

# **The Catholic Connections Handbook**

*For Middle Schoolers*

*Second Edition*

## **CATECHIST GUIDE: THE NEW TESTAMENT, THE CHURCH, AND THE SACRAMENTS**

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Pray It! Study It! Live It!® resources offer a holistic approach to learning, living, and passing on the Catholic faith.



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# Introduction

## Quick Overview

This guide is the parish catechist’s resource for *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers, Second Edition (CCH)*. The *CCH* is a comprehensive overview of the Catholic faith, in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Its fifty chapters follow the outline of the Catholic faith as presented in the *Catechism* under the “four pillars” of faith: The Profession of Faith (the Creed), the Celebration of the Christian Mystery (the Sacraments), Life in Christ (Morality), and Christian Prayer. Thus, included in the *CCH* are the topics the Creed, liturgy and Sacraments, Christian morality, and prayer. Ten additional life issues chapters are found only in the catechist guides. The main text of each chapter in the *CCH* presents a particular topic of the Catholic faith. The sidebar articles in the chapter enhance the main text by connecting the topic to prayer, Catholic saints, Catholic history, and lived faith.

For the convenience of catechists, three separate guides accompany the *CCH*:

- *The Old Testament, the Trinity, and the Mission of Christ* (covering *CCH* chapters 1 through 18, and featuring two life issues chapters)
- *The New Testament, the Church, and the Sacraments* (covering *CCH* chapters 19 through 36, and featuring two life issues chapters)
- *Christian Morality and Prayer* (covering *CCH* chapters 37 through 50, and featuring six life issues chapters)

Each of these catechist guides provides the teaching process for catechists to use in covering each chapters’ content and connecting it to young people’s life experience.

In preparation for creating these guides, we spent many hours observing and interviewing catechists and parish catechetical leaders. The lessons in this guide were created to directly respond to the needs we observed and the needs those leaders shared with us.

## Leading the Lessons

Each chapter in this guide is presented as a 60- to 90-minute lesson and provides time for the participants to read from the *CCH*. Each lesson is presented in a two-page spread so that you can teach the entire lesson without flipping back and forth between pages. Lessons follow the Saint Mary’s Press Pray It! Study It! Live It! catechetical process that catechists have used with great success. Your preparation consists of familiarizing yourself with the *CCH* chapter content, reviewing the lesson in this guide, and gathering a few supplies.

Each lesson has four components: (1) a Pray It! segment found in the guide only and led by the catechist, or found in the Pray It! article in the *CCH*; (2) a Study It! segment; (3) a Live It! segment; and (4) a Pray It! segment found in the *CCH*. Each component is assigned a suggested time or time range. If your class is 60 minutes long, you will need to follow the shorter times; if your class is 75 or 90 minutes long, you can follow the longer times. Here's a quick look at the lesson components.

### ● **Pray It! Opening Prayer**

Each lesson begins with a short opening prayer related to the chapter topic. This prayer may be found only in the guide, or sometimes in the Pray It! article in the *CCH*, to be led by the catechist. Suggestions are included for actively involving participant volunteers in the prayer.

### ● **Study It!**

The Study It! component is the heart of the lesson and will take the majority of your class time. During this time you will cover or review the chapter content. The Study It! process follows the chapter headings and is typically divided into three sections. Each section has a suggestion for beginning with a simple activity or discussion to prepare the young people for the content in the section. This is followed by reading or presenting that section's content in the *CCH*. A suggestion for reviewing the section content through questions and discussion is also provided.

You may read or present the content of the sections in a variety of ways. Here are some suggestions:

- Have the participants take turns reading the *CCH* section aloud, switching at each paragraph.
- Have the young people read the section silently to themselves.
- Ask the participants to read the chapter at home, prior to class. Review the content in class using the chapter summary handout.
- Present the content of each section in your own words, asking volunteers to read key sentences or paragraphs at appropriate times.

There is a lot of content in each chapter. It will not be possible to cover it all in depth, especially if your class is 60 minutes or less, so you will need to summarize some sections of the chapter quickly. The lesson directions suggest which sections to summarize, and the numbered points on the chapter summary handout provide key points to use.

## ● **Live It!**

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The Live It! component is an engaging learning activity that connects the chapter content to the young people's life experience. These activities are typically about 15 minutes long, requiring a minimum of supplies and usually having the participants work together. If your class time is short, you will need to stay on top of the time and keep moving the process forward without too much delay. If your class time is longer, you can allow more time for the participants to interact with the content and with one another.

## ● **Pray It! Closing Prayer**

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The session concludes with another simple prayer, using the prayer from the Pray It! article in the *CCH*. Suggestions are included for actively involving participant volunteers in the prayer.

## **Handouts**

The lesson for each chapter of the *CCH* has two one-page handouts designed to make your life as a catechist a little easier. The first handout is the chapter summary handout. On it are two or three learning objectives that are the main goals of the lesson. The chapter summary handout also contains a summary of the key content in the chapter. This handout can be used in the following ways:

- to help you prepare for leading the lesson with a quick overview of the main content points
- to hand out to the young people as a review of the chapter content
- to send home to parents and guardians so they are aware of, and reinforce, what their son or daughter is learning in the sessions

The second handout is typically used as a learning resource in the Study It! or Live It! components of the lesson process. Sometimes it will contain a prayer to use during the Pray It! component. This activity handout is often integral to the presentation of the lesson, but sometimes it is offered as an optional activity that can be used to extend and enhance the lesson. This optional activity handout can be used as a take-home activity. The variety of activity handouts allows for some to be used as discussion starters; some as informal, quick checks of the content presented; some as an aid to individual or small-group work; and some as a means to encourage creativity and personal expression in learning.

## Online Content

All of the handouts in this guide are also available online for easy access and customization. Also available online are a variety of other resources that can be used to reinforce the content covered in a lesson and provide additional support for lesson planning. These resources include:

- chapter quizzes
- tip sheets for catechists and parents
- links to helpful websites
- additional activity handouts

Go to [www.smp.org/resourcecenter/books/](http://www.smp.org/resourcecenter/books/) to see how these support materials might help you.

## Spirit and Life

As a catechist, you have taken on an exciting and profoundly important task. Saint John Baptist de La Salle, the patron saint of teachers, often reminded his teachers that their students were not simply students in an academic sense but were *disciples*: “This must be your goal when you instruct your disciples, that they live a Christian life and that your words become spirit and life for them” (Loes and Huether, eds., *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, p. 440). As a Lasallian ministry, Saint Mary’s Press has this goal as well—that as you use and adapt these guides in your own situation, your words may become spirit and life for your own disciples. We at Saint Mary’s Press deeply appreciate your ministry and hope that our resources serve you well. Please be assured of our continual prayers for you and the young people you serve.



# **Part 1: The Creed**

# Chapter 19

## The Bible: The Gospels

### Preparation and Supplies

- Study chapter 19, “The Bible: The Gospels,” in the handbook.
- Provide sheets of paper and pens or pencils, one for each group of four or five.
- Provide four index cards for each pair of young people.
- Provide Bibles and markers, one of each for each pair or group of three.
- Write the following list of bullet points on the board:
  - The birth of Jesus
  - Jesus’ first public miracle
  - The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand
  - The Last Supper
  - Jesus’ suffering and Crucifixion
  - The Resurrection
- Make copies of the chapter 19 activity handout, “Sharing the Good News” (Document #: TX003567), one for each pair or group of three.

### Pray It! (5 minutes)

**Tell** the participants that in this lesson they will learn about the Gospels. **Explain** that through the accounts of the four Gospel writers, we learn who Jesus is and how he wants us to live. **Select** a volunteer to read 2 Peter 1:16. **Pray** the following:

- God our Father, we thank you for those whom you inspired to preserve and pass down the story of our salvation. As we enter into our study of the New Testament, help us to see and embrace the truths contained within. May our study, prayer, and immersion in the Gospel message bring us closer to you and your Son, Jesus, through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

### Study It! (35 to 45 minutes, depending on your class length)

#### A. Jesus and the New Testament

1. **Organize** the young people into groups of four or five. Distribute a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil to each group. **Explain** the task as follows:
  - In your groups, discuss what you know about the events from Jesus’ life that are written on the board.
  - Invite representatives from each group to share what they know about the various events in Jesus’ life.
2. **Direct** the participants to read the chapter introduction and the section “Jesus and the New Testament,” on pages 202–205 in the handbook. The content covers points 1 and 2 on the handout “Chapter 19 Summary” (Document #: TX003566).

3. **(Optional) Direct** the young people to find a partner and turn to the Think About It! article on page 205 in the handbook. **Instruct** the pairs to read the article and discuss the questions.

## B. Writing the Gospels

1. **Invite** the participants to reflect on a situation in their lives in which they and their family members experienced the same event in a totally different way. After a few moments, **direct** the young people to turn to someone near them and, in 60 seconds, share their experiences, explaining how each family member would describe the event. **Ask** for a few volunteers to share their stories with the group.
2. **Direct** the participants to read the section “Writing the Gospels,” on pages 205–208 in the handbook. The content covers points 3 through 7 on the handout “Chapter 19 Summary” (Document #: TX003566).
3. **Direct** the young people to find a partner. Give four index cards to each pair. **Ask** the pairs to write the names of the evangelists—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—one on each card. Then **ask**:
  - Having looked at the differences in the four Gospels, explain why each Gospel writer chose to write about Jesus the way he did. Write your response on that Gospel writer’s card. Be ready to report your answers.

**Write** the names of the evangelists on the board and ask for responses. **Summarize** the participants’ responses under the names of each of the evangelists.

## C. Getting to Know Christ

**Direct** the participants to read the section “Getting to Know Christ,” on pages 208–211 in the handbook. The content covers points 8 and 9 on the handout “Chapter 19 Summary” (Document #: TX003566).

*Note:* If you are running short on time, you may wish to just briefly summarize this section.

### ● Live It! (20 to 25 minutes)

1. **Organize** the young people into pairs or groups of three. **Distribute** a Bible, markers, and a copy of the chapter 19 activity handout, “Sharing the Good News” (Document #: TX003567), to each pair or group. **Assign** each pair or group one of the following Scripture passages:
  - Luke 2:1–7
  - John 2:1–12
  - Matthew 14:13–21

**Explain** the task as follows:

- As a group, look up and read your assigned passage in your Bible.
- In the space allotted on the handout, design a “Web page” containing a short news story on the events you read about. Be sure your Web page includes artwork.

2. **Invite** the pairs or groups to share and explain their Web page with the entire group.

### ● Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

**Direct** the participants to the Pray It! article on page 203 in the handbook. **Lead** the young people in praying the prayer together. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

### ● Online Resources

To access activities and a quiz related to this chapter, go to [www.smp.org/resourcecenter/books/](http://www.smp.org/resourcecenter/books/) and click on “Catechist: Additional Course Handouts or Quizzes.” Tip sheets and links are also available.

# The Bible: The Gospels

## Chapter 19 Summary

### Chapter Learning Objectives

- The participants will examine how the four Gospels differ in emphasis because of the different perspectives of their authors.
- The participants will recognize that in Scripture, especially in the Gospels, we get to know Jesus and the truth of his message of salvation.

### Content Summary

1. We can get to know Jesus through the events of his life and his message, as recorded in the four Gospels, in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the many letters of the New Testament.
2. *Inspiration* means that God is the ultimate author of the books of the New Testament, including the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These Gospels are at the heart of the whole Bible.
3. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the *synoptic* Gospels, because they record similar events and teachings. Yet each synoptic Gospel is also different from the others.
4. Matthew wrote for the Jewish people, and showed how Jesus' life fulfills the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament.
5. Mark wrote more for Gentiles and often explains Jewish customs in his Gospel.
6. Luke's Gospel emphasizes that Jesus came to save all people, and includes some unique stories to teach God's mercy and love for the poor. Luke's Gospel also teaches about Jesus' childhood.
7. John's Gospel is unique because it begins with the pre-existence of the Word of God as the Second Person of the Trinity. John's Gospel emphasizes the divinity of Jesus.
8. We can understand the Gospels better if we (a) know the audience and purpose for which each Gospel was written, (b) try to get the basic idea and realize that sometimes physical realities stand for spiritual realities, (c) realize that some Gospel events show that the Old Testament is being fulfilled through Jesus, (d) look to notes and commentaries within the Bible or in other books to help us, and (e) realize that we are not alone. We look to the bishops of the Church to explain Scripture and Tradition correctly, and, in our own study and prayer, we should ask the Holy Spirit to guide us.
9. If we read Scripture, we will get to know Jesus. In getting to know Jesus, we will learn what it means to be happy, in this life and in the next.

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## Chapter 19 Activity: Sharing the Good News



Choose one of the following Scripture stories and read it in your Bible. In the space below, design a “Web page” containing a short news story about the event you read about. Be sure your Web page includes artwork about the event.

- The Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1–7)
- The Miracle at the Wedding Feast at Cana (John 2:1–12)
- The Miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (Matthew 14:13–21)



# Chapter 20

20

## The Bible: The Acts of the Apostles

### Preparation and Supplies

- Study chapter 20, “The Bible: The Acts of the Apostles,” in the handbook.
- Provide sheets of paper and pens or pencils, one of each for each group of three or four.
- Provide Bibles, one for each participant.
- Make copies of the chapter 20 activity handout, “Come, Holy Spirit” (Document #: TX003569), one for each young person.

### Pray It! (5 minutes)

**Tell** the participants that class will begin with a prayer to the Holy Spirit. **Invite** a volunteer to read John 14:26. **Pray** the following:

- Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Amen.

**Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

### Study It! (35 to 45 minutes, depending on your class length)

#### A. Pentecost

1. **Ask** the young people to find a partner and answer the following questions. (You may want to write these on the board.)
  - If you could travel back to the time of Jesus, what particular event in Jesus’ life would you want to witness? Why?
  - Have you ever asked the Holy Spirit to help you make a difficult decision or to respond to the need of another? Describe the situation.

**Invite** volunteers to share their responses.

2. **Direct** the participants to read the chapter introduction and the section “Pentecost,” on pages 212–216 in the handbook. The content covers points 1 through 4 on the handout “Chapter 20 Summary” (Document #: TX003568).
3. **(Optional) Direct** the participants to the Think About It! article on page 215 in the handbook. **Read** the article. **Use** the questions there to lead a discussion.

#### B. The Work of Saint Peter

1. **Organize** the participants into groups of three or four. **Distribute** a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil to each group. **Explain** the task as follows:
  - On a sheet of paper, each group is to write a chapter for “Acts of the Disciples.” The purpose of your chapter is to share the news about ways young people today are spreading the message of Jesus Christ. Your group’s chapter should indicate how the Holy Spirit is at work in your world. Your chapter can be a story about an event you have experienced, it can be a prayer, or it can be a teaching you would like to share with other young people.
2. **Invite** the groups to read their chapters to the large group when everyone is finished working.

3. **Direct** the young people to read the section “The Work of Saint Peter,” on pages 216–217 in the handbook. The content covers point 5 on the handout “Chapter 20 Summary” (Document #: TX003568).
4. **(Optional) Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the Did You Know? article on page 217 in the handbook. **Ask** the participants to name our current Pope. **Help** them to connect with your local church (your diocese and parishes) by asking them to name the local bishop (or cardinal or archbishop) and some of the local priests and deacons. **Write** these names on the board.

### C. The Travels of Saint Paul

**Direct** the participants to read the section “The Travels of Saint Paul,” on pages 218–221 in the handbook. The content covers points 6 and 7 on the handout “Chapter 20 Summary” (Document #: TX003568).

*Note:* If you are running short on time, you may wish to just briefly summarize this section.

### Live It! (15 to 20 minutes)

1. **Organize** the young people into ten groups. **Distribute** a Bible to each participant, and **assign** each group one of the following Scripture passages:
  - Acts of the Apostles 1:1–9 (Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit)
  - Acts of the Apostles 2:2–13 (The Coming of the Holy Spirit)
  - Acts of the Apostles 2:43–47 (Life among Believers)
  - Acts of the Apostles 3:1–10 (Peter and John Heal a Lame Beggar)
  - Acts of the Apostles 6:1–8 (The Seven Helpers or The First Deacons)
  - Acts of the Apostles 8:26–40 (Philip and the Ethiopian Official)
  - Acts of the Apostles 12:6–18 (Peter Is Set Free from Prison)
  - Acts of the Apostles 15:1–29 (Jews and Gentiles: The First Council)

**Explain** the task as follows:

- A blockbuster movie starring the Holy Spirit is soon to be released. Your job is to create a movie trailer that will be the “teaser” to invite people to come see the movie. *(Optional: Show a clip to illustrate that a trailer is made up of several scenes.)*
  - In your group, you will read your assigned Scripture passage from the Acts of the Apostles and then develop a scene or skit that will be part of the movie trailer.
2. **Direct** the groups to present their scenes in order of the assigned chapters.
  3. **Invite** comments on how the Holy Spirit was active in the scenes.

### Optional Activity

**Distribute** to each participant a copy of the chapter 20 activity handout, “Come, Holy Spirit” (Document #: TX003569), and a Bible. **Use** the handout to reinforce the young people’s knowledge of Pentecost.

### Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

**Direct** the young people to the Pray It! article on page 213 in the handbook. **Lead** them in praying the prayer together. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

### Online Resources

To access activities and a quiz related to this chapter, go to [www.smp.org/resourcecenter/books/](http://www.smp.org/resourcecenter/books/) and click on “Catechist: Additional Course Handouts or Quizzes.” Tip sheets and links are also available.

# The Bible: The Acts of the Apostles

## Chapter 20 Summary

### Chapter Learning Objectives

- The participants will explore how the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was a central event in the life of the early Church and in the spread of Christianity.
- The participants will examine various events in the Acts of the Apostles and the work of Peter and Paul.

### Content Summary

1. The Acts of the Apostles is a written account of the early Church following Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven.
2. The Acts of the Apostles focuses on the Church of the Apostles and their first followers.
3. This book's main theme is how the Holy Spirit guided the Apostles so the Word of God could spread, and it focuses in particular on the work of Saints Peter and Paul.
4. The Acts of the Apostles begins with the Ascension of Jesus and then gives an account of the event of Pentecost.
5. Saint Peter emerges as the leader of the early Church as it struggles to find its way. In an important event, Peter realizes that the Good News is meant for everyone—Gentiles as well as Jews.
6. After his conversion, Saint Paul brought the Church to the far reaches of the Roman Empire through his missionary activity.
7. The Acts of the Apostles ends with the image of Saint Paul in Rome, teaching about the Lord Jesus and proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

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## **Chapter 20 Activity: Come, Holy Spirit**

Read the Acts of the Apostles 2:1–4 in your Bible. In the space below, create an illustration to represent one or more of the events at Pentecost.

