

The Catholic Connections Handbook

For Middle Schoolers

Second Edition

CATECHIST GUIDE: THE OLD TESTAMENT, THE TRINITY, AND THE MISSION OF CHRIST

Virginia Halbur

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 each 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 guides provides the teaching process for catechists to use in covering each chapter’s 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 is 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 is 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 bullet points on the chapter summary handout provide key points to use.

● **Live It!**

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**

The lesson 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 can reinforce, what their son or daughter is learning in the lessons

The second handout is typically used as a learning resource for 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 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/ 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 are deeply appreciative of 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 1

Revelation, Sacred Scripture, and Sacred Tradition

Preparation and Supplies

- Study chapter 1, “Revelation, Sacred Scripture, and Sacred Tradition,” in the handbook.
- Provide a Bible for each participant, if possible.
- Make copies of the chapter 1 activity handout, “Scripture Passage Search” (Document #: TX003497), one for each group of three or four.

Pray It! (5 minutes)

Lead the participants in making the Sign of the Cross. Pray the following:

- God, we thank you for bringing us here today. May this time we spend together bring us closer to one another and closer to you. We ask that you make yourself known to us. We cannot see you or hear you or touch you, but we know you are here. Please speak to our hearts. Make us aware of your presence. Amen.

Invite the participants to offer any special intentions for which they would like to pray. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

Study It! (40 to 50 minutes, depending on your class length)

A. Revelation

1. Briefly **explain** that the topic for this chapter is God’s Revelation. Ask if anyone knows what the word *revelation* means. **Ask** if anyone knows a word that sounds similar (reveal). **Explain** that this is essentially what Revelation is: God’s revealing himself, or making himself known, to us.
2. **Direct** the participants to read the chapter introduction and the section “Revelation,” on pages 16–19 in the handbook. The content covers points 1 through 4 on the handout “Chapter 1 Summary” (Document #: TX003496).
3. **(Optional) Direct** the participants to the Think About It! article on page 19. **Ask** a volunteer to read the article aloud, and **use** the questions at the end to lead a discussion.

B. Sacred Scripture

1. **Distribute** a Bible to each participant. Increase the participants’ familiarity with the Bible by reviewing the sections of the Bible. **Instruct** the young people to locate and hold the pages of the sections. **Demonstrate** how they should do this. **Ask** them to hold the Old Testament in the fingers of their left hand and the New Testament in the fingers of their right hand. **Invite** volunteers to share their observations. **Point out** that the Old Testament is more than twice the size of the New Testament.

Ask the participants to hold the pages of the Gospels. **Point out** that there are four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. **Invite** the young people to share any observations they may have. (For example, Mark’s Gospel is the shortest, and Luke’s is the longest.)

Ask the participants to hold the pages of the Acts of the Apostles through the end of the Bible. **Explain** that the rest of the Bible covers the struggles, works, and teachings of the early Christian Church. **Ask** the young people if they have any questions.

- Direct** the participants to read the sections “Sacred Scripture” and “Sacred Tradition” on pages 19–22. The content covers points 5 through 8 on the handout “Chapter 1 Summary” (Document #: TX003496).
- (Optional) Direct** the young people to the Live It! article on page 21 in the handbook. **Invite** a volunteer to read the article aloud, and **use** the questions at the end to lead a discussion.

C. God’s Mystery

Direct the participants to read the section “God’s Mystery,” on page 23 in the handbook. The content covers point 9 on the handout “Chapter 1 Summary” (Document #: TX003496).

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

Live It! (10 to 15 minutes)

- Organize** the young people into groups of three or four, and **distribute** the chapter 1 activity handout, “Scripture Passage Search” (Document #: TX003497), to each group. **Divide** and **assign** the Scripture passages listed in the handout among the groups. **Explain** the task as follows:
 - Members of each group are to look up their Scripture passages and take turns reading them aloud to one another. (*You may wish to practice locating one or more Scripture passages with the large group before the groups work independently.*)
- Invite** volunteers from each small group to share their favorite passages with the large group.
- Comment** as follows in your own words:
 - What God has made known about himself is called Revelation. It is communicated to the world in two main ways: through Sacred Scripture and through Sacred Tradition.
 - God fully revealed himself in Jesus Christ.
 - The responsibility of teaching about Jesus Christ, through Scripture and Tradition, belongs to the Apostles and their successors, the Pope and the bishops.
 - The seventy-three inspired books and letters we recognize as the Word of God comprise Sacred Scripture. The Bible is another name for Sacred Scripture.
 - God is the ultimate author of the Bible, for the Holy Spirit inspired the human authors to communicate, without error, what God wants us to know for our salvation. This guidance of the Holy Spirit is called inspiration.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Gather the participants in a circle. **Ask** them to take out their handbooks and turn to the Pray It! article on page 17. When all are ready, **ask** a volunteer to read the prayer aloud. **Invite** another volunteer to read Romans 8:38–39 aloud. **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/ and click on “Catechist: Additional Course Handouts or Quizzes.” Tip sheets and links are also available.

Revelation, Sacred Scripture, and Sacred Tradition

Chapter 1 Summary

Chapter Learning Objectives

- The participants will explore how God reveals himself to us, particularly through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.
- The participants will become familiar with the sections of the Bible.

Content Summary

1. God makes himself known to us through the signs of creation around us, through the voice of the Church, and through the voices of our conscience speaking from within us.
2. What God has made known about himself is called *Revelation*. It is communicated to the world in two main ways: through Sacred Scripture and through Sacred Tradition.
3. God fully revealed himself in Jesus Christ.
4. The responsibility of teaching about Jesus Christ, through Scripture and Tradition, belongs to the Apostles and their successors, the Pope and the bishops.
5. The seventy-three inspired books and letters we recognize as the Word of God comprise Sacred Scripture. The Bible is another name for Sacred Scripture.
6. God is the ultimate author of the Bible, for the Holy Spirit inspired the human authors to communicate, without error, what God wants us to know for our salvation. This guidance of the Holy Spirit is called inspiration.
7. Four special books in the New Testament are called the Gospels. The Gospels tell us about the life, teachings, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
8. The word *tradition* means “to hand on.” *Sacred Tradition* means both the central content of the Catholic faith and the way that content has been handed down through the centuries under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
9. We cannot totally grasp God, because God is greater than anything we can understand. God is the ultimate mystery.

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Chapter 1 Activity: Scripture Passage Search

Look up some or all of the following Scripture passages:

- Matthew 6:9–15 (The Our Father)
- Exodus 2:1–10 (Moses and the Burning Bush)
- Isaiah 7:10–16 (Prophecy of the Birth of Emmanuel)
- Jeremiah 1:4–10 (Call of the Young Prophet Jeremiah)
- Zechariah 9:9–10 (Prophecy of the Lord Entering Jerusalem)
- Psalm 23 (The Lord Is My Shepherd)
- 1 Corinthians 13:1–13 (Saint Paul's Discourse on Love)
- Matthew 7:12 (The Golden Rule)
- Matthew 5:3–10 (The Beatitudes)
- Matthew 18:10–14 (The Parable of the Lost Sheep)
- Matthew 22:34–40 (The Greatest Commandment)
- Mark 4:35–41 (The Calming of the Storm at Sea)
- Mark 10:13–16 (The Blessing of the Children)
- Mark 12:28–34 (The Greatest Commandment)
- Mark 14:22–26 (The Last Supper)
- Luke 6:37–42 (On Not Judging Others)
- Luke 15:11–32 (The Parable of the Lost [Prodigal] Son)
- Luke 21:1–4 (The Poor Widow's Donation)
- Luke 23:39–46 (The Agony in the Garden)
- John 1:1–5 (The Word and the Light)
- John 8:12 (The Light of the World)
- John 15:1–17 (The Vine and the Branches, Last Supper Discourse)
- John 20:1–10 (The Resurrection)
- 2 Timothy 3:10–17 (Saint Paul's Reminder to Timothy about Learning from Scripture)



Chapter 2

2 The Bible: God's Plan for Salvation

Preparation and Supplies

- Study chapter 2, “The Bible: God’s Plan for Salvation,” in the handbook.
- Clear a reasonably sized area of the room to enable the participants to walk freely without bumping into anything.
- Gather sheets of colored construction paper and a blindfold.
- Make copies of the chapter 2 activity handout, “A Salvation History Timeline” (Document #: TX003499), one for each group of two or three.
- Provide Bibles, one for each group.

Pray It! (5 minutes)

Tell the participants that this class will begin with a prayer asking for God’s guidance on life’s journey. **Pray** the following:

- Father, throughout history you have guided us. Though sometimes it is difficult to hear you, we still listen. Though sometimes we make the wrong choices, you give us a second chance and call us back home to you. You made all of us good. You made all of us to be with you. Please be patient with us. We love you and are thankful for all you have given us. We lift up this prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Study It! (40 to 50 minutes, depending on your class length)

A. The Early Stages of Salvation History (Stages 1, 2, and 3)

1. **Direct** the young people to find a partner. If there is an odd number of participants, have one group of three. **Inform** the young people that this game is called Mine Field. **Explain** the following:

- One pair at a time will leave the room and blindfold one of its members. While the pair is gone, I will place a number of colored sheets of paper on the floor, creating a “mine field.” When the pair returns, the non-blindfolded person will have the task of guiding his or her blindfolded partner through the mine field without stepping on any of the papers. The non-blindfolded person will do this only by offering spoken directions as a guide.

Reassure the participants that they will be safe. After you have chosen the first pair, **give** them the blindfold and **ask** them to leave the room. While they are gone, **arrange** the sheets of construction paper on the floor. Be sure you have covered the floor well, leaving little open space to walk. **Ask** the first pair to enter the room and begin their walk through the mine field. **Repeat** the activity until all the groups have had a turn. **Reflect** on the experience afterward by discussing how the young people felt walking through the mine field, what they did to get through it successfully, and what made the experience difficult.

2. **Direct** the participants to read the chapter introduction and the sections “Stage 1: Primeval History,” “Stage 2: The Patriarchs,” and “Stage 3: Egypt and the Exodus,” on pages 24–28 in the handbook. The content covers points 1 through 3 on the handout “Chapter 2 Summary” (Document #: TX003498).

3. **(Optional) Direct** the participants to the Think About It! article on page 29 in the handbook. **Ask** a volunteer to read the article aloud, and **use** the questions at the end to lead a discussion.

B. The Middle Stages of Salvation History (Stages 4, 5, and 6)

1. **Explain** to the young people that God has a plan of salvation in which everyone has a part. **Ask** the participants to name people they know personally who are doing what God intended, and ask them to explain their choices.
2. **Direct** the young people to read the sections “Stage 4: The Promised Land and the Judges,” “Stage 5: The Kings and the Prophets,” and “Stage 6: The Exile and the Return,” on pages 29–32 in the handbook. The content covers point 3 on the handout “Chapter 2 Summary” (Document #: TX003498).
3. **(Optional) Direct** the participants to the Live It! article on page 31 in the handbook. **Read** the article aloud, and **brainstorm** with the young people ways they can participate in God’s plan of salvation.

C. The Last Stages of Salvation History (Stages 7 and 8)

Direct the participants to read the sections “Stage 7: The Life of Jesus Christ” and “Stage 8: The Church,” on pages 32–34 in the handbook. The content covers points 4 through 7 on the handout “Chapter 2 Summary” (Document #: TX003498).

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 groups of two or three. **Distribute** a Bible and a copy of the handout “A Salvation History Timeline” (Document #: TX003499) to each group. **Explain** the task as follows:
 - Each group is to put the events listed on the handout in chronological order by numbering them 1 through 10. You may use your Bibles to locate the events. In the empty squares on the handout, draw three symbols to represent events from salvation history.
2. **Invite** volunteers to read the events aloud chronologically. **Ask** a representative from each group to share the symbols the group drew in the squares and to explain what events they represent.
3. **Comment** as follows in your own words:
 - The final stage of salvation history continues today through the Church.
 - The Church will continue to share the Gospel until the end of time.
 - With the help of the Holy Spirit, we, as members of the Church, take part in Christ’s mission today.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Direct the participants to the Pray It! article on page 25 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/ and click on “Catechist: Additional Course Handouts or Quizzes.” Tip sheets and links are also available.

The Bible: God's Plan for Salvation

Chapter 2 Summary

Chapter Learning Objectives

- The participants will explore ways God has guided humanity through a number of events in salvation history.
- The participants will examine the Bible to see examples of people chosen by God to do his will.
- The participants will reflect on how they participate in salvation history.

Content Summary

1. Salvation history is the pattern of events through which God reveals himself and his saving actions to us.
2. Salvation history can be divided into eight stages—six stages found in the Old Testament, and two stages found in the New Testament.
3. The Old Testament stages are the following: (1) primeval history, (2) the patriarchs, (3) Egypt and the Exodus, (4) the Promised Land and the judges, (5) the kings and the prophets, and (6) the Exile and the return.
4. The New Testament stages are the following: (7) the life of Jesus Christ and (8) the Church.
5. The final stage of salvation history continues today through the Church.
6. The Church will continue to share the Gospel until the end of time.
7. We, as members of the Church and with the help of the Holy Spirit, take part in Christ's mission today.

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Chapter 2 Activity: A Salvation History Time Line

Put the following events in chronological order by numbering them 1 through 10. In the empty squares, draw three symbols to represent events from salvation history.

- ___ Abraham and Sarah's descendants became God's people, the Israelites.
- ___ Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating from the forbidden tree.
- ___ God made a covenant with Noah never to destroy the human race with a flood again.
- ___ Through Moses, God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites to guide them in living their part of the covenant they made with God.
- ___ Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden.
- ___ God established the New Covenant with all people by sending his only Son to become one of us.
- ___ God wiped out all human wickedness from the earth with a flood.
- ___ God made a covenant with Abraham and promised him many descendants.
- ___ God created Adam and Eve and promised them they would live with him in happiness forever.
- ___ Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt.

