

Becoming a Community

A Book for the Fifth Year of Catechesis





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How time flies! How fast we grow! And how true this is. A little while ago we were children. Today we have grown and become almost adolescents. At every stage of our life, it is important that we keep on learning, so that the older we grow, the better able we will be to make good choices - the best ones.

Now that we are becoming older, we no longer frequent family members or carers only, but we meet many friends and other people, with whom we share our life journey. We know some of these friends very well; we know their names and their likes. But, there are also others, whom we do not know that well, even though we meet them in church or in other places. These persons also form part of the Christian community of which we are members. We are called to share our Christian life with them.

This book will help us, as a Christian group, to become a community which believes and wants to live life as Jesus showed us. My wish is that this book will help you to become a Christian community, which believes and lives together.

Rev. Dr Carl-Mario Sultana



Presentation

I earnestly hope that this book will be used by catechists as a catechetical companion on their journey with adolescents, so that the latter will learn to appreciate more *God's* love, the greatness of their dignity as *God's* children and the beauty of the Christian commitment that makes us all one community.

I also wish that Family Catechesis will be an instrument to bring the family closer to the word of *God*, so that each member realises that *God* loves and wishes him/her well. This recognition will strengthen the family in faith, unity and reciprocal respect.

I thank *God* for his immense greatness. I also thank every person who, in one way or another, helped in this catechetical project.

Sr Alexandra Chircop,
Co-ordinator of this programme.



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1

Chapter One Discovering Each Other



The First Theme

Getting to know each other

The aim of this theme: to become familiar with the reality that God has always wanted, and still wants, to communicate with us in various ways; he wants to enter into a relationship with us to show us that he loves us and wishes us well.

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

- When two persons wish to start a relationship as friends, they start to communicate with each other. The more they communicate, the better they get to know each other and the greater is their relationship. Friends use different ways of communication.
- God has done the same with regard to man. Ever since the creation of man, God has always communicated his love towards man by entering into a relationship with him and expects man to do the same.
- Just as friends use different ways and occasions to communicate, so God has, over the years, used various ways to transmit his messages to us human beings.

REMEMBER

The word "revelation" means that God communicates with man to build a relationship.

The facts that God wants to communicate (reveal) to all people are:

- that God loves every person,
- that God wishes every person well,
- that God wishes that every person is good for his/her own sake and also that of others; therefore he hopes that each person makes good choices,
- that God sent Jesus to save us so that through Jesus we realise that God the Father truly loves us.



Different ways and means that God has used and still uses to communicate his love for us, as well as to build a relationship with us. These are:

1. Before the birth of Jesus



Creation. God showed how much he loves and wishes man well by creating a beautiful world for him.



He spoke directly to various persons, among whom we find: Adam and Eve (Genesis Chapters 2 and 3), Moses (Exodus Chapter 3). God spoke to various other persons, including the adolescent Samuel, when he was sleeping.



He spoke to prophets, namely: Isaias, Jeremiah, Daniel and others in their hearts. These prophets **first passed on** his messages to the people and later **wrote them** down so that they would not be lost.



He chose **events**, like the one mentioned in Exodus, when through Moses, the Jews left Egypt (Exodus 12: 37 - 42). Another occasion was when the Jews were taken into exile to Babylon and their return from there (2 Kings Chapter 24 and Esdra Chapters 1 and 2).

2. When Jesus was born

God sent his son Jesus among us.

- With his birth and throughout his life, Jesus showed us how much God loves us and how much he wishes us well. He did this through his preaching, miracles and through the example of his own life.
- To save all the people in the world and to show his great love for us, Jesus suffered, died and rose up from the dead. He did all this for all **the people of the world**. All this is recorded in the Gospel.

3. At the present time

- **In creation.** All creation is a gift from God to us. It is a home for all of us. Through creation we realise how much God loves us. He wants us to take care of all he has created for us.



- **In the Bible.** In the Bible we find lessons to aid us in our life. It is a book which helps us to form our character as God wishes. The Bible shows us how we can build and strengthen our relationship with God.
- **From everyday experiences.** If we pay attention, every day shows us that God wants to teach us something. For example, we come across occasions of helping each other, of respecting those older than we are, of forgiving each other, of being merciful, of being happy for others and of sympathising with those who are going through difficult times.
- **In prayer.** Every day, God invites us to talk to him in our prayers; he wants us to open our hearts to him, like two friends who confide everything in each other. The more we open our hearts to him, the more we trust him.
- **In the Church.** The Church, through the Pope, the priests and catechists, as well as good and well prepared persons, teaches us how to understand better the Bible, God's love for us and, finally, how to make good choices throughout our lives.



The Word of God

Look up in the Bible: 1 Sam 3: 1-10

Reflect:

What message, do you think, God wants to send you through the story of Samuel?

Challenge

During this week pay attention to all the occasions you have each day to: help your friends, respect someone older than you and care for your environment. Find time to read and listen to the Word of God, especially during mass.



Diary

In your diary, write down or draw: who, at present, is God to you - he is someone who

Write down or draw what you want to tell God.

Let us read together as a family

From the Bible: Deuteronomy 6: 4-7

'Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. Therefore, you shall love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home

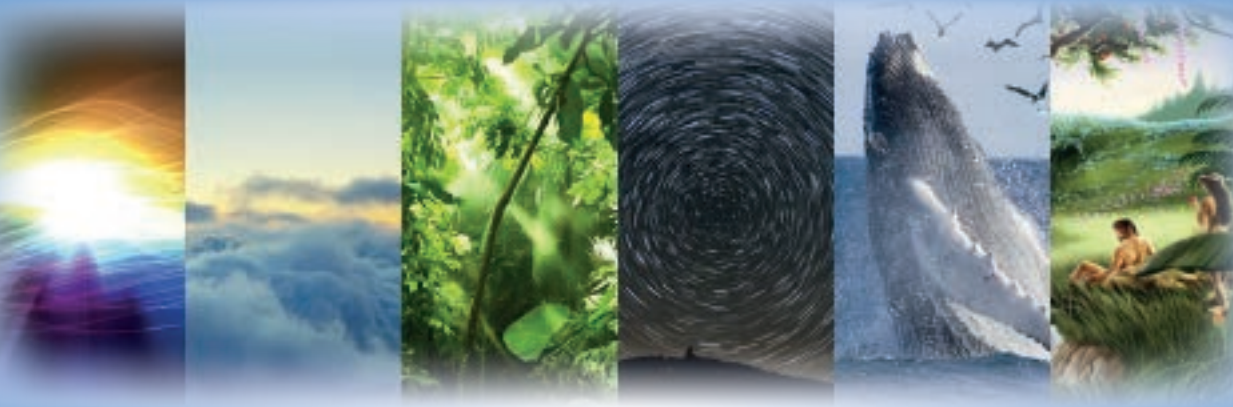
Let us pray together as a family

Lord Jesus, help us as a family to improve our relationship with you; give us the courage to help others, especially in our family, to keep alive this relationship through reading your Word in the Bible, through personal prayer and also through prayer in the community.



The Second Theme Getting to know each other

The aim of this theme: to understand that creation, including man, is the fruit of God's love. God wants us to take care of all he has created with great responsibility.



Let us learn how to live better as Christians

- The first book of the Bible is called *Genesis*. The author of *Genesis* used symbols to help us understand better God's act of creation.
- The most important fact that we find in the first chapter of *Genesis* is: God created everything, including man.
- "Creation" means the environment and man.
- The length of time taken by God to create the world is not important. What is important is that God created everything.

REMEMBER

"Genesis" means the start, 'the beginnings'.

- In the Bible we read that God saw that everything was very good.
Everything that God made is very good. (see Genesis 1:31)
- All creation is God's gift to us because he loves us very much.
- God's great wish is that we take care in a responsible way of all creation.
- **God created everything, all that lives, that which is visible and also that which is invisible; everything is God's gift.**
- **God is Great and Almighty**, he created everything by the strength of his Word.
"And God said, ' Let there be light.' And there was light....."
Gen 1:3 ff
- God is everywhere, we find him in all creation.
- We find God everywhere; there is no place we can hide from him.



- God is present everywhere not to watch over us to punish us when we do wrong, but because he wishes to be close to us, so that we never feel alone.
- **God knows everything.** He knows the past, the present and the future.
- God is **very wise**; creation is one of the signs of his wisdom. Everything he made was well thought out; nothing was made haphazardly or by coincidence. He made everything in a wise and loving way.
- God is a **mystery**; this means that we can never fully understand him. What is important is that **we believe that God exists, that he loves each one of us personally and that God loves all the people of the world.**
- God has no beginning and no end. He has always existed and will exist for ever. This means that he will always love us; his love for us will never end.
- God has left creation to us, **responsible** persons, to care for it well and not destroy it. God does not want us to destroy what he lovingly created.
- Let us remember that love and responsibility can never be separated.

The Word of God

Look up in the Bible: *Gen 1:31a*

Reflect:

What do you understand when you read these words from Genesis?

Challenge

During this week, seek to thank God for all creation. Do your best to care for creation.



Diary

In your diary, write or draw a prayer to thank God for all creation. Write down (or draw) what you are doing to show that you love and care for all ceation.

Let us read together as a family

From the Bible: Book of Psalms: Psalm 148

'Halleluia!

Praise the Lord from the heavens;

Give praise in the heights etc.'

Let us pray together as a family

We thank you , Lord of all creation. Give us the courage and wisdom to care for all creation as you wish us to do. "I believe in one God, the almighty Father, who created heaven and earth, all that is visible and all that is invisible." Thank you Lord for really loving us.



The Third Theme

The Gift of Life

The aims of this theme: to discover the gift of life that God gives each person and find the reason why man has been created.

The First Part

The gift of life - God created the human being in his own image

Let us learn to live better as Christians

- When God created man, he created him differently from the rest of creation. *Genesis 1:27*: "God created man in the image of himself, in the image of himself he created him"



- God is fatherly, just as our parents are. Why? Because we have a body and a soul. Our parents gave us our body, while God gave us our soul.

- A body without a soul is dead; a soul without a body is a spirit and not a person. The soul is eternal; it lives for ever.
- A person is complete, whole and really living when he/she has both a body and a soul.
- When God created man he made him in his own image. We have to remember that God has no body, so nobody can resemble him, either in his face or in his body. God is a spirit.

God made man differently from the rest of creation, because God gave every person:

- The gift of freedom --- that is, the capacity to choose right from wrong.
- The ability to think and to reason.
- The ability to build relationships, that is, being friends with God and with other persons.



- The ability to love and be loved.
- The ability and the responsibility to take care of all creation, that which is visible and also that which is invisible to sight, but which can be seen by scientific inventions, like microscopes or telescopes.
- The ability to understand that God loves him/her and his/her ability to reciprocate this love by loving him back in various ways; animals cannot do this.

- The ability to give birth to other persons through the relationship between a man and a woman, together with God, who is the Lord of life.



- Animals live by instinct; for example, animals do not enter into loving relationships like humans. Animals do not communicate like humans. The rest of creation lives by instinct and nature's cycle.
- Man uses reason, because man has a brain to think.

The Second Part God's wish for each person

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

When God created man, he did not do so haphazardly or by coincidence.

Therefore, God has a great project for every person; he has a particular aim for each and every one of us.

Just like in every other relationship among humans, God wishes that every one of us: knows him, loves him, serves him and enjoys him.

- We get to know him by entering into a relationship with him, especially by communicating with him in prayer. The more we know him, the more we trust him, and therefore, the more we love him.
- The more we grow in his love, the more we serve him; this means that we help and sympathise with each other more, while respecting the whole of creation.
- Because God loves us, he wishes us to enjoy him for ever in heaven, after this life.

REMEMBER

God wants us to:

- know him,
- love him,
- serve him,
- enjoy him.

The Word of God

Look up in the Bible: **Mark 12: 29-31**

Reflect:

What message, do you think, Jesus wants to pass on to you? How can you live this message in your daily life?

Challenge

During this week look up Psalm 136, lines 1-4, in the Bible. Try to be a good friend to everybody, even to those whom you do not particularly like.



Diary

In your diary, write down or draw how you can love *God* and serve him, especially when you are dealing with other persons who are your brothers and sisters, children of *God*, your *Father*.

Let us read together as a family

Look up in the Bible: Psalm 136: 1-9 - A litany of thanksgiving

Praise the Lord, who is so good,
God's love endures forever.
Praise the God of gods,
God's love endures forever.
Praise the Lord of lords,
God's love endures forever.
Who alone has done great wonders,
God's love endures forever.
Who skilfully made the heavens,
God's love endures forever.
Who spread the earth upon the waters,
God's love endures forever.
Who made the great lights,
God's love endures forever.
The sun to rule the day,
God's love endures forever.
The moon and stars to rule the night,
God's love endures forever.

Let us pray together as a family

Help us, Lord, to continue helping each other as a family, so that we can grow in our relationship with you. This we pray through our Mother Mary, who knew you, loved you and served you fully and is now enjoying you forever. Amen.

The Fourth Theme

Respect towards one's own dignity and the dignity of others

The aims of this theme are: to discover the meaning of the word "dignity" and what it means in practice that God has given this dignity to each person. We have to understand that each one of us has to respect his/her dignity first, but it is also our duty and responsibility to respect the dignity of others.

The First Part

The Dignity of a Person

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

A person's dignity arises from the fact that each one of us is created in the image of God (Gen 1: 26-27). To cherish this dignity which God himself has given us, we have to remember that each person:

- has to respect himself/herself first, if he/she wants to be respected,

REMEMBER

The word "dignity" means respect towards your own person and towards that of others, because we have been created in the image of God.

- has to take care of his/ her health. When we take care of our health, we would be taking care of our life and our dignity, which is a gift from God.
- has to take care of himself/herself by making good choices in life.
- has to be courageous enough to admit his/her mistakes and try to to remedy any damage done.
- has to work for justice towards himself/herself and towards others.
- has to carry on learning about himself/herself, seeking to educate himself/herself to become a wiser person. At the same time, he/she has to go on learning about God, because the more he/she gets to know God, the more he/she gets to know himself/herself and will be able to help others.



- If someone asks you to do something to show that you really love him, it will be a good deed if you help him, once the thing he has asked for is good. But, if the thing is not good, you should not do it.
- We must remember that one who really loves us does not enforce conditions.

The Second Part

Let us Respect the Dignity of Others

To respect the dignity of others, we have to build a good and strong character from when we are very young and continue to develop it during our life.

Among the many things that help us build our character, there are the cardinal virtues, also known as the human virtues.

They are called "human virtues" as they can be practised by each person. These virtues are called "cardinal" because this word means "door hinges". In the same way that a door cannot function without hinges, so a person cannot lead a good life without these virtues.



The cardinal virtues are:

- courage or strength
- prudence or wisdom
- justice
- self control

Let us discover these virtues.

- **Courage** is a very important and necessary virtue in our life. It helps us not to lose heart, not to be afraid of any challenge that comes our way.
- In the Bible we find several courageous people, among them the young Daniel.
- We can become courageous by praying, trusting in God and always telling the truth.
- Prayer and courage go together,

REMEMBER

The word "virtue" means good behaviour that is learnt from those around us, especially from their good example. We can also learn it from the Bible - God's Word. We must practise this good way of life throughout all our life. For example, sincerity is a virtue which should be always practised.



- Courageous children are not those who shout, stamp their feet and thump their fists on the table, but those who speak calmly and tell the truth about themselves and others.
- Quite often, courage and truth go together. We should tell the truth out of love and not for any other reason.
- We show that we are courageous persons when we make good choices and respect our dignity and that of others.
- When we show courage to do the right things, we will be admired by everyone.
- We should not confuse courage with presumption. A presumptuous person wants to be the centre of attention and does not care for others. Such a person does not respect his/her dignity, much less that of others.
- **Justice** calls us to be fair with ourselves and with others.
- We should remember that injustice is not respect. who commits an injustice is not respecting his/her dignity, much less that of others



- When we ask for forgiveness and forgive ourselves and others, we will be respecting our dignity and also that of others.
- **Wisdom or prudence** helps us to think with our minds and also with our hearts. Before we make our choices, we will be wise to think of the consequences of our choices and feel responsible for what we do.
- **Self control** demands that we not only control how and when we speak, but we also have to control our mind as sometimes, we allow our thoughts to run away with us and we make mountains out of molehills. This lack of control may hurt us and others.
- It is very important to keep a time-table of how we spend our time; this is one way of growing up into mature persons.
- When we exercise these four virtues, we will be respecting not only our dignity but also that of others.

REMEMBER

The cardinal virtues are:

- courage/
strength
- prudence/wisdom
- justice
- temperance (self control)



The Word of God

Look up in the Bible: Mt 22: 36-40 The Great Commandment

Reflect:

What challenges do Jesus' words in St. Matthew's Gospel offer you?

What do you think is the message of St. Paul in his second letter to Timothy: 2 Tim 1:7

'For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather of power and love and self control.'

Challenge

During the coming week try not to miss any occasion to respect others that may come your way. Ask yourself: Do I wish others to respect me? So, try to respect yourself and respect others.



Diary

In your diary write about or draw an occasion when, with great courage, you showed respect and love towards others. Write or draw a prayer so that Jesus will fill you with courage and much love towards others.

Family Catechesis

Let us read together as a family

Look up in the Bible: the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 13: 1-3

Let us pray together as a family

Lord, help us to be filled with love and courage so that our love and respect for each other as a family will continue to grow. We pray for this together with our Mother Mary, who was a very courageous woman and knew how to love very much. Amen.



2

Chapter Two The Christian Community



The First Theme

Discovering the Christian Community

The aims of this theme: to become more familiar with the meaning of the word "community", to understand better the commitment that the community has towards individuals and to discover what is the model of the Christian community.

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

1 The social community

1.1 What does the community consist of?

- The community consists of persons.
- We cannot buy, rent or borrow the community, but we can build it together.
- The community is you and I, you and I together. We become members of the community as soon as we are born. The older we grow, the more we form part of the community by learning how to live within the community and understanding what our duties towards it are.
- Each one of us is important to the community, as we all have things to offer to it and things to learn from it.



- Each community is made up of persons with different characteristics: for example, there are those who love doing sports, singing, dancing, the arts etc.



- In every community there are persons who are married, single, in a relationship, still studying, priests, nuns or monks, widows and widowers.
- Each person has his/her own talents and capabilities. In the community we need each other.
- Each community has a leader or a group of leaders.
- Each community has a set of values upheld by all, lived by all, both as individuals and as a group.

1.2 Why is the community important?

- Without the community we cannot live as we all need each other.
- The community is a place where we feel accepted as we are: rich or poor, tall or short, well-built or slim, whatever our abilities are and whatever colour we are.
- It is our duty as citizens to respect each member of the community as well as the community itself in various ways to make it better.



1.3 What makes a good community?

- The good values practised by the community make it a good community. We learn these values from each other by word of mouth, by reading, but above all by the good examples we give each other.
- In the community we learn to accept each other, even if we have different opinions.
- We do all this in the community because we follow the teaching of Jesus.



2. The Christian Community

2.1 What is the Christian community?

- The Christian community is a community of faith believing in Jesus Christ.
- The Christian community is the Church.
- The Church is made not of stones, but of me and you. We become part of the Christian community when we are baptised.
- The first community of Christians did not have any special building where to meet; they used to meet in the homes of each other. Yet, just the same they were a community; they were the Church.
- In the Acts of the Apostles, the book which relates what the Apostles did after the coming of the Holy Spirit, we read that the first Christian community had certain characteristics.

REMEMBER

The Christian community: the head of the community is Jesus Christ.

- we become part of the Christian community through Baptism,
- throughout our life we learn how to be real members of this community,
- we learn how to love it,
- we learn how to pray for and forgive each other,
- we learn to look for that which unites us to the teaching of Jesus and not focus on the differences among us.



2.2 The characteristics of the first Christian community in the Acts of the Apostles (Chap 2)

- i. they used to learn together about Jesus Christ,
- ii. they prayed and received the Eucharist together,
- iii. they loved each other,
- iv. they helped each other and shared everything,
- v. they were generous with each other,
- vi. they spent time together as friends.

As members of the Christian community, it is not enough that we are baptised, but it is necessary that together we discover, learn, live and pray as a Christian community.

We feel alive in the Christian community by:

- learning the principal elements of what makes us a Christian community,
- learning how to behave in the community and
- learning how to grow up in the Christian community.

In the Christian community we learn how to become Christians. Throughout our lives we continue learning how to become a community and cannot just stop when we receive the First Communion or the Sacrament of Confirmation.

2.3 Important things we should learn to continue discovering and growing in the Christian Community

- i. to learn about Jesus Christ and become more familiar with his teaching and that of the
- ii. Catholic Church,
- iii. to learn to pray together and for each other,
- iv. to learn how to respect our dignity and that of others and how to use our liberty well,
- v. to learn how to work, help and sympathise with each other,
- vi. to learn to look for what unites us rather than that which divides us,
- vii. to learn to find the good in each other and not talk against each other,
- viii. to learn to care for all creation so that everybody enjoys this beautiful gift God gave us,
- ix. to learn to love the Christian community and to remember that Jesus Christ is the head of this community, which is the Church.



Look up in the Bible: Acts of the Apostles: 2: 45-47

Reflect:

What, do you think, is the message of these words found in the Acts of the Apostles?

Challenge

During this week pray for the community where you live; pray also for the community of Christians. Following the example of the first Christian community continue showing love, respect and kindness towards everybody.



Diary

In your diary, write down or draw what you are doing, or wish to do, as an adolescent to improve the *Christian* community.



Let us read together as a family

From the Acts of the Apostles 2: 43-47

The life of the first disciples. "Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favour with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved."

Let us pray together as a family

Lord Jesus Christ, we pray as one family that you help us to do our best to live as true Christians, as you wish us to do, with everybody, even with those who have different opinions, religions, cultures and colour. We pray this through our Mother Mary, who was the first Christian mother. Amen



The Second Theme

Living our Baptism within the Community

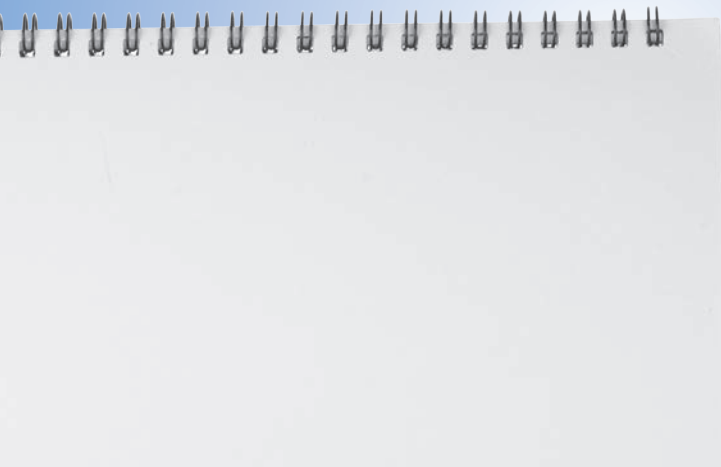
The aim of this theme: to appreciate the fact that through Baptism we became members of the Christian community and also to understand what it means to live as a baptised person.

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

- When we were born we became members of the people of God, as God is everyone's Father. When we were baptised we became Christians - persons who believe in Jesus Christ and his teaching.
- We become Christians through Baptism.
- We are baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity, that is, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- At Baptism, Jesus Christ, through the Church, welcomes us as new members of this big Christian family.
- Through Baptism we become brothers of Jesus Christ and brothers of all the other Christians all over the world.
- At Baptism we receive the Holy Spirit who fills us with his graces and much love; he helps our understanding so that, little by little, we learn how to become Christians and live like Christians.



- When we were baptised in the Catholic Church, we became Catholics; therefore, we have the duty to respect the authority and teaching of the Catholic Church.
- Through Baptism, which is the first sacrament, we can start participating in all the other sacraments.
- Since we are all brothers in Christ, it is our duty and responsibility to pray for ourselves and for all our brothers and sisters.
- It is also our responsibility to pray together with others, especially during the Sunday mass.



We have to try and live our Baptism every day and everywhere. We do so by learning those things we believe in - like the Creed; by learning those things which, as Christians we have to practise (the practices) and by learning the Christian attitudes which help us to live as true Christians.

REMEMBER

"Attitude" means the way you think and behave. All this influences the way you live your life. When a person has a good attitude, we notice that his behaviour is good.

- When we try to live like this, we are really living our Baptism within the community.

In the Creed, which is the declaration of our faith, we find all that we believe in as Christians.



We call this creed "Liturgical" because all Christians, wherever they are in the world, recite it during the Sunday mass and on the big feast days of the Church.

The Creed is found on pages 16-17 of the book "Jiena Magħkom"

Our Christian attitudes, adapted to the age of adolescents, are as follows:

- Looking for the good in each person as everyone has some good in him/her;
- Understanding that all of us need God's help;
- Understanding that we need to go to confession to ask for God's mercy, thereby renewing our friendship with him and with our brothers and sisters;
- Respecting and caring for all creation.

Our practices as Christians, which as members of the Christian community we are in duty bound to know and live:

- to love each other truly;
- to pray for each other and to pray together;
- to live the Ten Commandments;

- To live the Beatitudes in the best possible way;
- To forgive those who hurt us;
- To practise charity with everybody, especially with the poor.
- To respect the dignity of each person, irrespective of his/her religion, colour, race and culture. We are all one family.
- To celebrate the sacraments;
- To celebrate together the Eucharist, especially during Sunday mass;
- To celebrate together our Christian feasts by going to church at Christmas, on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and at Easter, the greatest feast;
- To respect, praise and pray to our Mother Mary, who is the mother of Jesus;
- To make good choices for our own good and that of others;
- To respect, pray to and learn about the saints, as these have much to teach us about our daily lives.



The Word of God

Look up in the Bible: Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians:
Chap 3: 27

'For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.'

Reflect:

What, do you think, is St. Paul's message in these words?

Challenge

During this week try to live your Baptism by looking for the good in others.



Diary

In your diary write down the date when you were baptised. Try to remember it every month and thank God for this great gift. Write down or draw a prayer of thanks to God for this great gift.

Let us read together as a family

From the Bible: St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians 4: 3-6

'Strive to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one spirit, as you were also called to one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.'

Let us pray together as a family.

Lord help us to live our Baptism which, with your grace we received. We also need to help the members of our family to live their Baptism in the Church and through the Church. Amen.



The Third Theme

An Apostolic Church - An Apostolic Community

The aim of this theme: to learn the meaning of the words "disciple" and "apostle", and to learn how we can live these words in our life to build an apostolic community.

Let us learn to live better as Christians

1. The disciple

- Jesus had many disciples - persons who believed in him; who followed him; who learnt from him.
- The more the disciple learns, the more he is able to teach others.

REMEMBER

The word "disciple" means: somebody who believes in someone, learns about him/her and follows his/her teaching and example. The word "apostle" means someone who is chosen and sent to do a particular piece of work.



2. The apostle

- Jesus chose the apostles to continue his work, that is, his mission. Therefore, he sent them to preach the Good News to all the world; this was their mission.
- The apostles were a community of twelve. These were: Peter, Andrew, James, John (these were brothers, the sons of Zebedee), Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon and Judas Iscariot. Later on, Mattias was chosen instead of Judas.
- Jesus chose Simon, whose name he later changed to Peter, to be the head of the apostles. Jesus is the founder, the head of the Church. As Jesus built the Church on the apostles, therefore, Peter being the head of the apostles, was also the first leader of the Church, that is, the first Pope
- In Matthew 28: 16-20 we find Jesus sending all the apostles all over the world, so that as a Christian community, they would preach the message of Jesus.
- After the coming of the Holy Spirit, when the apostles understood better the teaching and mission of Jesus, they went from place to place, teaching all that Jesus had taught them.

Everywhere they went they established Christian communities, made up of those persons wishing to believe in Jesus and willing to follow his teaching.

- The Bishop is the head of the Church of a locality. At the moment, the Archbishop of Malta is Mons. Charles J. Scicluna.



3. The Church is Apostolic -The Apostolic community

- The Church is apostolic because it is built on the apostles
- The Church is apostolic because it passes on the teaching of the apostles.
- Through Baptism, we also have this mission like the apostles, to go all over the world to spread the Good News of the Lord. Therefore, we all have the duty to work towards building an apostolic community.
- To become apostles of Jesus, first we have to get to know Jesus; we must have a relationship with him. In this way we become his disciples.
- We become the disciples of Jesus when we learn about him from competent persons, read about him in good books, read the Bible and seek capable persons to explain it to us, pray, go to church to hear about Jesus, receive the sacraments, especially go to confession and receive the Eucharist.

- During our lives we, as Christians, are called by Jesus to be his disciples and apostles by preaching him to others by word and by the example of our life.
- We become an apostolic community when we try to preach Jesus to others and by the way we live our life with others.
- In everyday life we can be the apostles of Jesus when we tell the truth and not tell unnecessary lies; we are good with everybody; do not call each other names; are honest and fair with everybody; help someone who has not understood the lesson or does not know how to do the homework, instead of telling everyone about him/her; are charitable, not necessarily by giving money, but by spending time with a person, for example, by reading books to an old person. When we do all this, we are also apostles of Jesus.
- There are different ways how we can be apostles of Jesus. The following are a few examples: when we play and talk to persons who feel outsiders, when we pray for each other, when we share things with others, when we accept those of another colour, culture and religion. Jesus loved everyone and he wishes us to do the same.
- We are apostles for each other when we share our talents and abilities with others, as thereby we are building a community.

The Word of God

Look up in the Bible:

Matthew Chap 25: 14 -30
The Parable of the Talents

Reflect:

- What, do you think, is Jesus' message in the parable of the talents?
- How can you use and are actually using your talents for the good of others?

Challenge

During this week reflect: If Jesus were present now, how would he want me to pass on his message to others, by word or, better still, by my behaviour? How does Jesus want me to be an apostle with others?



Diary

In your diary, write down or draw how during this week you have been an apostle with others.



Let us read together as a family: Matthew 5: 14 - 16

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lamp stand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."

Let us pray together as a family

Lord Jesus, give us your help and encourage us, so that together as a family, we become your disciples and never lose heart to become also your apostles.



The Fourth Theme

The Catholic Church - A Christian Missionary Community

The aim of this theme: to understand the meaning of the word "catholic"; to understand that to be catholic means that we are missionaries with everybody.

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

1. The Catholic Church - The Catholic Community

- Although we come from different places around the world and talk different languages, as well as pray in different ways, we are all united in Jesus Christ; we are all members of the Church.
- Though we are all spread all over the world, as Catholics we all:
 - have one faith - believe in Jesus
 - believe in one Creed;
 - have the same Baptism;
 - celebrate the seven sacraments;
 - are, together with our Bishops, united with the Pope to form one Church.

REMEMBER

The word "Catholic" means universal. The Catholic Church is spread around the world. It works with and accepts everyone, persons of all colours, cultures and religions

- have one mission: as Christians we love each other; we live and spread the message of Jesus Christ to everyone.



2. The Catholic Church - A Community of Christian Missionaries

- The Catholic Church is open to all persons, whatever their colour, race, culture or language; therefore, the Catholic Church is missionary.
- When we received Baptism, each one of us also received an invitation from Jesus to become missionaries. The older we grow, the better we will understand this invitation.
- To be missionaries, there is no need for us to go abroad; we can be missionaries with our colleagues. We can do this by loving, sympathising with and sharing all we have with others.
- To be true missionaries, we have to remember the words of Jesus in Mark's Gospel: Mark: 12: 31. "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."

REMEMBER

The word "missionary" means: one who spreads the words of Jesus, by word of mouth or by example, in his country or abroad.

There are various ways how we can be missionaries:

- we can give some of our time to listen to, help or play with someone;
- we can pay visits to the elderly;
- we do not speak ill of others;
- we can help in any projects of charity undertaken by our country or in foreign countries.
- we can pray for all missionaries so that Jesus continues to care for them.



The Word of God

Look up in the Bible: **Matthew Chap 28: 16- 20**

Reflect:

What message do these words of Jesus give you? What challenge does Jesus offer you?

Challenge

During this week try to be a missionary with those around you.



Diary

In your diary, write down or draw about how you felt when you tried to be a missionary with those around you. Write or draw a prayer for the needs of all missionaries.

Let us read together as a family

**Look up in the Bible: St Paul's letter to the Ephesians, 4:
11- 13**

'And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ.'

Let us pray together as a family

Lord Jesus help us as a family to answer your call to be missionaries by opening our hearts to all persons, whoever they are. We also pray for all missionaries all over the world. Take care of them and bless them, Lord. We pray this through our Mother Mary, who is the Mother of the Church.



3 Chapter Three Living in a Community



The First Theme

Wise choices - I Feel Responsible

The aim of this theme: to learn how to make wise choices and to feel responsible for our choices.

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

1. Freedom, Choices and Responsibility

1.1 Freedom

- God created us as free persons, that is, God gave us the gift of making our own choices and decisions.
- Being free does not mean that we can do whatever we like.
- To be free means to be able to make choices and take decisions that are good for us and for others.
- Every choice or decision we make always affects others in one way or another. We cannot think only of ourselves.

REMEMBER

To be free means that we can choose right from wrong; it also means that in our life we can take both big and small decisions.



- We Christians are also to remember that we have to respect God and his law, as well as the teaching of the Church in our choices and decisions.
- The more we use our freedom well with lots of care and love, the more good we do to those around us, the more restful we feel and the more peace surrounds us.
- When we use our freedom well, we feel more respect towards ourselves and others feel more respect towards us.
- We become "libertines" when we misuse the liberty/freedom that God gave us.

1.2 Choices

- During the day we make many choices, like what to wear, what music to listen to, and many other choices.



- In our choices and decisions we have to use both our minds and hearts and remember the teaching of Jesus and also that of the Church.
- If we base our choices only on the feelings of the heart, very often we will make wrong choices, as feelings tend to change. If we use only our mind, we may also make mistakes as we are made up not only of a mind. We need to have feelings for ourselves as well as for others. Therefore, there must be a balance between the mind and the heart.
- When we make a wrong choice or decision, we should not be discouraged but admit our mistake and get on with life. The important thing is that we learn from that experience or that consequence.

1.3 Let us be responsible persons

- We should not make hurried choices or decisions, as one who hurries too much is prone to make mistakes. On the other hand, we should not always leave things for the morrow and never choose or decide.
- If a person always leaves choices or decisions for a later date, he/she shows that he/she is not responsible.



- Before making any important choice/decision, it is always necessary to think of the consequences of our choice/decision, both in our regard and that of others.

2. Aids to helps us make good choices

When we are going to make an important choice, we need to follow the following points:

We must be calm - haste may result in many mistakes. We must never make important choices/decisions in our life when we are troubled.

1. We should pray to the Holy Spirit to help us.
2. We need to look for competent persons, who wish us well and ask for their advice.
3. We should think deeply about the given advice and act on it if it looks good.



4. Before making any choice/decision it is advisable to do this short, but very important, exercise. You need pencil and paper to do it.

Take a page the size of an exercise book and rule it in three columns.

- At the top of the page write down the name of the choice/decision you have to make.
- In the first column list the advantages of that choice/decision.
- In the second column list the disadvantages there may be if you make that choice/decision.
- In the third column list the consequences the choice/decision may bring.

After doing all this, fold the paper and do not take any notice of it for some days (at least two days). In the meantime, pray to the Holy Spirit for help. After the no action days, check to see if you want to change anything that you have written. Consider everything carefully. When the moment for choosing comes, if you think that the choice/decision is good for you and others, then freely make that choice or take that decision.

5. When you do all this, you are ready to make your choices and be responsible for the consequences such choices may bring.
6. There is always a lesson to learn from every choice you make; you can even learn from your mistakes.

The Word of God

Look up in the Bible: Proverbs Chap 4: 13- 14

'Hold fast to instruction, never let her go; keep her, for she is your life. The path of the wicked enter not, walk not on the way of evil men.'

Reflect:

What do you think is God's message to you in these words found in the Proverbs?

Challenge

During this week read again the section titled "Aids to help us make good choices." Try to use this teaching and this exercise when you have to make a very important choice. Pray to Jesus to help you make a good choice.



Diary

In your diary write down or draw how you feel when you have to make an important choice. Write or draw how you felt when you made that choice.



Let us read together as a family

From the Letter to the Hebrews 10: 22b - 24

'Let us approach with a sincere heart and in absolute trust, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to our confession that gives us hope, for he who made the promise is trustworthy, We must consider how to rouse one another to love and good works.'

Let us pray together as a family

Holy Spirit, thank you for being always with us; help us to make wise choices and decisions, for your glory and our own good and that of others, especially that of our family. Amen.



The Second Theme A Guide to Better Living: The Ten Commandments

The aim of this theme: to become more familiar with the laws that God gave us - the commandments. He gave them to us because he loves us and wishes us well. These laws guide us to live better by respecting God, ourselves and others.

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

1. The Ten Commandments are there for our own good.

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments to pass on to the Jewish people and to all people believing in God. They are ten words - ten laws given to us by God to show us how to act if we really want to live as persons with the dignity of being God's children. Though these ten words or phrases might seem negative, they are, in fact, very positive because the person who respects them and follows them, obtains a good relationship with God, joy, peace and respect towards himself/herself and towards others.



REMEMBER

Another word which means the Ten Commandments, is "The Decalogue", which means, "The Ten Words."

- God gave us these commandments as a gift, because he loves us.
- God gave them to us because he is interested in us.
- God wishes us well.
- God gave the commandments to us because he wishes that our dealings with each other should reflect the dignity of persons created by him. God himself deserves every respect.

The commandments do not restrict our freedom; they make us freer as they offer us help and direction in the choices we make.

2. How The Ten Commandments Are Divided

- The first two commandments deal directly with God.
- The third commandment holds the challenge that we, as a community, need God and each other. Therefore, on one day during the week, which for us Christians is Sunday, we meet with the Christian community to celebrate mass. On this day we do not work and so find more time for our friends and dear ones.

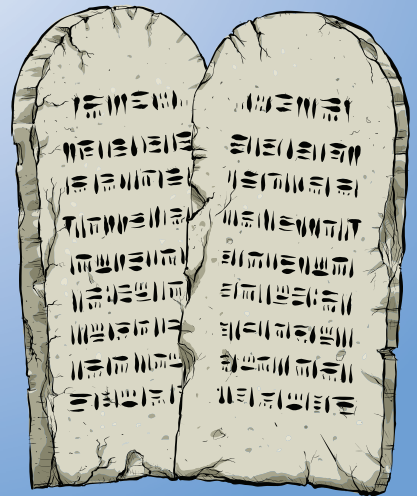


- The fourth commandment reminds us that after *God*, we should respect those who gave us birth and raised us up. On the other hand, the latter should remember that this respect should be reciprocated - that is, they should respect their children and those they are bringing up.
- From the fifth to the tenth commandment we find guidelines of what to avoid and what to do to live a decent life, both with ourselves as well as with all other human beings.

3. The Commandments are:

I am the Lord your God

1. You shall not have other gods besides me
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain
3. Keep holy the Sundays and feast days
4. Honour your father and mother
5. You shall not kill
6. You shall not commit adultery
7. You shall not steal
8. You shall not bear false witness
9. You shall not covet the wives of others
10. You shall not covet the goods of other people



The Word of God

Look up in the Bible: Deuteronomy 5: 6 - 21

Reflect:

When you read these words of the Lord in the Bible, what do you think is the message that God wants to send you?

Challenge

During this week recall the teaching about the commandments and also read these words in the Bible from the Proverbs: "My son forget not my teaching, keep in mind my commands."



Diary

In your diary, write down or draw a commandment which you consider to be very important in your life and say why it is so much important.



Let us read together as a family

From the Bible: Psalm 15 (14)

It is interesting to note that in the Bible there is a psalm which the Jews consider as the liturgical decalogue. In fact, it consists of ten words which the Jews ask the Lord and the priests, known as Levites, answer them in ten words. This psalm is called the "liturgical decalogue".

Psalm 15 (14)

Lord, who may abide in your tent?
Who may dwell on your holy mountain?

Whoever walks without blame, doing what is right, speaking truth from the heart, who does not slander a neighbour, does no harm to another and never defames a friend;

who disdains the wicked, but honours those who fear the Lord;
who keeps an oath despite the cost;

who lends no money at interest and accepts no bribe against the innocent. Whoever acts like this shall never be shaken.

Let us pray together as a family

Lord help us as a family to appreciate more your law in the commandments; help us to live this law to the best of our ability, for our own good and that of our neighbours. Amen.

The Third Theme

Being Happy Together: The Beatitudes

The aim of this theme: to become more familiar with the reality that living the beatitudes brings peace and joy to us personally and to all communities.

Let us learn to live better as Christians

- In the Gospel, Jesus gave us an example of how as Christians, we can be happy, feel blessed and live in peace despite the challenges we meet.



- If we follow the programme of Jesus, we will have real joy, which never ends.

REMEMBER

Jesus gave us the beatitudes; these are a sort of map or programme for the Christian, so that together with others, he/she can live in peace and happiness. The beatitudes are a challenge to us, but, if we try to live them well, they will fill us with a joy that nobody can take away from us

- Each beatitude begins with the word "happy". This means that anybody who tries to follow the programme of Jesus, becomes a happy person, lives happily with others and helps others to live happily.
- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.
- Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.
- Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you because of me, rejoice and be glad for your reward will be great in heaven.

The Word of God

Look up in the Bible: Psalms 25: 4-5

'Make known to me your ways Lord, teach me your paths.'

Reflect:

What are you praying to the Lord when you read these words from Psalm 25?

Challenge

During the week, re-read well the beatitudes. Find which beatitude interests you most and think how you can live and practise it better with yourself and with others.



Diary

In your diary, write down or draw one of the beatitudes which Jesus gave us. Write down or draw why you like that particular beatitude and what you learnt from it when you practised it. (You can write or draw about more than one beatitude).

Family Catechesis

Let us read together as a family.

Look up in the Bible: Matthew 5: 3 - 10

Let us pray together as a family

Lord help us as a family to live day by day your programme in the beatitudes. Bless us Lord Jesus and help this family never to lose heart when faced with challenges, so that we live like real Christians, as you wish us to do. Amen.



I Bear Witness in the Community

The aim of this theme: to understand the need that we, as Christians, have to bear witness to what we believe in; mercy towards our neighbours, especially the poor, is a strong foundation of our identity as Christians.

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

- Love among us is the foundation of our lives as Christians.
- It is important to give alms, but the greatest gift we can give is love from our heart. The acts of charity we do are acts of love which instil peace in our hearts.
- It is not how much or what we give or do to others that counts, but our attitude when doing so. We will gain no merits if we do many acts of charity without respecting the dignity of the person.
- The words in the Gospel of St Matthew (Chap 25: 31 - 46) are a test to the Christian. This means that when we die, Jesus will judge us on how much we really loved our neighbours when still alive. He will ask us how many charitable acts we did, how merciful we were with ALL persons.



- In order to help us understand and put into practice the words of Jesus regarding the love and charity we should offer our neighbours, the Catholic Church has proposed to us seven Acts of Mercy concerning the bodily needs of others and another seven Acts of Mercy concerning the spiritual needs of others.. In 2016, Pope Francis added another Act of Mercy which concerns both bodily and spiritual needs - the care of the environment.

The Corporal Acts of Mercy (those concerning the bodily needs)

- Feed the hungry
- Give water to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Visit the sick
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bury the dead



Look up in the Bible: Matthew Chap 25: 31 - 46

Reflect:

These words from the *Gospel of St. Matthew* will be part of our test to enter heaven. What do you think about this passage?

Challenge

During the week, read again these *Acts of Mercy* and try to practise one or more of them.



Diary

In your diary write down or draw how you practised one or more of the Acts of Mercy. Write down or draw what you felt when you did this.



Let us read together as a family

**Look up in the Bible: St Paul's letter to the Ephesians, 4:
32**

*'Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another
as God has forgiven you in Christ.'*

Let us pray together as a family

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for all you provide us with.
Help us and remind us to get rid of our egoism and be merciful
to everybody, because everybody is our neighbour. Amen.



4 Chapter Four A Community that Prays



The First Theme

Walking together the Liturgical Year

The aim of this theme: to become familiar with the liturgical year of the Church, with its meaning and significance in our life as Christians, both on a personal level as well as on the community level. The liturgical year helps us understand the meaning of a community that prays together.

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

- The year has four seasons, twelve months, fifty-two weeks and three hundred and sixty-five days. These include: holidays, for example, the Christmas holidays; Public Feasts, for example, the feast of St. Paul (10th February), the feast of St. Joseph (19th March), Sette Giugno (7th June), St Mary (15th August); National Feasts, like Freedom Day (31st March), Independence Day (21st September), Our Lady of Victory (8th September), Republic Day (13th December). We find all these events in a calendar which is issued every year. The year begins on the 1st of January and ends on the 31st of December.
- The Church also has its year, which is called the Liturgical Year, in which we find special seasons like: Advent, Christmas, Lent and the Three Holy days of Easter, Easter Day and Ordinary Time.

- The Church also has its calendar. The liturgical year of the Church begins on the first Sunday of Advent and ends on the feast of Christ the King, towards the end of November.



- The liturgy is the official prayer of the Church. The word "liturgy" means "action" - praying together - which is done by the Christian community together with the Church all over the world.
- Everybody can take part in the liturgy. Jesus is there for all in the Church - we are one family as God is the Father of everyone.
- The aim of the liturgical year is to celebrate together the life and mysteries of Jesus Christ, starting from the Incarnation and Birth, the Three Holy Days of Easter, during which we celebrate Maundy Thursday, the Passion of Jesus, his death on Good Friday, Saturday morning - a day of silence when we wait for his rising from the dead - Easter, right up to his Ascension to heaven and the feast of Pentecost.

REMEMBER

The liturgy is the official prayer of the Church. The word "liturgy" means "action" -- praying together—which is done by the Christian community together with the Church everywhere, in Malta and abroad.

- In the calendar of the liturgical year we find the readings of the daily mass and of Sunday. In it we also find the feasts celebrated during the year and the colour of the priest's vestments during the liturgy.
- Violet is worn during Advent and Lent, while white is worn at Christmas, on Maundy Thursday and at Easter. Green is worn during the Ordinary Time - the days during the year.
- The readings of the Word of God during Sunday mass are spread over a cycle of three years:
 - Year A - normally readings from St Matthew's Gospel are used;
 - Year B - readings from the Gospel of St. Mark are used and
 - Year C - the readings are from St. Luke's Gospel.
 - St. John's Gospel is read on various days throughout the year, especially during Eastertide.



1. The Division of the Seasons of the Liturgical Year

- Advent** During Advent we long and wait for the birth of Jesus.
- Christmas** We start discovering Jesus when he started his life as a person among us; from Christmas onwards we keep discovering Jesus from his teachings and mission.
- Lent** It is a time when we experience forgiveness, mercy and charity.
- Easter** We experience our rising with Jesus and through Jesus.
- Ordinary Time** We experience the voyage of Jesus: his teachings, miracles, parables etc.



The Word of God

Look up in the Bible: Psalm 23

Reflect:

What do you feel when you read this psalm? What do you think is its message?

Challenge

Next Sunday go to mass and pay attention to the reading of the Gospel.



Diary

In your diary, write down or draw the *Gospel* of last Sunday and express, by writing or drawing, what you learnt from it which can serve you in life.



Let us read together as a family

From the Bible: St Mark 16: 1-8

'When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary , the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint him. Very early when the sun had risen, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb. They were saying to one another, "Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up they saw that the stone had been rolled back; it was very large. On entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were utterly amazed. He said to them, "Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Behold, the place where they laid him. But go and tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him as he told you." Then they went out and fled from the tomb, seized with trembling and bewilderment. They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.'

Let us pray together as a family

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for suffering and dying to show us your love by saving us. Thank you for rising from the dead to strengthen our faith. Help us to continue being strong in our faith, so that we never lose heart and always remember that you are our only Saviour, victorious even over death. Amen Halleluia!

The Second Theme

Praying in different places and on different occasions

The aim of this theme: to be more familiar with the fact that we can pray in various places and on various occasions during the day.

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

- Praying means listening and talking to God. In prayer we can talk to God about EVERYTHING - all that is in our heart: that which makes us happy, that which saddens us, that which we wish for, that which we are afraid of, all the plans that we have in our mind and heart.
- After we pray and open our heart to God, it is important to say, "Now we leave everything in your hands; only you know what is good for us." When we do this, we show great faith in God.
- God always wishes us well; he always gives us all that is good for us, at the time that we need it.



REMEMBER

Prayer is a conversation with God; it is a dialogue with God.

- Sometimes people say that they have prayed but have not received what they prayed for. We must remember that *God sees beyond our immediate needs*; so, if we have prayed and not received what we have prayed for, it means that what we think we need is not good for us or it is not the time for it. What is important is that we should go on praying and trusting in *God*, that we continue to believe that *God wishes us well*.

- The *Gospels* tell us that *Jesus* was always praying. We find him praying in different places and on different occasions. He was always in a prayer mode.
- *Jesus* prayed during his life, at his death and after he rose from the dead.
- Real friends enjoy talking to each other and confiding in each other. When we pray, we are confiding in our greatest friend: *Jesus* to pray means to **LOVE** and **TRUST**.



- The Sunday mass is also a community prayer. So, we should participate and pray with the community.

1. Let us mention some of the occasions and places when we know that Jesus prayed.

1.1 Jesus prayed in different places and on various occasions. Here are a few examples:

- alone on a mountain and then night fell: Matthew 14:23
- on a mountain: Matthew 4:8: the devil tempts Jesus
- in public: John 11: 41-42
- in public, before curing the deaf-mute : Mark 7: 31-37
- in a secluded place, alone he prayed after curing someone: Luke 5:16
- in the countryside before feeding the 5,000 people: Matthew 14: 19
- in public before raising Lazarus from the dead: John 11: 41-42
- in public: for children: Mark 10: 13-16



1.2 Jesus prayed for himself and for others and with others:

- for himself to do God's will: Matthew 26: 36-44
- for himself and his disciples and those who believed: John 17: 1-26
- during the Last Supper: Mark 14: 22-23
- when he was dying on the cross: Luke 23:46
- when he rose up from the dead, before eating with the apostles: Luke 24:30.

1.3 He prayed during the day

- in the morning before going to Galilee: Mark 1: 35-36
- before a meal: Matthew 26:26, Luke 24:30
- during the night before he took an important decision - the choice of the apostles: Luke 6: 12-13.



2. Places and occasions when we can pray

- At home
- At school
- At the Catechesis Centre
- In a chapel of adoration
- In church
- In the countryside



Look up in the Bible: Matthew Chapter 18:20

'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'

Reflect:

What, do you think, is the message of Jesus in these words?

Challenge

During this week find time to pray alone. Try not to wait till Sunday to visit Jesus in church or in a chapel. When hearing mass, do your best to participate fully by actively praying with the community.



Diary

In your diary, open your heart to Jesus by praying for what you wish. If you want, write down or draw this conversation/prayer.



Let us read together as a family

Look up in the Bible: Mark, 11: 23-25

'Amen I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it shall be done for him. Therefore I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours. When you stand to pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance, so that your heavenly Father may in turn forgive you your transgressions.'

Let us pray together as a family

Lord Jesus, as a family we thank you for everything; we pray that you take care of us so that we live as true Christians, as you wish us to. Amen.

(The family that prays together, stays together. Saint Theresa of Calcutta).



The Third Theme

Different positions while praying

The aim of this theme: to appreciate more the symbolism of the gestures made during prayers, particularly those made during the Liturgy of the Eucharist: the mass

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

- In the Catholic Church, we find many symbols, which have different meanings, especially the gestures we make during liturgical prayer, mostly during mass.
- In the liturgy, especially during mass, we pray also with our body, through various positions which all have important meanings.

1. We stand up

- Standing up during mass is a sign of respect.



- The priest represents Jesus Christ; so we stand up as a sign of respect towards Jesus Christ. We stand up when the priest is coming out to start the celebration of mass and at the end when he is going away.
- We stand up during the reading of the Gospel as a sign of respect towards the reading which recounts the actions of Jesus Christ.
- We stand up to recite the Creed - the expression of our faith - and also when we pray the Our Father.

2. We sit down

- Sitting down is a position in which we can listen, where we can pay more attention, and where we can think (reflect) better



REMEMBER

The word "symbol" means: something which means different things to different people, for example: a ring. The same ring may mean a gift on a special occasion; to others it may mean a family inheritance; to others it may mean a particular friendship with a dear one. Another example is this: a cross may mean a simple decoration on a necklace; to us Christians it is our Sign - the Cross on which Jesus Christ died.

- We sit down during the homily to listen attentively and reflect in silence.
- We sit down or kneel after receiving holy communion, so that in silence we meditate and pray respectfully to Jesus whom we have received.
- We should not sit down to have a nap or to chat - we must remember that the mass is a Christian community prayer and a prayer with the community. Besides, the house of God is a house of prayer and not unnecessary talk. There is a time and a place for everything!

3. We genuflect

- We do this gesture by bending down on one knee and slightly bowing our head. This is a sign of adoration and respect.
- We genuflect when in church we go in front of the Tabernacle, as a sign of respect and adoration to Jesus, who is present in the Tabernacle.
- The priest genuflects after the consecration of the bread and wine, as a sign of adoration towards the real body and blood of Jesus Christ. He genuflects again towards the Sacrament before starting to give out the Eucharist to the congregation.

4. We kneel down

- Kneeling down is a sign of adoration, respect and thanksgiving towards Jesus in the Eucharist.
- We kneel down during the consecration, as at that moment Jesus is present, alive both in body and blood. This is a great mystery of our faith. So, when the priest raises the host, we should kneel down and look at the host. When the priest genuflects we should bow our heads.
- We should do the same when the priest raises the chalice - kneel down or remain kneeling, and look at the chalice. When the priest genuflects, we should bow our heads as a sign of respect, thanksgiving and adoration.



5. We make the sign of the cross

- We make the sign of the cross at the beginning and the end of the mass. When we do so during the mass, we would be asking the Holy Trinity - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - to celebrate with us this prayer - the celebration of the Eucharist.
- We make the sign of the cross because we remember that Jesus died on the cross; it is through the cross that Jesus redeemed us and showed how much he loves us.
- Before the reading of the Gospel, we make the sign of the cross on our forehead, our lips and on our heart. This means that we wish that the Word of God be in our mind (so that we understand it), on our lips (so that we spread it) and in our heart (so that we will live it).

Look up in the Bible: Psalm 95:6

'Enter, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the Lord who made us.'

Reflect:

What, do you think, is the message of this verse from Psalm 95?

Challenge

When we go to church, especially during the mass, in the moments of silence, let us do our best to talk to Jesus and not talk among ourselves.



Diary

In your diary, write down or draw your dialogue with Jesus after receiving holy communion or when you are in front of Jesus in adoration.

Let us read together as a family

Look up in the Bible: Psalm 96
Praise to the God of the universe

(This psalm may also serve as a family prayer).

Sing to the Lord a new song,
sing to the Lord all the earth!
Sing to the Lord, bless his name;
announce his salvation day after day.

For great is the Lord and highly to be praised,
to be feared above all gods.
For the gods of the nations all do nothing
But the Lord made the heavens.
Splendour and power go before him;
power and grandeur are in his holy place.

Give to the Lord, you families and nations,
give to the Lord glory and might;
give to the Lord the glory due his name!
Bring gifts and enter his courts;
bow down to the Lord, splendid in holiness.

Praise among the nations his majesty,
among all peoples his wonders.
Tremble before God, all the earth;
Say among the nations: The Lord is king.
The world will surely stand fast, never to be moved.
God rules the peoples with fairness.

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice;
let the sea and what fills it resound;
let the plains be joyful and all that is in them.
Then let all the trees of the forest rejoice before the Lord comes,
who comes to govern the earth,
to govern the world with justice,
and the people with faithfulness.

The Fourth Theme Different Forms of Prayer

The aims of this theme are: to discover the meaning of the word "dignity" and what it means in practice that God has given this dignity to each person. We have to understand that each one of us has to respect his/her dignity first, but it is also our duty and responsibility to respect the dignity of others.

Let us learn how to live better as Christians

- Prayer is part of the life of a person. Many people around the world, even of different religions, feel the need to pray. They feel the need to communicate their wishes and all that is happening in their life to someone greater than they are.
- If we had to visit different countries all over the world, we would see people praying in different languages and in different ways as well. For example, in certain places people pray by dancing - this dancing is liturgical, that is, it is related to the functions and celebrations of the Church.



REMEMBER

Praying is part
of the life of
people.

- In other places, people pray by means of processions, like we also do in Malta.
- Other people pray by leaving their country and going on a pilgrimage, like when they go to the Holy Land - to Jerusalem. There they go to follow in the steps of Jesus, all in an atmosphere of prayer. The pilgrimage is a journey from one place to another, for example, from Birkirkara to the Marian Sanctuary in Mellieħa or to the Ta' Pinu Sanctuary in Gozo.



- During the journey/pilgrimage, people generally say the Rosary and listen to passages from the Bible. Several people go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Lourdes, Fatima, Pietralcina (to visit the tomb of St Pius of the Wounds - Padre Pio) and to other places around the world.

- Prayer is not putting on a show. To pray means to talk personally to God.
- It is also important to pray with the community and as a community. Again, this is not a show.
- All these are forms of prayer. Along with these, the Catholic Church teaches that there are **five forms of prayer**.

These are prayers of :

- praise
- thanksgiving
- blessing and adoration
- petition
- intercession.



The Word of God

Look up in the Bible:

St Paul's letter to the Romans,
Chapter 15: 5-6

'May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflect:

What message do these words of St. Paul bring you?

Challenge

During this week re-read these five forms of prayer and every day pray in one of these forms; little by little, these forms of prayer will become part of your life.



Diary

In your diary, write down or draw a prayer you wish to say to Jesus. Use one of these five forms of prayer.



Let us read together as a family

Look up in the Bible: Psalm 8

(This psalm is the prayer the family prays together).

O Lord, our Lord,
How awesome is your name through all the earth!
You have set your majesty above the heavens.
Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have drawn a defence against your foes,
to silence enemy and avenger.
When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and stars that you set in place!

What are humans that you are mindful of them,
mere mortals that you care for them?
Yet you have made them little less than a god,
crowned them with glory and honour.
You have given them rule over the works of your hands,
put all things at their feet:
All sheep and oxen,
even the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, the fish of the sea,
and whatever swims the paths of the seas.
O Lord, our Lord,
how awesome is your name through all the earth!