


UNIT TWO: I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

LESSON 3: Thinking about Jesus: Infancy and Hidden Life

CONTENTS OF LESSON:

1. 'The whole of Christ's life was a continual teaching..' [Pope John Paul II CT9]. By studying and contemplating the mysteries of his life we can get to know Christ in a deeper way and love and follow him better. [CCC 2715] We say 'MYSTERY' because what we see of Christ's life points to much more that is invisible. [CCC515]
2. The highlights of the infancy and 'hidden life' are found in the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary:
ANNUNCIATION: The angel announced that Jesus would be great, the Son of the Most High God; an everlasting king. He would be holy, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.
VISITATION: Elisabeth realized the presence of God because her baby leapt for joy and the Holy Spirit revealed it to her. Mary praised God for his mercy and power.
BIRTH OF CHRIST: Though Jesus was a king, he was born in a stable and laid in a manger. The angels sang the 'Gloria' which we sing at Mass. [CCC525]
PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE: Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to consecrate him to God. Simeon and Anna, led by the Spirit, realized who Jesus was. Simeon called him God's salvation, a light and a sign. [CCC529]
FINDING IN THE TEMPLE: Jesus' words to his mother show his total commitment to his mission and his awareness that he is God's Son. He remained obedient to his human parents, as to his Heavenly Father. [CCC532, 534]
3.  Jesus invites us to be one with him as we live our daily lives. We can identify with him since he lived an ordinary life in a family and community like any of us. He worked as a carpenter, studied the scriptures, attended the synagogue, ate, helped, played, prayed etc. [CCC 531,533]

REFERENCES: Luke 1: 26-38; 39-56; 2:1-20; 22-39; 41-52. John 15:4.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts, Bibles, materials for 'mystery'. (See Starter)

NB. We will focus on Jesus as we follow the events portrayed in the Joyful Mysteries. Mary's role and response will be taken up next year in the 'Marian Morning'.

I. STARTER:

[Before the students enter the class a 'mystery' is staged. (A few students could be asked to help beforehand.) E.g. Flower petals strewn on the floor; a strange smell filling the room; the chairs placed in an unusual way. The teacher acts surprised and discusses the possible reasons:]

- What could have happened here? Who do you think has done this?
[After some discussion the teacher explains:]
- This is what we might call a MYSTERY. [Write on board.] It was not a real mystery, because we planned it; but it helps us to understand the meaning of the word mystery. What does mystery mean? [It is something that cannot be fully understood or explained.]
- The Church calls the events of Jesus' life 'mysteries'. E.g. The mystery of his Death and Resurrection, the mystery of his Incarnation. Why do you think we call them mysteries?
[Because Jesus is God, and what we see of his life is only a sign of much, much more that we can't see or understand fully.]
- Even though we can't fully understand, it is very good to study these mysteries, because they help us to know Christ better, and if we know him, we will love him (He is so loveable!) and if we love him, we will be able to follow him better and better.

II. DEVELOPMENT:

- In the next 4 lessons we will study 4 important parts of Jesus' life, mostly following the 'Mysteries' of the Rosary. First we will study the INFANCY of Jesus [Write on blackboard]. This means the time when he was a baby.

[Give out the handouts and ask the students to work on the first 4 mysteries: Annunciation, Visitation, Birth of Christ and Presentation. They read the Bible passages, answer the questions and then think of any words that describe the atmosphere of the event. These words could be taken straight from the Bible passage. Go over the answers. Accept the students' suggestions for the describing words:]

ANNUNCIATION: [Describing words: WONDERFUL, GREAT, IMPOSSIBLE.]

1. What did the angel Gabriel say about Jesus?
[He will be great; the Son of the Most High God. He will be an everlasting king.]
2. Why would Mary's baby be called holy?
[Because Mary would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit.]

VISITATION: [Describing words: PRAISE, JOY, BLESSED.]

3. What made Elisabeth realize that God was present?
[Her baby leaped in her womb; the Holy Spirit revealed what was happening.]
4. What did Mary praise God for?
[For the great things He had done; his holiness, mercy and power in helping the poor and weak.]

BIRTH OF CHRIST: [Describing words: HUMBLE, GLORY, PRAISE, AMAZED.]

5. How was Jesus' birth different from that of other kings or great people?
[He was born in poor and humble surroundings: a stable; his bed was a manger (a feeding box for animals); his first visitors were shepherds.]
6. What was the angels' song? Where do you hear it nowadays?
['Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to people of goodwill.' We sing it at Mass.]

ANNUNCIATION: [Describing words: GUIDED, PRAISE, AMAZED.]

7. Why did Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to the temple?
[To present him to God according to the religious law.]
Ever since God spared the Jews' first born sons in Egypt, (when all the Egyptian first-born died) the Jews always presented their first born sons to God. This action meant: 'This child rightly belongs to you!' It reminds parents that their children really belong to God, not to them.
8. What did Simeon call Jesus?
[God's salvation; a light; a sign.]
Again it was the Holy Spirit who led Simeon and Anna to recognize the child.

- Let's look at the next part of Jesus' life. This part covers about 30 years and is called his 'HIDDEN LIFE'. [Write on blackboard]
All this time, Jesus lived quietly like any of us. Only his mother and father remembered the exciting events when he was a baby. The Bible gives us only one story from this entire period: The story of the 'FINDING IN THE TEMPLE'.

[Read the last Bible passage and answer the questions together:]

Describing words: ANXIOUS, WORRIED, COMMITMENT.

1. Where did Jesus and his family go? For what? With whom?
[To Jerusalem; for the Passover Festival; with friends and relatives.]
2. What did Jesus answer his mother? What does it show?
*["Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"
It showed that Jesus was aware that he was God's Son and that he was committed to the work he was sent for.]*
3. What message do you get from verse 51?
[Though Jesus was God, he was obedient to his earthly parents. We could learn from him.]

III. ACTIVITY:

- Though the Bible is mostly silent about 30 years of Jesus life, let's try to imagine what he would have been doing and experiencing as he lived in a family and community.

[Ask the students to quietly note down what they think Jesus might have been doing. They share in groups of 3 and then come up and mime one experience. (Miming takes less time than acting with words) The teacher could go round while they are planning and make sure each group selects a different act. The rest of the class tries to guess. The teacher adds comments and makes a list on the board while the students make one on the back of their handouts.]

- JESUS WORKED as a carpenter with his father. He must have spent many hours sweating it out, sawing, carving, carrying logs of wood, cleaning the wood-shavings etc.
- PLAYED with other children, neighbors, cousins. Like any child Jesus must have played, gone for walks, or gone fishing etc. In the Gospels we hear him talk about children's games.
- STUDIED. Hebrew boys had to study Greek and also the scriptures. He must have spent a lot of time studying as he knew the scriptures very well and often quoted from them.
- ATTENDED THE SYNAGOGUE on the Sabbath. As we go to Church on Sundays, Jews attended the synagogue to listen to God's Word.
- ATE TOGETHER WITH HIS FAMILY. Like any family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph had meals together. On the Sabbath they had a special meal with prayers.
- Jesus must have HELPED IN HOUSEHOLD JOBS too like marketing, fetching water, cleaning etc.

IV. INTERIORISATION/PRAAYER:

Jesus once said to his disciples, "ABIDE IN ME, AS I ABIDE IN YOU!"

Abide means 'remain' or 'live'. Most of his life Jesus lived an ordinary life, like any of us. He wants us to connect to him, to remember him, talk to him, act as he would, as if he was living in us.

Spend a few minutes and talk to Jesus about any experience in your life: at home, school, church, neighborhood.

[Students pray in silence for AT LEAST 5 minutes.]

HOME ASSIGNMENT:

⇒ Read the handout.

⇒ Pray the Joyful Mysteries with your family and explain each mystery to them.