

Year 1 – Session 1
Family Faith Formation
Who Do You Say that I Am?
Discovering Jesus Christ

Resource for Adults:

- “Who is Jesus” DVD - Original Alpha – from Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Brompton, England. Available on a flash drive for \$29.99 [here](#). ([YouTube review sample](#))
- Alpha Course in a Catholic context [can be found here](#).
- [The “Discovering Christ” series](#) is similar to Alpha, produced by ChristLife, an evangelization effort of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. (“Why Does Jesus Matter”)
- Bishop-Elect Robert Barron has several YouTube short clips – “Who is Jesus?” or “Who Do You Say that I Am?”

If you show the Alpha “Who is Jesus?” video by Rev. Nicky Gumbel (30 min.) – Introduce the video as coming from “Alpha,” an evangelization course that started in Brompton, England. Note their fun British accents and different words.

*On this first night it would be good to make available resources that families can purchase for their homes: crucifix, images of Jesus, Bibles, etc.)

Objectives for Adults:

- To enter or renew a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- To recognize Jesus as Teacher, Healer, Friend, Savior
- To accept the central Gospel message of salvation

Objectives for Children:

- To understand that Jesus is Teacher, Healer, Friend, Savior
- To know that as followers of Jesus we try to be like him

Objectives for Family:

- To discover ways of bringing Christ into family life
- To incorporate the sign of the cross into daily life as a reminder of Jesus’ daily presence in our lives.

Laying a Foundation

Conversion before catechesis - Catechesis of parents is important, but prior to this, we must encourage them along the path of conversion. “...If we address ‘I don’t know’ before we address ‘I don’t care,’ we’ll waste our efforts and frustrate our people, because they just don’t care.” - Curtis Martin

One night on this might not be enough for some parents - You might consider running a pre-evangelization program like Alpha or ChristLife and invite parents you know who might be in need of primary proclamation: those who have little or no relationship with Jesus and are interested in learning more.

Intercession – Consider asking parish prayer groups, homebound and those who love to pray for others to pray for families beginning formation for sacraments during the time leading up to your first parent gathering. Pray as a catechetical team for the parents who you will encounter this year.

- **Welcome / Introduce Theme:** (5 min.) Families begin together
During our time together, we will focus on the person of Jesus Christ. Two thousand years have passed since Jesus walked the dusty roads of Israel. At that time, many people who knew Jesus, including his friends and followers, didn't know what to make of him. Some may have called him a prophet; others thought of him as a miracle worker, a healer. To some, he was known as a teacher and friend and to others as the Savior, Son of God.

Today, we are faced with the same important question: Who is Jesus to us, and why is it important? This gathering gives us a chance to learn more about Jesus and to reflect on his life, his love, and his teachings. We begin in prayer with a reading from the Gospel of Mark.

- **Opening Prayer** (10 min.)

Sign of the Cross

Scripture Reading

(You might want to teach and explain to children how we make the sign of the cross on our head, lips, and heart before the Gospel is proclaimed.)

A Reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

Now Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:27-29a)

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Sharing

Display several different pictures of Jesus. Ask children to share with parents how they picture Jesus (baby in a manger, good shepherd, Sermon on the Mount, rising from tomb). Ask parents to respond by sharing their image of Jesus.

Glory Be ...

*Children are dismissed to their session. (See children's lesson)

- **Parents/Adult Presentation** (30 – 40 min.)

Introduce Video: Choose one of the videos mentioned above.

During our time together, our conversation and reflection will be on the person of Jesus Christ. In our reading, we heard the question: “Who do you say that I am?” As followers of Jesus, this is our fundamental question, and each of us must answer this for ourselves.

Watch Video.

At the heart of Catholic Tradition is the mystery of Christ. All of Catholic teaching, belief, and practice (discipleship) is understood in light of this mystery. Who we are called to be as Christians can only make sense if we know Jesus Christ and grow in a relationship with him. (CCC 90)

St. Augustine wrote that if we do not know the Gospels, we do not know Christ. The Gospels serve as the starting point for our understanding of who Jesus was and who he is for us today. Each of the Gospels provides us with a particular angle for exploring who Jesus was and who he is for us today.

Three points that will be helpful for us to remember.

1. Gospels compiled long after Jesus' death and resurrection: not meant as accurate chronology
2. Each Gospel designed for particular group of people with specific questions and concerns. (See handout)
3. Gospels told from a perspective of faith. They were written in light of the resurrection and the ongoing guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Four Core Images

While each Gospel brings a somewhat different perspective, a number of core images are present.

Teacher

We see a consistent image of Jesus as teacher. Can you give me any examples? (Sermon on the Mount, Conversation with disciples.)

Read Matthew 7:24-29

Jesus not only taught, but he taught with authority. He taught the truth he knew because of his unique relationship with the Father. There was no inconsistency between what he taught and how he lived.

Healer

Jesus healed those who were sick. But also included an invitation to conversion. Can you give examples? (Jarius' daughter, Peter's mother-in-law, Woman with hemorrhage, Man born blind, Paralytic)

Read Mark 2:1-12

While people were impressed with the physical healing, it is the spiritual healing that Jesus desired.

Friend

Throughout the Gospels, we find images of Jesus as friend and companion. On multiple occasions, we hear of Jesus sharing a meal and friendship. Can you give examples? (Wedding at Cana, with Zacchaeus, with Lazarus appearance after resurrection)

Read: John 21:1-14

Jesus cares for his friends and invites them into ever deeper relationship with him and one another.

Savior

The center of our Catholic faith points to Jesus as Savior. Through Jesus, we gain eternal life; our sins are forgiven and made right with God; we are saved from all that oppresses us. Luke begins Jesus' ministry with this story:

Read Luke 4:16-21

Jesus as Savior is not only a future reality but a present one as well.

Jesus' saving action is inviting all of us to a conversion of heart and a change of life.

We are all called to follow Jesus' example

We are **teachers** when we teach our children to forgive, to be peacemakers, to share with others.

We are **healers** when we care for our children or our aging parents, when we reach out to someone who is hurting, when we foster peace in our homes and neighborhoods.

We are **friends** when we listen carefully to the concerns and hopes of others, when we reach out to someone new in the community, and when we are present to someone experiencing loss.

We **share in the saving presence** of Jesus when we forgive and ask forgiveness, when we pray with someone going through difficult times, when we work to remedy situations that do not respect the dignity of each person.

As disciples, we are called to live as Jesus did and love as Jesus loved. In small group, talk about a time when you felt you shared Jesus' presence with someone else. What image of Jesus does your family need to reflect on right now?

If there is time, conclude with a personal testimony of your relationship with God in the midst of his Church (yours or a team member's). This need not be spectacular, but it should be heartfelt, real, impactful, and not long.

- **Children Presentation** (30-40 min.)
Choose activities from your parish faith formation program that will reinforce who Jesus is, how much he loves us, and the good news of Jesus' Resurrection. You could follow themes from the parent session, Jesus as Teacher, Healer, Friend, and Savior.
- **Sharing and Action Plan – Children and Parents together** (15-20 min.)
Ask children to tell their parents something they learned about Jesus today. Ask parents to reinforce this by sharing with their child what they learned.

Provide an action plan sheet so families can record and take home their plans. Make suggestions related to this lesson. (Choose a picture of Jesus to hang somewhere in your home.)

- **Closing Prayer and Ritual** (10-15 min.)
Hand out prayer cards so parents can respond. Include words for signing with the cross.

Prayer

Jesus, you are teacher and Lord. Open our minds and teach us your ways.
Send us your Spirit that we may teach our children to have faith in you.

Jesus, you heal all who come to you. Open our hearts and give us your peace.
Send us your Spirit that we may be a healing presence to those who are sick or sad.

Jesus, you are our friend. Walk with us; be always at our side.
Send us your Spirit that we may reach out to those who are without friends.

Jesus, you are our Savior and hope. Refresh our souls and free us from sin.
Send us your Spirit that we may bring the saving word of God's love to those around us.

Ritual - Making the Sign of the Cross

Because it was by his death on the cross and resurrection that Jesus saved us, the sign of the cross is very important to us. It is the central symbol of our Christianity. We make the sign of the cross at the beginning and end of Mass; on our forehead, lips, and heart at the Gospel; and before we begin to pray. At baptism, parents and godparents make the sign of the cross on infants. In the very early days of the Church, it was the custom to make the sign of the cross on the forehead as a sign of belonging to Christ. Parents often 'sealed' children, and adult Christians 'sealed' one another, saying, **"You belong to Christ, may he to whom you belong protect you,"** as they went out into a world where they were in danger because of their belief in Christ.

Invite parents to make the sign of the cross on the forehead of their child saying:
"You belong to Christ, may he to whom you belong protect you."

Invite each child to sign their parents with the sign of the cross saying: "Jesus loves you."

Suggest to parents/guardians that they could begin the custom of making the sign of the cross on their children when they leave home each day or at bed time.

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