

School Edition

Teacher Guide

saint mary's press



***Catholic
Connections***
for Middle Schoolers

Jesus the Christ

**JESUS
CHRIST**

Gloria Shahin

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Welcome to the Catholic Connections Program!

Welcome to Catholic Connections, a religious education program for middle schoolers! The program includes the following six fully developed courses, each with its own teachers guide, providing teaching steps as well as supplementary information and activities:

- God, Revelation, and Faith
- Jesus the Christ
- The Holy Spirit and the Church
- Prayer
- Christian Morality and Justice
- Liturgy and Sacraments

In each course the students' primary resource is *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers* (Saint Mary's Press, 2009). The handbook is a visually appealing, youth-friendly presentation of the Catholic faith.

The six teacher guides and the handbook work together to equip Catholic school teachers with an excellent resource for fostering the faith of young adolescents. Fostering the faith of young adolescents involves helping them to make connections between the Catholic faith and everyday life. It also means helping young people strengthen their connection to the faith community and enter more fully into the life of the community. Catholic Connections aims to strengthen the students' Catholic identity and inspire them to participate more fully in the Church's mission.

Living the Catechetical Ministry in a Catholic School

The mission of a Catholic school is to educate children and young people in all areas of the curriculum, preparing them academically for productive and successful lives as members of society. Even more than that, however, a Catholic school is entrusted with forming students in the faith, integrating it into all areas of school life, and making it an integral part of school life—and daily life. Throughout a Catholic school curriculum, whether in English class, in learning math, in playing a competitive game in a physical education class or learning a song in music class, the Catholic faith and teachings provide the foundations for the students' character formation. The teachings of the faith are a unifying thread throughout each school day, taught in the words, example, and instruction of all school staff.

As a Catholic school religion teacher, your role is especially important in the faith formation of the students. Through daily instruction and interaction with the students, you lead them to a relationship with Christ that can become as essential a part of their daily lives as conversation and leisure time with friends. By imparting to them the teachings of the Catholic Church and the message of the Scriptures, and applying those in meaningful ways to how they live their daily lives, you bring the students to a realization of the meaning of Jesus' words "Come, follow me" (Matthew 4:19). You make this message personal and relevant in a world where distractions can be a constant challenge to heeding this call.

How to Use Catholic Connections

Features of the Handbook

The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers is a great tool for study. But it is more than that. The handbook includes many special features designed with an eye to helping the students apply the Catholic faith to the way they live their lives.

Each chapter of the handbook has a number of special features. These are short articles set in special boxes. Along with the main text in the chapters, these articles are intended to help the students further study, pray, and live the faith. Following are descriptions of the special articles you'll see throughout the handbook.

Pray It! Liturgy Connection

Faith is celebrated in the Church's liturgy and sacraments. The "Liturgy Connection" articles will help students see the relationship between Catholic beliefs and worship.

Pray It!

Faith comes to life through prayer. In each chapter, the handbook contains a short prayer that will be integrated into the class's closing prayer.

Live It!

Being Catholic has to do with beliefs, but it also has to do with the way we live it. The "Live It!" sidebars suggest ways the students can put their faith into action.

Think About It!

Every chapter has a "Think About It!" sidebar with questions for the students to reflect on or discuss in class or at home.

Did You Know?

Many of the "Did You Know?" sidebars explore topics covered in the chapter in greater detail.

Looking Back

Sometimes a little history provides a better understanding of aspects of Catholic beliefs and practices. The "Looking Back" articles appear occasionally to provide students with this type of historical insight.

Fun Fact

The "Fun Fact" sidebars in every chapter provide a bit of informative and amusing trivia.

People of Faith

The handbook introduces the students to or reacquaints them with some of the holy people and saints who have strengthened the Church and inspired others with their faith through the centuries.

References

Following the handbook's forty-three chapters, the students will find the following reference sections:

- Catholic Prayers: a collection of Catholic prayers
- Beliefs and Practices: a brief summary of core Catholic beliefs and practices
- Glossary of Key Words: a glossary containing all of the key words found in the Handbook

Features of the Teacher Guide

Chapter Opener Pages

Every chapter of the guide begins with two opening pages. These provide background information to help you prepare for teaching the lesson. The pages contain:

- a chapter overview stating the overarching catechetical themes of the chapter.
- a summary of the learning objectives for the chapter, identifying the key catechetical points the students will learn.
- suggested background reading for the teacher. The suggested readings include content from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* related to the theme of the chapter, as well as related Scripture readings. Together, these provide a wider context for understanding the content that the students will be learning.
- “Background for the Teacher,” a chapter introduction written specifically for the teacher, providing insight and inspiration related to the theme of the chapter, and written from a real-world point of view, to provide opportunity for reflection, as well as guidance and encouragement in how to live what you are entrusted with teaching the students in your care.
- a teacher's prayer and reflection question, to help you get centered in preparation for teaching the chapter and in living out the chapter's message.
- a materials list, identifying all the materials required specifically for the instruction and activities in that chapter.

Core Chapter Content

For every chapter, the teacher guide contains teaching steps for every feature of the handbook. The following are the core elements of each chapter in the guide:

- *Discussion points and questions for reinforcement* for every part of the lesson. Although you can tailor this to fit your teaching style and supplement it with your own questions, explanations, and insights, the content provided here will cover the key points the students need to be taught.
- *An opening prayer and a closing prayer.* Every chapter begins and ends with prayer, with student participation a key part of these prayer experiences. (See below for more on the prayer experience as an important part of the lessons.)
- *Supplementary sidebar information.* Each chapter contains background information related to the chapter, written specifically for the teacher. Use this information to learn more about a specific Scripture story, historical event, or Church teaching, and incorporate the information in your instruction.
- *Activities and lesson extensions* the students can complete in groups or independently. Every chapter contains one or more hands-on or interactive activity designed to personalize and reinforce the key message of the chapter. Use these activities to enliven the instruction and to draw in students who may generally prefer to recede into the background.

Make the activities fun and low-pressure, with more emphasis on full participation and effort than on a definitive “correct” outcome.

- *Suggested media resources.* To enhance the students’ learning experience and appeal to a wider range of learning modes, include multimedia whenever possible. The guide includes suggestions for movies (or segments of movies), documentaries, and music that can be incorporated into the lesson or used as part of the prayer experience. Use these when it is practical, and engage the students in discussions related to them when suitable.

Emphasis on Scripture

To reinforce the importance of Scripture and expand the students’ knowledge of the Bible, Scripture readings—from both the Old and the New Testament—are a part of most lessons, with some chapters containing more than one suggested reading related to the chapter theme. Make these readings an essential part of the instruction, and use the suggested discussion points and questions in the guide to help the students understand the meaning of the Scripture passage and its relevance to their own lives. A special Bible icon alongside recommended Scripture readings will help you identify these readings as you prepare for and teach the chapter.



Time for Prayer

Each chapter begins and ends with a short prayer time. Young people respond well to ritual, so these prayer times have ritual elements built into them. For example, each opening prayer begins with “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.” (This is a familiar Lasallian prayer of the Christian Brothers, and Saint Mary’s Press is a Lasallian ministry.) Another ritual element is a special prayer space in your classroom that the students can gather around for the opening and closing prayers. If at all possible, try to create such a space.

The students should be involved in the prayer times as much as possible. For the closing prayers in most sessions, the participants read together or are led by a student volunteer in praying a prayer from the handbook.

Chapter Activities

To expand the students’ learning of the chapter content and to provide students with opportunities for reflection, for critical thinking about how what they have learned applies to their own lives, and for creative ways to explore the material, each chapter is supplemented with three activity masters. In most chapters, the activity masters are intended to accompany the chapter as follows:



- activity master A: This activity is generally intended as a warm-up activity, to be completed by the students before they begin the chapter. The activity is designed to get the students to reflect on the key theme of the chapter in a “big-picture” sort of way, applying its relevance to their own lives. Completing the activity will prepare the students to understand the chapter content as personal and meaningful in their own lives.
- activity master B: Frequently this activity sheet contains more than one activity, each of which is intended to be used with a specific section of the chapter. These activities are designed to help the students think analytically about the content of the section and reflect on ways they can live what they have learned.
- activity master C: The closing activity for the chapter frequently features a review of the key concepts or terms taught in the lesson, and it frequently engages the students through the use of a game, such as a word search or an acrostic, or a creative exercise,



such as designing symbols, reflecting on artwork, and so forth.

Look for the activity book icon throughout the guide to help you identify ideal points in the chapter instruction for incorporating these activities.

Testing and Evaluation

Chapter tests are available in the *Catholic Connections for Middle Schoolers Test Book*. Tests contain a combination of objective questions in a variety of formats, such as sentence completion and multiple choice, as well as essay questions. Each test is weighted at 100 points. Each objective question has a value of 10 points and the essay question a value of 20 points. Answers for the tests and the pages of the handbook on which test questions are covered are provided in the answer key, found at the end of the *Testing Resource*.

Catholic Connections Card Game

The Catholic Connections program has an optional card game called *GAME ON! Games for Catholic Connections* (Saint Mary's Press, 2009), which contains cards with questions that can be used to play several kinds of games with the students. One question on each card is specifically connected to the content of this course. You can use the card game to introduce or review course doctrine. Consider some of these uses:

- When the students' focus is waning and a change of direction might be helpful to get them to refocus on the chapter, play a quick quiz game using the game cards.
- End each chapter with a *GAME ON! Games for Catholic Connections* tournament.

Materials and Preparation

Each chapter contains activities for the students to complete. Some will require a bit of advance preparation and the gathering of craft supplies or other items. These are listed at the start of each chapter. In addition to these, however, there are some basic supplies that should always be available for completing the Catholic Connections lessons throughout the school year. These include:

- Bibles (one per student is ideal). Be sure to provide a Catholic edition. We recommend using either the Good News Translation, which is age-level appropriate, or the New American Bible, which is used for the readings of the *Lectionary*.
- Supplies for creating a prayer space, such as a prayer table, a table covering, a Bible and stand, a cross, and a candle and matches (if permitted).
- A copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (United States Catholic Conference; also available online at the bishops' Web site, www.usccb.org) for your own reference and to share with the students as appropriate.

Additional preparation for every chapter includes having on hand copies of the activity masters for that lesson. Be sure to have enough copies available before starting each chapter, to simplify the integration of these activities into the instruction.

Overview of *Jesus the Christ*

Christ stands at the center of salvation history, at the center of our parish life, and in the hearts of believers. Throughout the chapters of this section, the students will come to know the many faces of Jesus. They will meet the Jesus of the Gospels, and connect his story to their own lives.

They will explore the other sources that connect us to Christ, including the Church and the communities to which they belong. The students will learn important Christological concepts, such as Jesus' Incarnation, the Trinity, Jesus' miracles, and salvation.

Throughout the lessons, the students will be challenged to rely on Jesus as Savior, role model, teacher, caregiver, and guide. The students will have an opportunity to enter into a deeper understanding and relationship with our Lord, from Jesus' humble earthly beginnings to his glorious Resurrection, recognizing that their lives are centered in God.

Chapter Themes

Chapter 8. The Gospels

This chapter looks at Jesus as he is presented in the Gospels. The chapter recognizes the diversity in the Gospel stories and underscores the saving truth of the Scriptures through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 9. Jesus Christ, True God and True Man

This chapter explores who Jesus is, how we find out more about him, and who we are in relationship to him.

Chapter 10. The Birth of Jesus

This chapter explores Jesus' birth, especially the mystery of the Incarnation, in which the Son of God became flesh and dwelt among us.

Chapter 11. Jesus Teaches

This chapter looks at Jesus' role as teacher and guide. Some of Jesus' parables are studied to see what they teach us today.

Chapter 12. Jesus Heals

This chapter presents Jesus' miracles and his ability to transform lives and the world. The students will be challenged to see where Christ's healing is still needed today.

Chapter 13. The Death of Jesus

This chapter looks at Jesus' suffering and death, and the salvation he gained for us through them.

Chapter 14. The Resurrection of Jesus

In this chapter, Christ's Resurrection is presented as the basis for our hope of salvation and eternal life.

Strategies for Helping Young People to Pay Attention

This section is written by John Barone, director of The Monarch Learning Center in Houston, Texas, and author of A Place for All: Ministry for Youth with Special Needs (Saint Mary's Press, 2008).

A Million Miles Away

Think back to when you were in school. Did you ever find yourself daydreaming in the classroom? Most of us at one time or another have become lost in thought and disconnected from the action in the classroom. But did you ever *decide* to daydream? Ever say to yourself, “I’m bored with this lesson; I’m going to daydream instead”? Most of us “wake up” from daydreams not remembering how or when we lost touch with our environment. Have you ever “put your foot in your mouth” by blurting out something you later regretted? Was it ever preceded by, “I think I’ll say something inappropriate now”?

Consider times when you were energetic and had difficulty sitting still. Remember squirming during a lecture, wanting desperately to move? Did you plan to feel this way?

Most of us do not choose to do these things. Yet when young people lose focus, act impulsively, or are hyperactive, we often think they are doing it on purpose.

Attention Differences

Symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) include distractibility, or difficulty maintaining focus. A participant who is distractible is unable to block out the distractions outside when seated beside a window.

Another symptom is impulsivity. You’ve seen participants who call out answers instead of waiting to be called on. This also includes impulsive actions, like grabbing a pen from another participant or running into the hall without permission.

With Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), hyperactivity is an added symptom. Participants who are hyperactive have high energy levels and need to move. They squirm in their seats, kick their legs, tap their pencils, and sometimes just run around the room.

These symptoms can severely impair learning. And many young people with attention differences also have to cope with a lack of acceptance or support from catechists, parents, and peers. This occurs when symptoms are misinterpreted as willful, when hyperactivity is interpreted as “won’t sit still,” and when distractibility is mistakenly understood as “refuses to pay attention.” Young people who are impulsive are often considered irresponsible or reckless.

This misinterpretation of these symptoms as a matter of choice is unfortunate but not surprising. If a young person in a wheelchair were described as “refuses to walk,” *that* would be surprising, but because the milder symptoms of ADD and ADHD are shared at times by most people, it is easy to label the behaviors as willful. Throughout the sessions we suggest ways you can help the participants who have difficulty maintaining attention. These suggestions are good for all learners, not just those with attention issues.

Around the World with Carlos

While observing a religious education session, I noticed that Carlos frequently ran to a globe in the back of the room and began spinning it. He grinned as he watched the globe whirl. “Carlos, where should you be?” The catechist’s tone was respectful. Carlos complied but was soon back at the globe. The catechist sighed and raised her voice: “Carlos! What is your job right

now?” He sheepishly returned to his seat.

When Carlos got up for the third time, I respectfully interrupted, and asked Carlos what the catechist wanted.

“For me to pay attention and not spin the globe,” replied Carlos.

“Do you want that?” He nodded yes vigorously. Carlos knew what his catechist wanted, and he seemed to want the same, but thus far was unsuccessful.

I gave him a stress ball, with instructions to squeeze the ball instead of spinning the globe. The rest of the group was given the job of observing to see if he was successful at keeping up with them and paying attention to the catechist.

The catechist continued the lesson, which was on the Sermon on the Mount. Carlos’s squeezing was intense. He stayed in his chair but seemed to focus all his attention on the stress ball. He never looked up, seemingly unaware of anything but the ball.

After a few minutes, I asked the group, “Did Carlos stay with everyone?”

They all responded, “Yes.”

“Did he pay attention?”

“Noooo!”

“Let’s check that out.” I asked Carlos if he was successful at staying with the group.

“Yep.” He smiled, never taking his eye off the ball.

“And were you successful at paying attention?”

“Yep.” He was beaming. “We learned about the Sermon on the Mount, how Jesus taught the Beatitudes, how we’re like salt and light, bringing flavor and God’s love to others, and . . .”

Although he hadn’t *looked* focused, Carlos had stayed focused and was able to recount the content of the lesson. The others were asked again if Carlos was successful at paying attention. They had a very different answer this time.

This simple modification helped Carlos to maintain his focus, restored peace to the meeting space, and allowed participant and catechist to feel competent.

More important, Carlos, his catechist, and the other young people experienced mutual joy because of the successful modification. The exclusive use of traditional methods to enforce compliance often results in embarrassment for a young person, disruption of the group, and a frustrating sense of failure for the catechist.

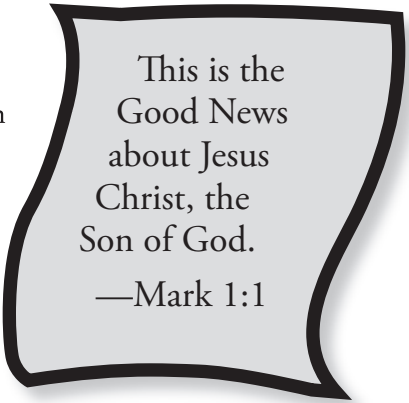
It would be an oversimplification to say that a stress ball is the cure for attention issues. For some it works wonders; for others it may have no effect, or it may make things worse. Try having a variety of items on hand for participants to try out. You can include squeeze balls, bean bags, putty, pieces of cloth, and other items that can be grasped.

Many other strategies in addition to tactile strategies can help you enhance the attention of the young adolescents you work with. These include strategies for arranging your meeting space, giving instructions, and helping young people who are distracted bring themselves back into focus.

Chapter 8: The Gospels

Overview

In this chapter the students will learn that the Gospels are at the heart of the whole Bible and that it is through them that we learn about Jesus' life and his teachings. They will discover the similarities and differences among the four Gospel writers, and will explore the differing points of view of a Scripture account of the Resurrection.



This is the
Good News
about Jesus
Christ, the
Son of God.

—Mark 1:1

Learning Goals

Enable the students to

- understand that the four Gospels differ in emphasis because of the different perspectives of their authors
- learn that God ensures the sacred truth of the Gospels and all Scripture through the Holy Spirit's inspiration of the authors
- recognize that through the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, we get to know Jesus and the truth of his message of salvation

Preparing for the Chapter

Background Reading

- *The Catholic Connections Handbook for Middle Schoolers*, chapter 8
- *CCC*, numbers 101–141 (Sacred Scripture)
- 2 Peter 1:16, Matthew 26:17–29, Mark 14:12–25, Luke 22:7–23, John 13:1–30

Background for the Teacher

One Day at a Time

“Proclaim the Gospel with your life,” Saint Francis of Assisi is supposed to have said. He then added, “If necessary, use words.” This could be the saintly variant of the familiar saying, “Actions speak louder than words.” No doubt Saint Francis would agree. He founded his Order of Friars Minor specifically to preach and to teach the Gospel—but, in his mind, actually living the Gospel came before all else.

How do we live the Gospel, the good news of salvation? We live it the same way we do everything else worthwhile: deliberately, mindfully, and one day at a time. We recognize intuitively that each day is a gift. But very few days are problem-free or stress-free. Jesus himself recognized this when he said, “Do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings.” (Matthew 6:34). Relying upon God's help, we can overcome whatever the day brings and live the Gospel one day at a time.

An ancient monastic practice that can help us to do this is “the word for the day.” Choose one Gospel verse (perhaps from the day’s Scripture readings) and commit it to memory. Bring it to mind at odd moments all through the day, as you are able. Whenever you find a pause in the day (waiting in a checkout line, stopping at a stoplight) or you find yourself obsessing about trivialities, recall your verse. By the end of the day, you will have imprinted the Gospel on your mind and heart. It will have become a part of you. In some small way, you will have begun to live it—one verse and one day at a time.

Catechism references: 75, 101–141, 514–515

Teacher’s Prayer

I am one person, Lord, among the multitudes in the Body of Christ. Yet I know that we are all one. Help me to understand the different perspectives of my brothers and sisters and to value the diversity in my community. As I immerse myself in the rich tapestry of your Gospel message, may I come to know you better and share your Word with passion. Amen.

Teacher’s Reflection

What is your strategy for living the Gospel “one day at a time”?

Preparing for the Activities

Materials

For the preview activity, read and bookmark the following Scripture passages in your Bible:

- Luke 2:1–7 The Birth of Jesus
- John 2:1–12 Jesus’ first public miracle (The Wedding in Cana)
- Matthew 14:13–21 Jesus Feeds Five Thousand
- Luke 22:7–20 The Last Supper
- Luke 23:1–49 or John 19:1–37 Jesus’ suffering and Crucifixion
- John 20:1–18 The Resurrection

“Media Connection” (*optional*)

- The segment “An Ark to Build” (57 seconds long) from the movie *Evan Almighty* (2007, 95 minutes, rated A-II and PG)



Opening with Prayer

1. **Invite** the students to gather in the prayer corner. Direct them to quiet themselves for prayer.
2. **Light** a candle, make the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.”
3. **Invite** a volunteer to read 2 Peter 1:16.
4. **Pray** the following:
 - ▶ God the Father, we thank you for those whom you inspired to preserve and pass down the story of our salvation. As we enter into the Bible, help us to see and embrace the spiritual 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.



Preview Activity

1. **Tell** the students that in this chapter they will learn about the Gospels and how, through the accounts of the four Gospel writers, we learn who Jesus is and how he wants us to live.
2. **Distribute** copies of activity master 8A, “How Much Do You Know About Jesus?”
3. **Read aloud** the introduction and invite the students to complete the activity. When everyone has finished, **invite** volunteers to share their summaries of the events from Jesus’ life. Refer to the Scripture accounts to provide important details about each event that the students omitted or to correct any incorrect details.

Introducing Chapter 8

1. **Have** the students turn to page 84 in their handbooks.
2. **Direct** their attention to the image at the top of page 85. Read aloud the questions alongside it.
3. **Tell** the students that in this chapter they will learn why it is important to draw closer to Jesus and listen closely to his message.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the chapter introduction on pages 84 and 85. **Ask:**

- ▶ In what ways is Jesus the greatest hero of all time? (*Accept all reasonable responses.*)
 - ▶ What are some things that hold you back from getting to know Jesus better? (*Accept all reasonable responses.*)
 - ▶ What can you gain from getting to know more about Jesus? (*Possible responses include better understanding his message, growing in faith, and living more fully as Jesus taught.*)
4. **Point out** that although we may sometimes feel that we are too busy to take time to read the Scriptures and for daily prayer, recognizing the true importance of making Jesus the center of our lives would allow us to make doing so a priority.
 5. **Call attention** to the Key Words list on page 84. **Tell** the students to listen for the meaning of these words as they read them in the chapter.

Think About It!

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud “Think About It!” on page 85.
2. **Engage** the class in a discussion based on the reflection questions that conclude this feature.
3. **Share** with the students your own responses to these questions.

Jesus and the Scriptures

1. **Invite** a volunteer to read aloud the first four paragraphs of “Jesus and the Scriptures” on pages 85 and 86. **Ask:**
 - Who are the four Gospel writers? (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*)
 - What does the word *Gospel* mean? (“*good news*”)
 - How was Jesus’ message and the events of his life transmitted to us? (*through the teachings of the Apostles, and the writings of the Gospel writers, who were inspired by the Holy Spirit*)
 - What are the key differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament? (*The Old Testament precedes the birth of Christ and prepares the way for his coming; the New Testament gives the account of Jesus’ birth, life, and message.*)
2. **Read aloud** the next two paragraphs.
3. **Invite** a volunteer to explain in his or her own words the meaning of the word *inspiration*. (*In referring to the Scriptures, inspiration means that God is the ultimate author of what was written; that he inspired the writers so that we may know the truth of his message.*)
4. **Invite** one or more volunteers to summarize some of the differences in the four Gospel writers’ accounts. (*Each Gospel writer did his own research, and may have been focused on different truths about Jesus. Therefore, the Gospel writers did not always include all of the same events from Jesus’ life. Also, even when they did describe the same events, the Gospel writers did not always include the same details.*)
5. **Ask:**
 - How do all four Gospels, despite some differences, share a common purpose? (*They all pass on the truth of what God wants us to know to follow Jesus and have salvation.*)
6. **Share** with the students more about the Gospels from “Extending the Lesson” on the next page.