AND
FELLOWSHIP
Ps 104: 13-15
Wis 16: 20

In the Middle East bread was an important part of the people's diet. It was the source of strength and life. Without it a person would weaken and die. Bread was also used as a sign of friendship. Friends would gather around the dinner table to break bread together. It was a source of communion among them. Jesus took this bread of life and changed it into the true bread of life. He changed it into his body.

WINE IS A SIGN
OF JOY
Jn 2: 1-12

Wine was also an important part of people's diet. Wine was used to add a sense of joy and happiness to a meal. It was used in moderation and brought joy and unity to the people gathered for dinner. Wine was also a sign of the everlasting joy that would come when the Messiah gathered his friends around him in the new kingdom. Jesus took wine and changed it. It became the source of true hope and joy. He changed it into his blood.

THE CHNAGED

BREADAND WINE
ARE THE SOURCE
OF GROWTH
1 Kgs 17: 7-16
Ps 78: 23-25

Bread and wine are signs of life-giving food. They are changed into the body and blood of Jesus. The changed bread and wine are signs that give life forever. If we do not eat the body of Jesus and drink his blood we will weaken and die forever. By sharing in his body and blood we will grow strong in the life of the Spirit that we received at baptism. We will live forever with the Lord in full joy and happiness.

THE BREAD AND
WINE ARE SIGNS
THROUGH WHICH
JESUS CONTINUES
HIS WORK

The bread and wine become signs of the life-giving death of Jesus. Under the appearance of bread and wine Jesus' death is made present. In the Eucharist we share in his victory over death. The bread and wine become signs of the Risen Christ. When we take part in the Eucharist we share in the life of the resurrection. The bread and wine are also signs of everlasting hope and joy. Jesus is present as the Risen Lord who sits at the right hand of the Father. He has all power and authority. When we share in the body and blood of Jesus we share in his full power and authority that will be made clear at the end of time.

THE EUCHARIST IS
THE SOURCE OF
LIFE, HOPE, AND
UNITY
Lk 14: 15-24
Is 25: 6-9

The body and blood of Jesus under the appearance of bread and wine are the source of strength for our life in the Spirit. They are the source of hope in the resurrection. They are the source of unity with God and with our sisters and brothers. The Eucharist brings about growth in the life of the Spirit, the life of the resurrection, and the life of the community.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

John 6, 25-40: Jesus is the bread of life

Footnotes:

6, 26: Saw signs...the people saw the miracle of the loaves and fishes. They did not understand its true meaning. The miracle only excited their imagination like a magic trick. They did not understand what the miracle taught about Jesus and his message. They had no faith in Jesus.

6, 27: Set his seal...Jesus is the beloved Son. He is the Chosen One of God who does the Father's will. The Father is well pleased with all he does.

6, 30: What sign can you do...the people asked for a miracle like the manna in the desert. The crowd did not come to Jesus with an open mind or an open heart. They had their own ideas about the one-sent-from-God. The people would not put their faith in him unless he said and did what they expected.

6, 32: My Father gives you the true bread...what God did through Moses was only a sign of what was to come. Jesus gives the manna from heaven its true meaning. He brings God's life to us.

6, 35: Bread of life...all through this passage, Jesus compares himself to bread. Ordinary bread gives life to the body. He will give life to the whole person. He will give a share of God's own life to every person.

6, 35: Will never hunger; will never thirst...human beings need food and drink to stay alive. Jesus uses these common human needs to describe how completely he will satisfy people's everyday desires. God's self-gift which comes to us in Jesus Christ makes our lives whole and complete in every way. There is nothing more we can want.

6, 40: Raise him on the last day...Jesus came to bring final victory over the kingdom of Satan. Those who are united with Jesus can never be destroyed. The final victory is theirs. They will live with God forever.

John 6: 25-40

25 And when they found him across the sea they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" 26 Jesus answered them and said, Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate loaves and were filled. 27 Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him, the Father, God, has set his seal." 28 So they said to him, "What can we do to accomplish the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent." 30 So they said to him, "What signs can you do, that we may see and believe in you?" 31 Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' " 32 So Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." 35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst. 36 But I told you that although you have seen (me), you do not believe. 37 Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, 38 because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. 39 And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should not lose anything of what he gave, but that I should raise it (on) the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him (on) the last day."

REFLECTION:

Jesus did not work miracles in order to attract attention. He worked miracles in order to show who he was. In this passage Jesus tries to explain the miracle of

the loaves and fishes. He tries to lead the people to deeper faith. Jesus comes from his Father to live a human life among human beings. He comes with the gift of life for all who receive him. Since we were created to be with God we all have a hunger for him which will not go away. Only God's self-gift in Jesus Christ can satisfy that hunger. Those who are one with Jesus in faith, nourish that faith and satisfy that hunger for union with God by receiving the Eucharist.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

What does it mean to say that Jesus is the Bread of Life?

Why is the Eucharist the source of all of our strength?

Why is frequent reception of the Eucharist important for Christians?

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE
THE EUCHARIST IS A MEMORIAL OF CALVARY

JESUS WAS GOD
IN THE FLESH
1 Jn 4: 2-3

God chose to become human in Jesus and live among us in the flesh. “Flesh” means that he had a real body, and he entered into a world scarred by sin. Through his mother, Mary, he descended from sinful humanity. In every part of this life he experienced the destroying power of our past history of sin. He lived with the fear, hate, and jealousy caused by sin. He did not sin himself. But because he chose to be flesh of our flesh, he was not free from the burden of sin around him.

JESUS IN HIS
FLESH TOOK UP
THE BURDEN OF
OUR SINS
2 Cor 5: 21

Jesus freely came among us to save us from the slavery of sin and death. In order to do this, he had to become human and live among human beings. He had to share the burden of our history of sin. He took upon himself the past history of sin, the sinfulness of the people around him, and the sinfulness of those to come.

JESUS DID THE
WILL OF HIS FATHER
Mt 26: 36-46

During his life Jesus taught us about his Father and tried to lead us to the Father. He tried to teach us that in order to come closer to the Father we must do the Father’s will. The Father’s will for us is that we should love God with our whole heart and love God with our whole heart and love our neighbor. Jesus’ whole life was an act of loving obedience to his Father’s will.

JESUS SUFFERED
AND DIED FOR US

Jesus was arrested and taken before Pilate. He was condemned, spat upon, and insulted. He was forced

Acts 2: 22-24

to carry his cross and finally he was crucified as a common criminal. All the while he did not utter a sound against those who hurt him. He even forgave them from the cross. When the moment arrived he surrendered his life into the hands of his Father. He did all of this for us.

THE GENEROSITY
OF JESUS OVERCAME
OUR SELFISHNESS

Gal 3: 13

Phil 2: 6-8

Jesus had to die on the cross in order to restore our relationship with God. God is unselfish and self-giving. We are selfish. Jesus could have overcome death by submitting himself to a natural death. His life and natural death would have restored the relationship between God and humanity. But in order to overcome the power of evil, especially the power of evil which is our deep seeded selfishness, he had to demonstrate his overwhelming generosity. He chose to die the death of a humiliated criminal, the death of a failed leader, order to break the power of selfish-ness once and for all. His generous self-giving love poured out for us on the cross guarantees that each of us can be free of the bondage of selfishness.

THE SACRIFICE OF
OBEDIENCE

Ps 40: 6-9

Is 1: 11-19

The true sacrifice of Calvary was a sacrifice of obedience. By obeying the Father's will even to death on the cross Jesus was able to receive the complete victory over sin, selfishness, evil, and death. Jesus overcame the sin of the first ancestors, who wanted to do things their way, by humbly letting go of control of his life and trusting his Father.

WE WITNESS THE
DEATH OF JESUS
UNTIL HE COMES

Phil 3: 7-11

Through the Eucharist we make present again the saving event on Calvary. We join ourselves to the Lord's passion and death so that we can be joined to his resurrection. When we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus we testify that we are willing to give up our way of doing things and do the Father's will. We unite our sacrifice of obedience to Jesus' sacrifice. Through his body and blood he feeds that growing relationship with him which enables us to consistently choose God's will rather than our own. When we are faithful to the Eucharist we witness in

our bodies to the death of Jesus until he comes again.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Mark 15, 21-39: Jesus dies on the cross

Footnotes:

15, 21: They pressed into service...Simon, a Cyrenian: a condemned person was constrained to bear his own instrument of torture, at least the crossbeam. The precise naming of Simon and his sons is probably due to their being known among early Christian believers to whom Mark addressed his gospel. See also the notes on Mt 27, 32 and Lk 23, 26-32.

15, 25: It was nine o'clock in the morning...literally, "the third hour," thus between 9 a.m. and 12 noon. Cf vv 33.34.42 for Mark's chronological sequence, which may reflect liturgical or catechetical considerations rather than the precise historical sequence of events; contrast the different chronologies in the other gospels, especially Jn 19, 14.

15, 26: The inscription...the King of the Jews: the political reason for the death penalty falsely charged by the enemies of Jesus. See further the notes on Mt 27, 37 and Jn 19, 23-25a.

15, 28: This verse, "And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'And he was counted among the wicked,' " is omitted in the earliest and best manuscripts. It contains a citation from Is 53, 12, and was probably introduced from Lk 22, 37.

15, 39: The closing portion of Mark's gospel returns to the theme of its beginning in the Gentile centurion's climatic declaration of belief that Jesus "was the Son of God." It indicates the fulfillment of the good news announced in the prologue (1,1) and may be regarded as the first fruit of the passion and death of Jesus.

Mark 15: 21-39

21 They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.

22 They brought him to the place of Golgotha (which is translated Place of the Skull). 23 They gave him wine drugged with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24 Then they crucified him and divided his garments by casting lots for them to see what each should take. 25 It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. 26 The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." 27 With him they crucified two revolutionaries, one on his right and one on his left. (28) 29 Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha!

You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save yourself by coming down from the cross." 31 Likewise the chief priests, with the scribes, mocked him among themselves and said, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32 Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also kept abusing him.

33 At noon darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. 34 And at three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35 Some of the bystanders who heard it said, "Look he is calling Elijah." 36 One of them ran, soaked a sponge with wine, put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to take him down." 37 Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 The veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 When the centurion who stood facing him saw how he breathed his last he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" 40 There were also women looking on from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the younger James and of Joses, and Salome.

REFLECTION:

The most common symbol of our faith is the crucifix. In loving obedience to the Father, Jesus gave up his life for us. On the third day the Father raised him from the dead. In this great act of God's love we have the forgiveness of our sins and the offer of true life. Jesus accomplished our redemption in a bloody way on Calvary. His act of self-giving love continues today in the Church. The Eucharist makes present again in an unbloody way Jesus' offering of himself for our salvation.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is it important that Jesus died willingly?

How does the redemptive act impact our lives?

How does this act of self-giving prepare us for our death?

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR THE EUCHARIST IS A TRUE SACRIFICE

SACRIFICE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament a sacrifice was a gift to God. It was made as a way of making up to God for the sins of the people. The Jewish people offered sacrifice to God in order to show him that they would be faithful to his covenant. They wanted to be united to him. The people offered gifts as a sign of their union with God.

EVERY SACRIFICE HAS A VICTIM AND A PRIEST

To have a true sacrifice, there must be something to offer. The people took live animals and offered them to God. They took the blood of the animals, which was a sign of life, and poured it over the altar as a sign of union with God. Only a priest could offer the sacrifice in the name of the people. He was appointed by God as the one who could offer a sacrifice that would be accepted.

THE SACRIFICE OF CALVARY Jn 12: 31-33

The sacrifice of Calvary was a true sacrifice. Jesus was the perfect victim. He gave his life in the flesh to save us. At Calvary he was the high priest who was worthy to offer the sacrifice to the Father. Jesus freely chose to give himself to the Father as a sacrifice so that sins could be forgiven and we could be united to the Father.

THE EUCHARIST AND CALVARY Lk 23: 44-46

The Eucharist is dependent on the sacrifice of Calvary. When we take part in the Eucharist we are united to the perfect priest and the perfect victim as he offers himself to the Father. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was a sacrifice of obedience to

the Father's will. His whole life was lived in obedience to his Father. The cross was the final and complete sign of his loving obedience. Because of his obedience he was lifted up and given all power in heaven and on earth.

THE SACRIFICE OF THE EUCHARIST

The Eucharist is a true sacrifice. Jesus continues to offer himself to the Father. The bloody sacrifice on Calvary was one and for all. Jesus cannot die again. But the sacrifice of Calvary never ends. It is the perfect expression of God's love for us. The sacrifice of the Eucharist is an unbloody sacrifice. When we celebrate the Eucharist the sacrifice of Calvary is made present in an unbloody way. Jesus, through his priest and people, once again offers himself to the Father as the perfect victim for the forgiveness of sins.

OUR SACRIFICE OF OBEDIENCE Jn 12: 23-26 Rm 12: 1-2

We too become priest and victim at the Eucharist. We bring to the celebration our personal sacrifice to be joined to the Sacrifice of Jesus. At the Eucharist we are asked to do God's will and not our own. God invites us to become generous people. In order for us to do this each of us needs to change and let go of selfish desires. This death to our desires is the crucifixion in our lives.

OUR WILLING ACCEPTANCE Mt 19: 16-30 2 Cor 12: 6-10

We also recognize that there are some things in us that will not change. Each of us has at least something that we would like to change or get rid of or be healed of. Yet the Lord has not allowed this to happen. He asks us to bear this cross so that we can identify with his sacrifice. When we willingly accept our weakness and the limitation of our cross and bring it to the Eucharist we are joined to the suffering of Jesus. He can then work through our limitations and reach the hearts of others.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Hebrews 10, 1-10: Jesus make us holy

Footnotes:

10, 1-10: Christian faith now realizes that the Old Testament sacrifices did not effect the spiritual benefits to come but only prefigured them(1). For if the sacrifice had actually effected the forgiveness of sin, there would have been no reason for their constant repetition (2). They were rather a continual reminder of the people's sins (3). It is not reasonable to suppose that human sins could be removed by the blood of animal sacrifices (4). Christ, therefore, is here shown to understand his mission in terms of Ps 40, 6-8, cited according to the Septuagint (5-7). Jesus acknowledged that the Old Testament sacrifices did not remit the sins of the people and so, perceiving the will of God, offered his own body for this purpose (8-10).

10, 1: A shadow of the good things to come...the term "shadow" was used in 8, 5 to signify the earthly counterpart of the Platonic heavenly reality. But here it means a prefiguration of what is to come in Christ, as it is used in the Pauline literature; cf Col 2, 17.

10, 5-7: A passage from Ps 40, 7-9a is placed in the mouth of the Son at his incarnation. As usual, the author follows the Septuagint text. There is a notable difference in v 5 (=Ps 40, 7b), where the Masoretic text reads "ears you have dug for me" (ears open to obedience you gave me, NSB), but most Septuagint manuscripts have "a body you prepared for me," a reading obviously more suited to the interpretation of Heb.

10, 8: Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings...these terms take from the preceding passage of Ps 40 (with the first two changed to plural forms) are probably intended as equivalents to the four principal types of Old Testament sacrifices: peace offerings (Lv 3, here called sacrifices); cereal offerings (Lv 2, here called offerings); holocausts (Lv 1); and sin offerings (Lv 4-5). This last category includes the guilt offerings of Lv 5, 14-26.

Hebrews 10: 1-10

1 Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of them, it can never make perfect those who come to worship by the same sacrifices that they offer continually each year. 2 Otherwise, would not the sacrifices have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, once cleansed, would no longer have had any consciousness of sin? 3 But in those sacrifices there is only a yearly remembrance of sins, 4 for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats take away sins. 5 For this reason, when he came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; 6 holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in. 7 Then I said, 'As is

written of me in the scroll, Behold, I come to do your will, O God.’ “
8 First he says, “Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings, you neither desired nor delighted in.” These are offered according to the law. 9 The he says, “Behold, I come to do your will.” He takes away the first to establish the second. 10 By this “will,” we have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

REFLECTION:

The blood of Jesus poured out upon the cross is our salvation. He made himself the perfect offering for our sinfulness. His loving obedience was the exact opposite of sin’s self-centeredness. He made peace between God and human beings by cleansing us of our sin and enabling us to generously give our lives to God.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why does the sacrifice of the Eucharist have real power?

How does the obedience of Jesus to do the Father’s will show us the way to that same type of obedience?

Why is frequent reception of the Eucharist the way to avoid sin?

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE
JESUS IS PRESENT IN THE EUCHARIST

JESUS IS PRESENT
IN THE HEART OF
EVERY BAPTIZED
PERSON

1 Cor 3: 16-17

Jesus is present in different ways in the Church. When we are baptized Jesus sends the Spirit into our hearts. He is present in the heart of every baptized person through the power of his Spirit. Every word and action of a Christian makes the power of Jesus felt in the world.

JESUS IS PRESENT
IN THE COMMUNITY
OF BELIEVERS

The community of baptized men and women make up the Body of Christ. Jesus is present in the Church. He is calling us to follow him through the visible Church. Through the Church the Word of salvation is announced to the whole world. As people hear this Word, through preaching, teaching, and example of Christians, they are moved by the Spirit to turn from their sins. Jesus, present in the words of Scripture proclaimed by the Church, can move people's hearts when human reason and persuasion are powerless.

JESUS IS PRESENT
WHEN THE MEMBERS
GATHER TO PRAY

Mt 18: 19-20

When the Church gathers in prayer, Jesus is also present. He is the one who stands between the Father and human beings. He presents our prayers to the Father and through his the Father's blessings come to us. The Father hears our prayers because he sees his beloved Son present in the members of the Church at prayer.

JESUS IS PRESENT
IN THE SACRAMENTS

Jesus is present in the sacraments of the Church. Through the signs of the sacraments he saves us from sin and death. For example, at baptism Jesus

cleanses us of sin and makes us children of God. The sign of this new life that Jesus gives us is the water poured over the head of the baptized person. Jesus makes us holy through the signs of the sacraments. He is acting for us through the sacraments.

JESUS IS PRESENT
IN THE EUCHARIST
AS GOD WITH US
Lk 24: 30-31

In the Eucharist Jesus is present in a different way than he is present in the other sacraments. In the Eucharist Jesus is present “with us” in his risen Body. Jesus not only unites us to God through the Eucharist, he also remains with us. In the Eucharist he becomes “God living among his people.” The Eucharist is the sacrament of the abiding personal presence of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

WE ADORE THE
BODY OF JESUS
GIVEN FOR US
Lev 26: 11-13
2 Cor 6:16

Jesus is the God-Man who is “with us.” In the Eucharist God has pitched his tent among us. We can go to a church and adore the God-Man in the tabernacle. We can offer prayers of praise and adoration to his powerful presence. But even as we worship him in the Eucharist, he is the God-Man present “for us.” The host in the tabernacle must be eaten because the body of the Lord is meant to touch the hearts of the men and women and unites them to God. It is only by eating the body of Christ that we can be united to his death and resurrection and therefore united to God forever.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

John 21, 4-14: The disciples recognize the Risen Lord

Footnotes:

21, 9.12-13: It is strange that Jesus already has fish since none have yet been brought ashore. This meal may have had eucharistic significance for the early Christians since v13 recalls Jn 6, 11, which uses the vocabulary of Jesus’ action At the Last Supper; but see also the note on Mt 14, 19.

21, 11: The exact number 153 is probably meant to have a symbolic meaning in

relation to the apostles' universal mission; Jerome claims that Greek zoologists catalogued 153 species of fish. Or 153 is the sum of the numbers from 1 to 17. Others invoke Ez 47, 10.

21, 12: None...dared to ask him: is Jesus' appearance strange to them? Cf Lk 24, 16; Mk 16, 12; Jn 20, 14. The disciples do, however, recognize Jesus before the breaking of the bread (opposed to Lk 24, 35).

John 21: 4-14

4 When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. 5 Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered him, "No." 6 So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. 7 So the disciples whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. 8 The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish. 9 When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." 11 So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come have breakfast." And none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they realized it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. 14 This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.

REFLECTION:

Jesus is no longer present with us in a visible, human form. Yet he did not leave us orphans. Today Jesus remains with us under the appearance of bread and wine. The food and drink which we receive in the Holy Eucharist is the real saving presence of the Risen Christ among us. His gift of faith and love give us the eyes we need to see him present in the Holy Eucharist. His presence in the Eucharist also strengthens our faith and love. It makes us able to recognize him more easily in other events of our life.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How did the large catch of fish help the disciples recognize Jesus?

What gifts does a person need in order to recognize Jesus' presence?

What are the different ways in which Jesus is present to the world?

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX
JESUS FROM ABOVE AND FROM BELOW

GOD AND HUMAN
Lk 1: 26-38

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is an important figure in the Church. Her whole life teaches us about Jesus. The Scriptures tell us that she was a virgin. When she became pregnant with Jesus she had no sexual relations with a man. She became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. The virginal conception demonstrates to us that Jesus was from above and from below. He was both God and human. He was God because he was conceived by the power of the Spirit. He was human because he was born of a human being, Mary.

MARY IS THE
MOTHER OF GOD

Mary was truly Jesus' mother. She brought him into the world with all of the pain that goes with any childbirth. She nursed him as any mother nurses her child. She cared for him and taught him what he needed to know. This child of hers was God's in the flesh walking among us. Mary was his mother. She is named the Mother of God because she is the mother of Jesus who was God with us in the flesh.

IN PRACTICE WE
CAN DENY THE
HUMANITY OF
JESUS

Difficulties arise when we look at Jesus and see him only as God---a person from above. In doing so we deny the Incarnation from below. We deny that Jesus was really human. His life on earth becomes a lie. God becomes a distant figure---one to be feared. God is seen as unapproachable---a person we have difficulty relating to.

GOD BECOMES
DISTANT AND
UNAPPROACHABLE
Heb 12: 18-24

When our faith in Jesus stresses that he is from above it affects the way we pray and worship. We tend to remove the Eucharist from the people. There is an exaggerated expression of adoration for the Eucharist. It is only touched by the hands of the priest. The vessels which contain it cannot be touched by ordinary hands. Religion becomes impersonal. We pray in order to satisfy and pacify a demanding "god" who lives above us and is not concerned with our everyday lives.

WE BECOME SLAVES
TO THE LAW
Gal 4: 4-7

This type of piety influences the way we treat ourselves and others. We strive for perfection in ourselves and in society. Rules for right and wrong become fixed and unbending---there is no room for ambiguity. God can only be pleased by perfectly fulfilling the letter of the law. We tend to have little understanding and compassion for those who cannot measure up. The result is that we are filled with guilt and approach God with unhealthy fear, as one approaching an enemy.

JESUS IS MORE
THAN A HUMANIST
Jn 5: 17-23
Jn 8: 23-24

On the other hand, if we look at Jesus as only coming from below we deny that Jesus was truly God. We look upon Jesus as a great humanist. He tells us to do good and avoid evil but gives us no means to do so. We see the overwhelming problems of human beings and overcome them with human effort alone. We try to conquer evil in ourselves and in society. Our answer to problems is to work harder, spend more money, seek more education and use force if necessary. When our efforts wear us out, with little change in the problems, we become discouraged. If Jesus were not God, then no matter how great a moral leader he was, he would have no lasting power over evil and we would not be able to experience change in ourselves or society.

WE LOSE THE SENSE
OF MYSTERY AND
REVERENCE

Looking at Jesus as only from below changes our prayer life. Since Jesus is only a great leader there is no place in the liturgy for worship or mystery. We lose the need for ritual and for reverence. Our

gatherings become occasions when people get together simply in order to feel better. The liturgy is geared to what gives the group a high. We would come away empty from the experience.

JESUS IS COMPLETELY HUMAN AND COMPLETELY DIVINE

Heb 2: 14-18

If we see Jesus as a composite being, half God and half human, we lose the effect of his divinity and his humanity. If he is a composite being he is a superman. He does not belong to the human race. He becomes a creature who cannot relate to God or human beings. Jesus is completely human and he is completely divine. He is God without losing any sense of being human. He is human without losing any sense of being God. This makes it possible for us to approach him in prayer as our brother who is one of us and expect him, because he is our God, to give us a share in his power over sin and death.

MARY REVEALS JESUS
Lk 2: 41-52

Through devotion to Mary we come closer to Jesus. We begin to understand how close God has drawn to us. This child she holds, our God, needs to be touched if he is to learn what love is. He needs to be changed, fed, held, and taught. In this child God experiences the touch of humanity and humanity feels the touch of God. The child Mary bore was one of us. We are his brothers and sisters. Devotion to Mary leads to an understanding of the person she bore.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Matthew 1, 18-25: Jesus is God with us

Footnotes:

1, 18-25: This first story of the infancy narrative spells out what is summarily indicated in v 16. The virginal conception of Jesus is the work of the Spirit of God. Joseph's decision to divorce Mary is overcome by the heavenly command that he take her into his home and accept the child as his own. The natural genealogical line is broken but the promises to David are fulfilled; through

Joseph's adoption the child belongs to the family of David. Matthew sees the virginal conception as the fulfillment of Is 7, 14.

1, 18: Betrothed to Joseph...betrothal was the first part of the marriage, constituting a man and woman as husband and wife. Subsequently infidelity was considered adultery. The betrothal was followed some months later by the husband's taking his wife into his home, at which time normal married life began.
1, 19: A righteous man...as a devotee observer of the Mosaic law, Joseph wished to break his union with someone whom he suspected of gross violation of the law. It is commonly said that the law required him to do so, but the texts usually given in support of that view, e.g., Dt 22, 20-21, do not clearly pertain to Joseph's situation.

1, 20: The angel of the Lord...in the Old Testament a common designation of God in communication with a human being. In a dream...see 2, 13. 19.22. These dreams may be meant to recall the dreams of Joseph, son of Jacob the patriarch (Gn 37, 5-11.19). A closer parallel is the dream of Amram, father of Moses, related by Josephus.

1, 23: God is with us...God's promise of deliverance to Judah in Isaiah's time is seen by Matthew as fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, in whom God is with his people. The name Emmanuel is alluded to at the end of the gospel where the risen Jesus assures his disciples of his continued presence, "...I am with you always, until the end of the age" (28, 20).

1, 25: Until she bore a son...the evangelist is concerned to emphasize that Joseph was not responsible for the conception of Jesus. The Greek word translated "until" does not imply normal marital conduct after Jesus' birth, nor does it exclude it.

Matthew 1: 18-25

18 Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. 19 Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. 20 Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. 21 She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son,
And they shall name him Emmanuel,"

Which means “God is with us.” 24 When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. 25 He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

REFLECTION:

God’s ways are indeed not our ways. In order to teach us about himself and to free us from the oppression of sin and death God sends, not an army of scholars or a collection of world leaders, but a helpless baby. This child had no money, no social standing, no religious clout. He was born in an insignificant village to ordinary Jewish parents.

Yet, Jesus is the very center of our faith. We believe that he gives us contact with the mystery of God in a way that no one else can. He alone is the mystery of God who was present in flesh and blood. He is also the answer to all of God’s promises from ages past. As we read the Gospels the Spirit gives us a deep, loving knowledge of Jesus.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

How does considering Jesus as only “from above” or only “from below” give us a distorted picture?

Why is our understanding of who Jesus is so important for Christian living?

What does it mean to say that Jesus “fulfilled the Scripture?”

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN THE TRINITY AND THE INCARNATION

JESUS ORIGINATES IN THE TRINITY

In order to answer the question, “Who is Jesus?” we have to go back to the Trinity. In the Trinity we usually speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These terms come from the Scripture and are used to identify the three relationships within God. In this chapter we will use terms of communication to identify those relationships.

THE SON IS GOD’S SELF-COMMUNICA- TION

Jn 1: 32-34
Jn 16: 4-15

Within God, we will call the Father the communicator; we will call the son the self-communicator, and we will call the Holy Spirit the sealer (the authenticator) of God’s self-communication. The Father communicates, the Son is the result of this communication, and the Spirit certifies that the communication is true. When God communicates outside the Trinity all of the communication takes place in the Son. When the Father spoke the word of creation the universe and all that is in it came to be in the Son.

THE RISEN CHRIST FASHIONS CREATION

Col 1: 15-20

The Son fashioned creation, gave it direction and prepared it for his incarnation in Jesus. All of creation was made in him and through him. Jesus the Christ unites in himself all that is divine and all that is human. In so far as he is from above, he has no beginning. He has always been the Father’s self-communication in the Trinity. At the appropriate time the Son took on flesh. The Son alone became human, lived among us, suffered and died, and rose again. When we look on Jesus, we see God

communicating himself in the flesh. Jesus Christ is the perfect image of God who continues to fashion, give direction to and prepare creation for his second coming.

THE SON DID NOT
CLING TO HIS
DIVINITY
Phil 2: 6-11

In the Incarnation the Son did not cling to what was divine. The Son emptied himself of divinity so that God in the person of Jesus could experience what it meant to be human like us in all things. Jesus had a created mind, will and soul. He grew up just as we do. He was able to suffer and feel compassion. He was limited in his knowledge and in his ability to help others. Yet, deep in his spirit he had a direct understanding of his relationship with his Father at all times. The Spirit continued to certify to the Father that this man was the Son and to certify to Jesus that God was his Father. The Spirit affirmed Jesus in his work to redeem and fashion creation and give it direction.

LIMITLESSNESS
BECAME LIMITED
SO THAT WE COULD
BECOME LIMITLESS
1 Cor 1: 22-25

The most difficult truth of faith for us to accept is that God who is limitless chose to become limited in Jesus. He did this so that he could prepare the way for human beings to transcend their limitation. The stumbling block to faith is to look on the man Jesus hanging on the cross and say, "This is my God." The Spirit certifies in our hearts that this crucified man is our God. Moreover, the Spirit certifies that we and all the members of the human race are being fashioned by him to be what he is; a child of God and a resurrected person.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Matthew 5, 1-12: Jesus' path to happiness

Footnotes:

5, 1-7, 29: The first of the five discourses that are a central part of the structure

of this gospel. It is the discourse section of the first book and contains sayings of Jesus derived from Q and from M. The Lucan parallel is in that gospel's "Sermon on the Plain" (Lk 6, 20-49), although some of the sayings in Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount" have their parallels in other parts of Luke. The careful topical arrangement of the sermon is probably not due only to Matthew's editing; he seems to have had a structured discourse of Jesus as one of his sources.

The form of that source may have been as follows: four beatitudes (5, 3-4.6.11-12), a section on the new righteousness with illustrations (5, 17.20-24.27-28.33-48), a section on good works (6, 1-6.16-18), and three warnings (7, 1-2.15-21.24-27).

5, 1-2: Unlike Luke's sermon, this is addressed not only to the disciples but to the crowds (see 7, 28).

5, 3-12: The form "Blessed are" (is) occurs frequently in the Old Testament in the Wisdom literature and in the psalms. Although modified by Matthew, the first, second, fourth, and ninth beatitudes have Lucan parallels. The others were added by the evangelist and are probably his own composition. A few manuscripts, Western and Alexandrian, and many versions and patristic quotations give the second and third beatitudes in inverted order.

5, 3: The poor in spirit...in the Old Testament, "the poor" (anawim) are those who are without material possessions and whose confidence is in God (see Is 61, 1; Zep 2, 3; in the NAB the word is translated "lowly and humble," respectively, in those texts). Matthew added "in spirit" in order either to indicate that only the devout poor were meant or to extend the beatitude to all, of whatever social rank, who recognized their complete dependence of God. The same phrase "poor in spirit" is found in the Qumran literature (1QM 14, 7).

5, 4: Cf Is 61, 2, "(The Lord has sent me)...to comfort all who mourn." "They will be comforted:" here the passive is a "theological passive" equivalent to the active "God will comfort them"; so also in vv 6 and 7.

5, 5: Cf Ps 37, 11, "...the meek shall possess the land." In the psalm "the land" means the land of Palestine; here it means the kingdom.

5, 8: Cf Ps 24, 4. Only one "whose heart is clean" can take part in the temple worship. To be with God in the temple is described in Ps 42, 3 as "beholding his face," but here the promise to the "clean of heart" is that they will "see" God not in the temple but in the coming kingdom.

5, 10: "Righteousness" here, as usually in Matthew, means conduct in conformity with God's will.

5, 12: "The prophets who were before you:" the disciples of Jesus stand in the

line of the persecuted prophets of Israel. Some would see the expression as indicating also that Matthew considered all Christian disciples as prophets.

Matthew 5: 1-12

1 When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 He began to teach them saying:

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.

6 Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.

7 Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

10 Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

REFLECTION:

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus announces the coming of God's Kingdom. Through the Risen Jesus the power of God is coming into the world in a new way. The power of God will change many hearts and re-make many lives according to the pattern of Jesus' life. Through the example of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit people will be able to depend completely on the Father and to live with a self-giving love. Only those who trust in God and not in themselves will be able to recognize the coming of the kingdom in the Risen Jesus.

Jesus presents his disciples with a new set of heroes and heroines. Those mentioned in this passage are to be admired and imitated in the Christian community. After reading the passage one must ask, "Is Jesus serious?" These virtues go against most cultural values and most of the traits that human beings hold dear. Jesus says to all of us that to be his followers we must radically change the values we cling to. We are invited to become humble obedient

servants.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

What must be done in order for a community to embrace these principles Jesus laid down for us?

What does the mystery of the Trinity have to do with God becoming human?

Why is the Incarnation such an important event in Christian history?

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT JESUS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

JESUS PROCLAIMS THE KINGDOM

Lk 4: 16-21

God, the Father, Son and Spirit looked on the earth and saw what pain, hopelessness, and suffering human beings were enduring. Moved by compassion God became human in the person of Jesus so that Jesus could establish God's kingdom on earth; a kingdom governed by compassion, love and justice. Jesus confronted the power of evil in the world and in human nature. He brought his ministry to ordinary people of his time. He preached the good news to the poor. He proclaimed liberty to captives. He brought new life to old religious structures and changed those that were outdated. He proclaimed that the end time, the time of the Spirit, was at hand.

A MESSAGE OF REPENTENCE

Mt 5: 43-48

Jesus invited people to repent---to change their way of thinking about themselves and others. He fulfilled the Jewish Law but he also gave new life to it and in some cases changed it. The Old Law said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." Jesus taught, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." He invited his listeners to see themselves as sons and daughters of God. They were to go before his Father in heaven and say "abba."

THE KINGDOM DISPLACED THE POWER OF EVIL

The coming of the kingdom of God displaced the powers of this world. Jesus had authority over the demons. He cured many who had been possessed

Mk 5: 1-20

by Satan. The demons recognized him as the one who would overthrow their authority. They were afraid of him and wanted him to leave them alone. Yet, they obeyed him when he commanded them. The kingdom Jesus came to establish crushed once and for all the power of evil.

A KINGDOM
CONQUERS DEATH
Mt 9: 18-26

The kingdom brought an end to the power of death. Jesus raised the daughter of an official from the dead. He did this to demonstrate that through him people could share in new life. Jesus has the keys to death. He has completely crushed the power of death.

JESUS CONTINUES
HIS WORK

Through the Church Jesus continues to preach the good news to the poor. He frees human beings from the shackles of sin and self hate. He touches the sick and invigorates the downhearted, confronts evil and injustice, embraces the lonely and forgotten. The Risen Jesus bonds with our weak and dying selves communicating a spirit of hope and celebration.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Matthew 12, 22-32: The Pharisees call Jesus a devil

Footnotes:

12, 22-32: For the exorcism, see the note on 9, 32-34. The long discussion combines Marcan and Q material (Mk 3, 22-30; Lk 11, 19-20.23; 12, 10). Mk 3, 20-21 is omitted, with a consequent lessening of the sharpness of 12, 48.

12, 25-26: Jesus' first response to the Pharisees' charge is that if it were true, Satan would be destroying his own kingdom.

12, 27: Besides pointing out the absurdity of the charge, Jesus asks how the work of Jewish exorcists (your own people) is to be interpreted. Are they, too, to be charged with collusion with Beelzebul?

12, 29: A short parable illustrates what Jesus is doing. The "strong man" is Satan, whom Jesus has tied up and whose house he is plundering. Jewish

expectation was that Satan would be chained up in the last days (Rv 20, 2); Jesus' exorcisms indicate that those days have begun.

12, 30: This saying, already attached to the preceding verses in Q (see Lk 11, 23), warns that there can be no neutrality where Jesus is concerned. Its pertinence in a context where Jesus is addressing not the neutral but the bitterly opposed is not clear. The accusation of scattering, however, does fit the situation. Jesus is the shepherd of God's people (2, 6), his mission is to the lost sheep of Israel (15, 24); the Pharisees are guilty of scattering the sheep. Matthew 12: 22-32

22 Then they brought to him a demoniac who was blind and mute. He cured the mute person so that he could speak and see. 23 All the crowd was astounded, and said, "Could this perhaps be the Son of David?" 24 But the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man drives out demons only by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons." 25 But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and no town or house divided against itself will stand. 26 And if Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself; how, then, will his kingdom stand? 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. 28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 How can anyone enter a strong man's house and steal his property, unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house. 30 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. 31 Therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

REFLECTION:

Jesus confronted the power of Satan. He drove out the dumb and blind spirit who possessed the man. The Pharisees were jealous and afraid of Jesus. Rather than interpreting his miracles as signs of the kingdom they interpreted them as works of the devil. They clung to their hardheaded belief that Jesus was evil. Their hardness of heart made it impossible for them to see Jesus in a positive light.

All of us are blind. When Jesus enters into our lives he gives us the power to see our sinfulness and repent of it. He teaches us about ourselves and shows us that he has been with us during both the difficult and good times. We see the need to accept ourselves as we are. As we do so we see the way to the Father.

Jesus opens our lips so that we can witness to his goodness to us. Everything that has happened to us, good and bad, is to be used to proclaim the kingdom to

others. Only Jesus can take away our blindness and give us the courage to witness to the kingdom.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why did Jesus establish the kingdom of God?

What is the sin of blasphemy against the Spirit? How does this occur today in our world?

How does the Church (the people) continue the work of Jesus?

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE THE RISEN JESUS

MINISTERS
ANNOUNCE THE
VICTORY
Mt 28: 16-20

The twofold purpose of ministry is to announce the good news of Christ's victorious resurrection and to apply that victory to the human race. Through ministers the Risen Jesus continues to announce the kingdom of God and implement it through the Church. It is the Risen Jesus who breathes life into the Church and gives direction to the kingdom. He continues to care for and interact with human beings through the sacraments. The ordained ministers of the Church, and by extension the lay ministers, make it possible for the work of the kingdom to continue. Through these people the Risen humanity of Jesus touches us. At their hands Jesus brings healing and forgiveness, he frees captives and preaches the good news to the poor. In the ministers of the Church Jesus remains with us until he comes again.

HOPE IS THE
SOURCE OF
MINISTRY
1 Pt 3: 13-17

Our ministry is a ministry of hope. Since it is not possible for us to transform our lives or to transform the creation around us we have to rely on the promise of the Risen Christ. Our hope is that he will work the necessary change in us so that we can become free and resurrected persons. We hope that through us he will touch the creation and make all things new. This takes time. Jesus will bring about the fullness of the kingdom in his own time and under his own terms. Our part is to confidently trust that the Spirit of the resurrection is at work in

us and in creation even though Jesus' plan unfolds in ways we do not expect.

LAZARUS HAD TO DIE

When Jesus went to visit Lazarus and found him dead in the tomb after four days he was sad and he prayed to his Father. Then Jesus said to Lazarus, "Rise up." Although Lazarus came back from the dead he did not live a risen life. Jesus gave him breath and heartbeat so that he could continue to live his earthly life. Lazarus had to die again. Then he could share in Christ's resurrection as we can.

JESUS CONQUERED DEATH 1 Cor 15: 1-8

When Jesus died his heart stopped beating and he stopped breathing. His body was placed in a tomb and remained there for three days. On the third day he was raised from the dead by his Father. But Jesus was raised to the life of the resurrection. By obediently dying he conquered death for everyone. Death no longer had power over him. He was raised to new life. His body was changed. It had new properties. Jesus could appear and disappear. He could walk through walls. He ate with his disciples and they recognized him after he rose from the dead. His material risen body was like his earthly body yet it was no longer bound by our rules of space and time. It was no longer limited.

WE WILL BE RISEN FLESH 1 Cor 15: 20-28 1 Cor 15: 35-44

When Jesus was raised from the dead he was given complete authority to implement the kingdom on earth. The power of evil, death, and sin would not be able to stand against his authority. Jesus sent his Spirit of freedom into the hearts of people to invite them to share in his resurrection. His bodily resurrection was a pledge that we too would rise from the dead. Jesus' pledge is that we will be changed into his likeness. We will not be bound by the limits of space and time nor will we be terrorized by sin and death. We will see God and our family and friends face to face.

WE WILL ENJOY THE DIRECT

Within each one of us there is a desire to know God and to be loved by God. This desire cannot be ful-

VISION OF GOD

Ps 42: 1-2

Ps 63: 1-6

filled by anything in this life. When we rise from the dead we will enjoy a direct vision of God. Our desire to know God will be satisfied and we will experience God's great love for us. In our new life we will learn more and more about God. We will grow in our love for God and for our risen brothers and sisters. This direct vision of God is called the Beatific Vision.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Matthew 13, 24-50: Jesus teaches about the kingdom of heaven

Footnotes:

24 He proposed another parable to them. The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. 26 When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. 27 The slaves of the householder came to him and said, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?' 28 He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves said to him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 29 He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. 30 Let them grow together until the harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, "First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn."'

31 He proposed another parable to them. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in the branches.'

33 He spoke to them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened."

34 All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables. He spoke to them only in parables, 35 to fulfill what had been said through the prophet:

"I will open my mouth in parables,
I will announce what has lain hidden from
the foundation (of the world)."

36 Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples approached him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field. 37 He said in reply, "He who sows good seed is the Son of Man, 38 the field is the

world, the good seed the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. 40 Just as weeds are collected and burned (up) with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. 43 The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears ought to hear. 44 The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys the field. 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. 46 When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it. 47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. 48 When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. 49 Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

REFLECTION:

The kingdom of heaven is a mystery. In order to understand this mystery we must listen in faith to the words of Jesus. By praying we can come to recognize the presence of God's kingdom in our hearts. We will understand what Jesus does for us and we will be filled with the desire to work for his kingdom.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why do you think Jesus used parables as a way to teach the people the lessons he wanted them to understand?

How do the parables in Matthew about the kingdom of heaven relate to us today?

Why is the kingdom of heaven a mystery?

CHAPTER THIRTY
JESUS: SOURCE OF LIFE

THE RESURRECTION
OF THE WORLD
Eph 1: 15-23

God in the person of the Son created all things and fashioned them in such a way that they speak to us of God's burning love. All of creation now dwells in the Risen Christ and reflects God's goodness. The presence of the Risen Lord is found in everything. The resurrection of Jesus marks the beginning of the resurrection of the world. His new life has been given to all creation. The Risen Lord in the Church is making the world new again.

GOD GIVES TO US
Eph 2: 4-10

The life of the resurrection is difficult for us to accept. We are more comfortable with a God who we can keep at a distance. We prefer to do things to please God and we have a terrible time with a God who does things for us. The resurrection is God doing for us---God giving us the Spirit, the Church, and life. What makes the resurrection more difficult for us to accept is that it is a free gift. We cannot earn it or pay God back for it.

ALREADY RISEN
BUT NOT YET
RISEN
Rm 8: 18-25

In Baptism Jesus made us resurrected persons yet we struggle with human limitations and the knowledge that we must die. We are shocked by the evil that surrounds us and at times seem to overwhelm the followers of the Risen Jesus. Our faith tells us that we are already risen but the

struggle of our daily lives testifies to us that we are not yet risen. When we cooperate with the Spirit of Jesus we are gradually transformed as well. At the moment of our death our transformation is completed. At the appointed time the world's transformation will be complete.

GOD CELEBRATES
OUR FLESH
Heb 2: 14-15

God has a burning desire to love and be loved by us. This desire was so strong that the second person became human in the person of Jesus. God took on our flesh to free us from sin and death and to celebrate our enfleshment. God wanted to be like us and in so doing made us like God.

JESUS LABORS
FOR US
Jn 5: 1-17

Jesus' life, death and resurrection were his "life's work" on our behalf. By working on our behalf he wanted to make it possible for us to be free and to experience his love and affirmation. The Risen Jesus continues to labor for us through all creation---the things of creation and the relationships we form are filled with the presence of the Risen Jesus.

BUILDERS OF THE
NEW EARTH
Rm 5: 12-17

Jesus completed the work of salvation in his flesh. He saved us in his humanity. Just as Adam in the flesh brought sin, and as a consequence death, into the world, so Jesus conquered sin and overcame death in his flesh. His continuing work to apply the fruit of his victory occurs in the flesh of his Body on earth. We followers of Christ are necessarily in love with the flesh. We are builders of the new earth. We seek and find holiness in the material creation and in our fellow human beings.

WE BUILD WITH
JESUS

All areas of life---political, physical, spiritual---become our concern because they are Jesus' concern. We cooperate with the Risen Jesus who desire it is to transform the earth and make it new. As fellow builders, we must concern ourselves with the needs of our brothers and sisters, with the

environment, and with unjust political structures. As we do this the kingdom is being realized and the risen life of Jesus grows in the world.

SCRIPTURE FOR CHAPTER THIRTY

Matthew 9, 18-26: Jesus has power over death

Footnotes:

9, 18: Official...literally “ruler.” Mark call him “one of the synagogue officials” (Mk 5, 22). My daughter has just died...Matthews heightens the Marcan “my daughter is at the point of death” (Mk 5, 23).

9, 20: Tassel...possibly “fringe.” The Mosaic law prescribed that tassels be worn on the corners of one’s garment as a reminder to keep the commandments (see Nm 15, 37-39; Dt 22, 12)

9, 24: Sleeping...sleep is a biblical metaphor for death (see Ps 87, 6 LXX; Dn 12, 2; 1 Thes 5, 10). Jesus’ statement is not a denial of the child’s real death, but an assurance that she will be roused from her sleep of death.

Matthew 9: 18-26

18 While he was saying these things to them, an official came forward, knelt down before him, and said, “My daughter has just died. But come, lay your hand on her, and she will live.” 19 Jesus rose and followed him, and so did his disciples. 20 A woman suffering hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the tassel on his cloak. 21 She said to herself, “If only I can touch his cloak, I shall be cured.” 22 Jesus turned around and saw her, and said, “Courage, daughter! Your faith has saved you.” And from that hour the woman was cured.

23 When Jesus arrived at the official’s house and saw the flute players and the crowd who were making a commotion, 24 he said, “Go away! The girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they ridiculed him. 25 When the crowd was put out, he came and took her by the hand, and the little girl rose. 26 And news of this spread

throughout the land.

REFLECTION:

In this Scripture passage both the official and the sick woman had faith in Jesus. Both of them believed that Jesus was bringing the saving power of God into the world. Jesus showed that he had power over all our enemies---even death itself. In the past God gave life back to people through the hands of the holy prophets. This required much prayer and abiding trust on the part of the prophet. Jesus raises the girl to life simply by taking her hand. Jesus showed that he possessed power over life and death.

The other message to us is the healing power of touch! How important it is to us that we are available to others in times of need and that by laying on hands we bring comfort and healing to the person. The power of touch is often used by Jesus in his ministry. We are called to be healers as well and through our touch and that of others we can bring healing to our brothers and sisters.

STUDY QUESTIONS: (Limit response to one page per question).

Why is touch so important in healings?

How were the miracles of Jesus different from magic?

How is Jesus the one savior of all people?