

# Becoming Human

Textbook for the third year of the Religion Curriculum in secondary schools



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A publication of the Secretariat for Catechesis of the Archdiocese of Malta  
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# Contents

<b>Authenticity</b>	<b>1</b>
You are unique.	2
Hiding behind a mask	4
A rebirth.	6
The greatest is love	8
Friends	10
The Family	12
<b>Being whole</b>	<b>15</b>
An image of God	16
Solitude	18
'Belonging'	20
Prejudice	22
Mercy and forgiveness	24
Three essential qualities	26
<b>Relationships</b>	<b>29</b>
A little less than angels.	30
Look after me	32
One step at a time	34
Harmony	36
A rainbow of colours.	38
Family and marriage	40
<b>What makes me a Christian</b>	<b>43</b>
The search for truth	44
Identity	46
Against the current	48
Jesus was a leader	50
Christians as 'salt' and 'light'	52
A renewed strength	54
<b>Good vs evil</b>	<b>57</b>
The original plan	58
Bad choices.	60
Freedom.	62
People of conscience	64
True joy	66
With the community.	68
<b>Part of a far larger world</b>	<b>71</b>
A living tradition	72
Religion in Malta	74
A faith formed over the ages	76
Bringing down the walls	78
Dialogue... the magic word	80
Keeping religion alive	82



# Becoming Human

The first and second books of religion in the Secondary level focused on the idea that each one of us is on a journey. This is a voyage of exploration where whatever we go through can teach us and help us to grow. It is also an inward journey of self-discovery, revealing all that goes on within us and around us, and all that forms our characters and personalities.

But none of this happens in a vacuum. This book, 'Becoming Human', focuses on the environment, and circumstances we constantly face and which, undoubtedly, have an impact on us. This book also explores the friendships and relationships that arise from life and that, whether we want it or not, condition us and even somewhat determine our perspective on life.

The book evolves in a way that supports the fact that we are born into a culture full of tradition, values and beliefs; yet, at the same time, this culture acknowledges the fact that we remain individuals who need to personalize all that is passed on to us.

Personal responsibility and commitment, especially through the lens of faith, start in this phase of life. It is a time when we slowly move out of childhood and start to make decisions that affect our personal lives.

When religion is presented in the proper way, it helps the individual grow holistically without suffocating one's freedom. This happens within a much larger context of other important and ancient Religions, besides the Christian religion of which we form part. Together, we form rich, wise traditions which give mankind a deeper humanity. In the Gospel of St Matthew, Jesus speaks to the people with a parable, telling them: 'Well then every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both old and new' (Mt. 13, 52).

It is true that religion has its roots in the past, in all that has been received. But like a tree that grows and spreads its branches, religion can nowadays still offer shelter and healing so often needed in our human experience.













# Authenticity

## PREPARE YOURSELF:

Are we authentic persons,  
or are we copies?

How can we define our  
love for others?

## TICK ✓ THE WORDS YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH:

☐

Authenticity

☐

Sincerity

☐

Hypocrisy

☐

Love

☐

Giving

☐

Friendship

☐

Family

☐

Community



# You are unique!

Often, when we buy branded goods, we find that they are more expensive than similar items of inferior quality. Today, it is considered illegal to sell items that look exactly like original branded items, but are not, since while they trick us into thinking they are original they are often

of an inferior quality. Sometimes, we fall for the trick and buy low cost copies, only to be dissatisfied, as, in the long run, we find that although we have saved money, the object bought is not authentic. In life it is important to know the difference between what is real and what is fake!

Something authentic is original. It is not something copied that passes as an original. Being authentic means being unique. The painting by Caravaggio found in St. John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta is unique, there is no other one like it. It is authentic. We are all called to be authentic human beings. No



## Pray

Find a quiet time and think about these words. How can you reconcile them with what you think about yourself, about your friends and family?

And the Lord told Samuel, "Take no notice of his appearance or his height for I have rejected him. God does not see as man sees; man looks at appearances but Yahweh looks at the heart." (1 Sam 16, 7)



## Did you know?

In Xi'an, China, a farmer who was searching for water to irrigate his fields came across one of the greatest archaeological finds in recent history. He found thousands and thousands of terracotta soldiers which had been made to protect the Emperor, Qin Shi Huang, who was the first Emperor to unite China. Even though he was known for his ruthlessness, he is honoured as one of the most forward looking leaders China has ever had. It was a truly unique and impressive find! The farmer who found them must have been quite shocked!



one is a copy, because God does not make copies. Each and every person is unique, with his own DNA which is particular only to him, and which makes him different from the rest of the world.

Maybe it's not the first time you were told, 'You're unique!' This is meant as a compliment to make you feel good. But the older you grow, the more you realize that there really is no one like you! Not because you are the best, but because each and every one of us has his own individual characteristics that are only his, even though there might be similarities with others. Even twins, who are normally considered 'identical' have

characteristics that distinguish them from each other. Pope John Paul II once said: 'Each person is unique and unrepeatable'.

Unfortunately, we sometimes go through phases in life, where instead of rejoicing in our uniqueness, we are scared of being different and we try to be similar to others in everything. We probably do this because we are worried that our friends, or those we admire, do not accept us. We feel more comfortable becoming like them, without realizing that, in doing so, we are losing more than gaining.

When this happens, we usually hide who we really are behind a

mask, so as not to allow others see our true self. Masks are usually worn to hide one's identity, or to please others and to feel accepted. Being authentic means being transparent, and this means being sincere, always being honest and true without fear or falsehood.

Masks hide our true identity and therefore they make us lie. Relationships, whether they are friendships, or more, cannot grow on lies. Lies hide the truth. The more we cheat others, the more we cheat ourselves because eventually, we will find it hard to accept ourselves as we truly are. The greatest gift we can give each other is to be who we really are, our true selves.



# Hiding behind a mask

No one knows the value of a work of art as much as the artist himself. In the Bible, God is referred to as an artist who forms the human being. One of the Fathers of the Church, Saint Athanasius, speaks of God as a sculptor who sculpts the human being out of fine marble. God, who has created us, knows our value well. The prophet Isaiah tells us that God has written our name on the palm of his hand and Psalm 139 says: 'You put me together in my mother's womb'.

In the Old Testament we come across many stories of people who, while searching for God, discover their own true value through the eyes of God. Thomas Green, who wrote many books with a spiritual theme, holds that we get to know God at the same time that we get to know ourselves. Searching for our true self and accepting this reality is often challenging. On the other hand, escaping from ourselves can cause more suffering.

In the Book of Genesis we read the story of the twins, sons of Isaac and Rebecca. A great conflict arose between Jacob and Esau about who was the elder, and who was to receive the blessing of their father. Jacob wanted to fool his father into thinking that he was Esau, who was the firstborn. He





pretended to be Esau and 'stole' the blessing, as his father, who was blind, did not recognize him. Jacob had to pass through a lot of suffering to discover himself and to understand what God was calling him for.

This story of Jacob could easily be our story too every time our selfishness and ambitions push us to lie to others. If we have God in our life, he gives us the strength and the courage to live a life of truth with ourselves and with others.

Psalm 51 recounts the story of King David during a time when he forgot completely who he was, and all that God had done for him. Letting his

egoism and thoughts take over, King David even committed a murder. In this psalm, King David said that he realised where his sinfulness and weakness had led him and how this showed his true self in God's eyes.

**Yet since you love  
sincerity of heart,  
Teach me  
the secrets of wisdom.  
Purify me with hyssop  
until I am clean;  
Wash me until I am  
whiter than snow...  
My sacrifice is this broken spirit,  
You will not scorn this crushed  
and broken heart. (Psalm 51)**

## Look it up!

In the Bible we meet different persons who made many mistakes in their life. Once they realized this, they embarked on a journey of transformation and eventually become better people. Read the story of Jacob in Genesis and discover how he changed from a selfish person to one of the Fathers of the People of God.





# A rebirth

Rita needed to get away from home, so she went for a long walk. The words she had just heard kept on echoing in her mind. She had never really liked her sister's boyfriend. He was too outspoken. Rita was sure he did not intend to hurt her, but no one had ever talked to her in that way... 'You are such a selfish person! Do you know how your sister suffers because of you...you come home and think the whole world revolves around you...You should know that your attitude really bothers everyone at home. Grow up and come out of your selfish bubble!' These words hurt Rita, but she knew they were true.

Have you ever experienced anything similar? Has anyone ever confronted you in such a decisive way? Has anyone ever told you something you did not want to admit about yourself and left you speechless in the process?

To truly appreciate our life, we need to take off the masks we carry around daily – the masks we sometimes wear to project the image of ourselves that we want others to see. Of course, how others see us does have its importance, but we cannot give a false image of ourselves. Jesus was very clear about this: 'The truth will set you free'. But free

from what? What are those things that enslave us and make us wear masks?

Jesus is the most complete person, truly free and authentic. He was never selfish. He never let other people influence him or his decisions, because he always did what the Father asked of him. Jesus wanted to free the people around him from their falsity, which was making them care more about how others saw them, than about their relationship with God and their faith. But God sees what is in our heart and not what is on the surface, like humans do. It is clear in the Gospels that Jesus found it



## Delve deeper

Have you ever had the opportunity of speaking to a colleague in the same way that the young man spoke to Rita? What pushed you to speak like that? What was the other person's reaction? If you could turn the clock back, would you do the same? Why?





### Live it!

What does it mean 'to be re-born'? Reflect on what is keeping you back from "being re-born". This week make an effort to overcome at least one of these difficulties. Do not lose heart; you can encourage a colleague to face this challenge together. When you have overcome the first hurdle, you can go on to the second. Now, you are at an advantage, because the fact that you have conquered the first difficulty, gives you confidence.

very hard to start a relationship with these people. The Pharisees were known as people who obeyed the Law only on the outside, for others to see; they were not authentic

people. Rather than being truthful to themselves and their God, they were more interested in how they appeared in front of others. This is why Jesus often argued with them, and once even called them 'whitewashed tombs', because they were beautiful on the outside, but full of death on the inside. Even today, the word 'pharisee' is synonymous to the word 'hypocrite'.

In the Gospel of St. John we meet a pharisee called Nicodemus, who wanted to get to know Jesus. Nicodemus met with Jesus in the middle of the night for a personal chat. Jesus told him that one needs to 'be born again', which means one needs to change one's mentality. Nicodemus found it hard to understand Jesus, because he took Jesus' words literally.

In the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus tells the parable of the hidden treasure. When one finds this hidden treasure, one sells everything to buy the field where the hidden treasure lies. Here we can understand better what Jesus tried to tell Nicodemus. The treasure is me, my life. I buy the field so that I can discover the treasure, little by little. But to do so, I need to free myself from all that keeps me alienated or stops me from discovering who I truly am.

**"The Kingdom of heaven is like a hidden treasure in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field." (Mt 13, 44)**



# The greatest is love

Gold is one of the most precious elements found in the earth, and things made from gold are usually quite expensive. But gold passes through a very long process before it becomes the shiny, smooth gold we know. Gold needs to be purified. It is put through high heat that eliminates any impurities that might lessen its value.

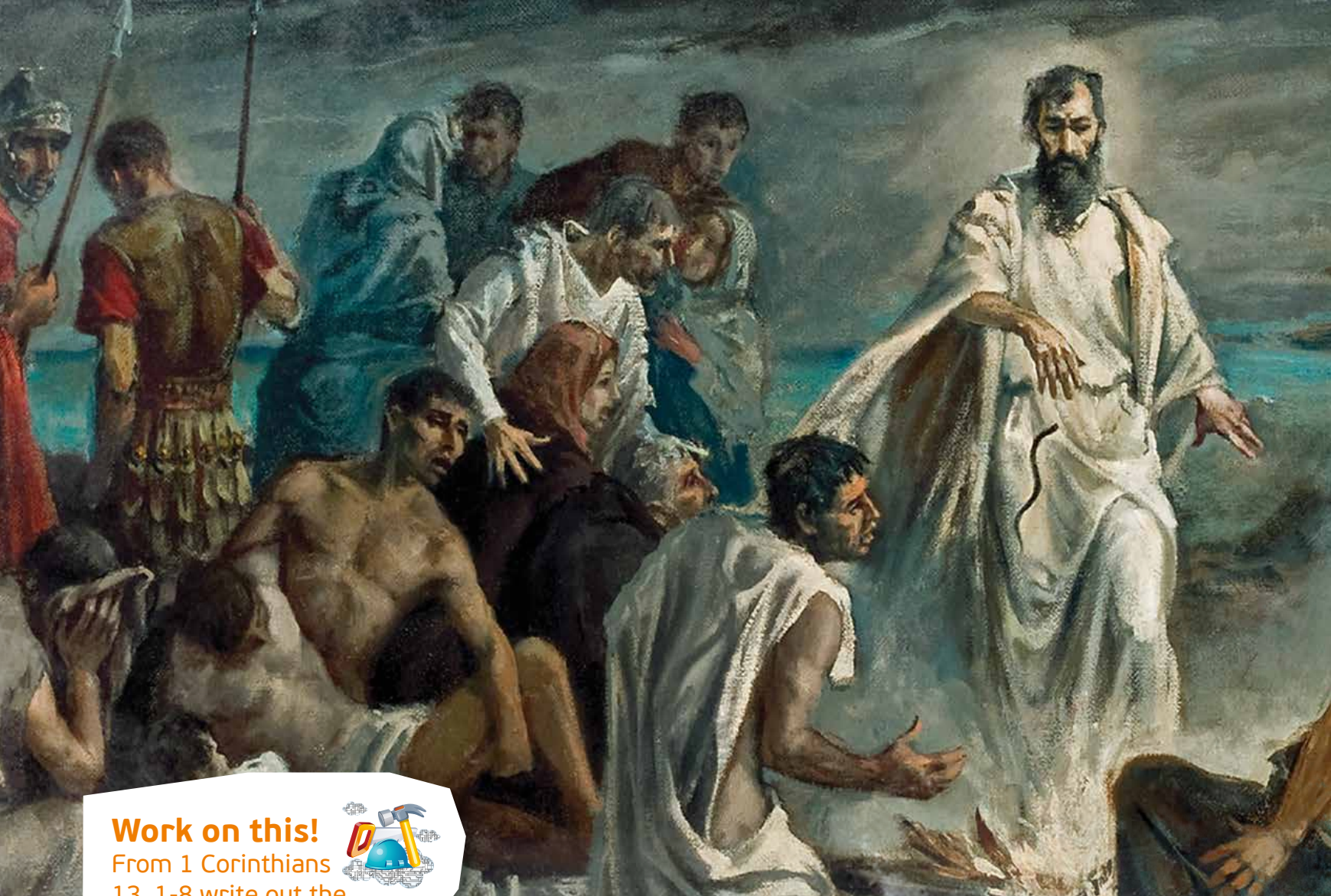
In the Bible, this symbol of purification is often mentioned as a process that we too need to go through. In the Book of the Prophet Malachi we read: "He will take his seat as refiner and purifier, he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and then they will make the offering to Yahweh as it should be made." (Mal 3,3) In

the Bible, fire is the symbol of true love. So, if there is a process by which we can become more authentic and real, then it is through the process of love.

St Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians writes an ode to love and shows us that even love needs to be purified to become true. Many people believe in love,







*The Shipwreck of St Paul* by artist Willie Apap and now at the Apostolic Nunciature, Tal-Virtù

## Work on this!



From 1 Corinthians 13, 1-8 write out the definition of love. Do you think this perfect way of loving can be achieved? Is it difficult to always love in this way? Our emotions vary from person to person, depending on how we are treated. God, though, does not love us in this way, because His love is not conditioned by the way we love him. God's love 'never ends'; and His love for us is perfect.

but it is all too easy to have different ideas of what love is. St Paul invites us to grow, mature and aspire for that true love that is purified of all selfishness and egoism.

"If I have the eloquence of men and angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fullness, to move mountains, but without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to burn it, but am without love, it will do me no good whatsoever.

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take

offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other peoples' sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. Love does not come to an end." (1 Cor 13, 1-8)

True love is capable of putting the interest of others before our own, making us authentic people who are truly able to love. This authenticity liberates us, and frees us from worrying about how others see us or judge us. This authenticity makes us complete persons who are truly able to love and accept love. It is difficult for one to accept love if one does not know how to love.





## Look it up

There are many song records whose theme is friendship. Here are the names of some, maybe you never heard of: Friends will be friends, you're my best friend, That's what friends are for. Try to find other recent songs with the same theme. What can we learn from them?

# Friends

Christopher was a special boy. He had nearly died at birth due to breathing problems. The doctors managed to save him, but he suffered permanent brain damage. Unfortunately, he could not talk and had to use a wheelchair.

With the help of technology, he learnt how to communicate and when he grew up he wrote many books and poems. In his book 'Under the Eye of the Clock,' winner of the Whitehead Prize, Chris recounted the experience of his first day at school. He

was very anxious and scared because, for the first time, he was going to be in a class with children without special needs. He had braced himself for a day full of loneliness. But, as soon as the bell for the first break rang, he found himself in the yard surrounded by many of his classmates, who eventually became his greatest friends.

That day was the first day of a beautiful period in Chris' life where he never felt alone, and which, years later, he shared in his book.

The word 'friend' brings to mind the word 'love' and this makes sense because it is through love that one manages to build real and lasting friendships. If there is no true love among friends, then that friendship is fake. True friendship is built on love, leads to real friendships and overcomes any problems or fears that might be faced. Shakespeare says this about friendship:

*"A friend is one that knows you as you are, understands where you have been, accepts what you have become, and still, gently allows you to grow".*



A true friendship helps you grow and find yourself. True friends do not stop you from being who you really are. On the contrary, they instill confidence so that you never need to hide your true self. Real friendship based on true love overcomes all fear and accepts all defects. In the Book of Bin Sirak we read:

### Delve Deeper

How many friends do you have on 'Facebook'? What kind of relationship do you really have with them? By now, you know that not all friends are the same. Think of your real friends and make a list of their qualities. Is there any quality in this list that you wish you had yourself? What are your feelings and thoughts after reading Christopher's story?



**"A faithful friend is a sure shelter, whoever finds one has found a rare treasure. A faithful friend is something beyond price, there is no measuring his worth. A faithful friend is the elixir of life, and those who fear the Lord will find one. Whoever fears the Lord makes true friends, for as a man is, so is his friends."** (Sir 6, 14-17)

The Bible is full of people who, like us, had to grow and be purified thanks to their relationships and friendships. A few of these great friendships are David and Jonathan, Ruth and Naomi and above all Jesus with the Apostles. In these stories we recognize ourselves,

because it is only when we accept to be loved, that we are able to grow. Each and every one of us has a hidden potential that, once discovered, can change our lives into a beautiful gift for others. True friendship was always a fundamental experience in the lives of many saints, who throughout the history of Christianity, transmitted the message of the Gospel in the most authentic and true way possible. Stories of saints like Saint Perpetua and Saint Felicity, and later Saint Gregory and his best friend Saint Basil, Saint Francis and Saint Clare. These friendships attest to the truth that Christianity is not an individualistic religion to be lived, cut off from others.





# The family

Mary was out buying vegetables when she came across Madeline, who quickly told her: "Well done for yesterday's concert! We were there and saw your son play! You must be really proud of him... he is so talented, God bless him! And when the concert was over, he impressed us with his self-assured attitude when dealing with the guests. You must be really, really proud!!"

But while Madeline was talking, Mary felt very sad, because even though she did appreciate her son's talent, she knew that he was

very different at home. He never helped, he practised his violin at all times of the day and night, and he was disrespectful and always wanted things his way. It saddened her that people saw him in such a positive light when at home he was totally different.

We are part of a family, and the relationships we have in the family are as important, if not more, than the friendships we have outside the family. It is good, therefore to ask ourselves some questions.

What is the family for you? Do you take for granted your family, who is always there for you?

What is your place and your part in the family?

## Pray



Find a quiet time to think about these words. Reflect on the way your relationship with your family can improve.

"Children, be obedient to your parents in the Lord – that is your duty. The first Commandment that has a promise attached to it is: Honour your father and mother and the promise is: and you will prosper and have a long life in the land. And parents, never drive your children to resentment but in bringing them up, correct them and guide them as the Lord does." (Eph 6, 1-4)







On the 12th World Youth Day held in Paris, Pope John Paul II spoke to the huge crowd of youths gathered before him and told them: **“My dearest youths, be generous and responsible in your contribution to the continuous building of the Church as a family, a place of dialogue and acceptance, where peace, mercy and forgiveness are always present.”**

How do you behave in your family? Do you try to be honest? Do you understand what other members of your family are going through?

Is the family a place where you only take, without every giving anything back?

Our voyage begins in the family. We started growing in the family which was our first teacher. Family members usually get to know each other as they really are, without masks, and with all their weaknesses and beautiful attributes. The family is also probably the first place where we are truly loved for who we are, and helped to grow and become better persons. It is also usually the first place where we are loved and where we learn to love.

As we grow up, besides the immediate family, we also form part of other bigger families, like the one in our village, parish or country. Even the church is a

community of faith we become part of through baptism and where we are eventually formed. This community of faith is important to us because it is there that we discover that we believe in the same things as other people, and it is also the place where we celebrate our belief.

The Christian community is built on sincere and authentic love, leading each person towards true love. The Christian community is called to spread the love of Jesus. It is Jesus himself who helps us change into individuals who are always on the lookout for members in the community who are weak and who might need our help.





## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

### A IMPORTANT WORDS

Briefly explain the following terms:

- ▶ Authenticity
- ▶ Friends
- ▶ Family

### B MAIN IDEAS

Write a paragraph about the following:

- ▶ Being authentic means being original and not a copy.
- ▶ My family and I.

### C STOP AND THINK

Using what you have learnt in this chapter, answer the following:

- ▶ It is easy to wear a mask. But the longer one wears a mask, the harder it is to remove it. Discuss.
- ▶ Why shouldn't we hide behind a mask?
- ▶ How are friendship and love related to each other?

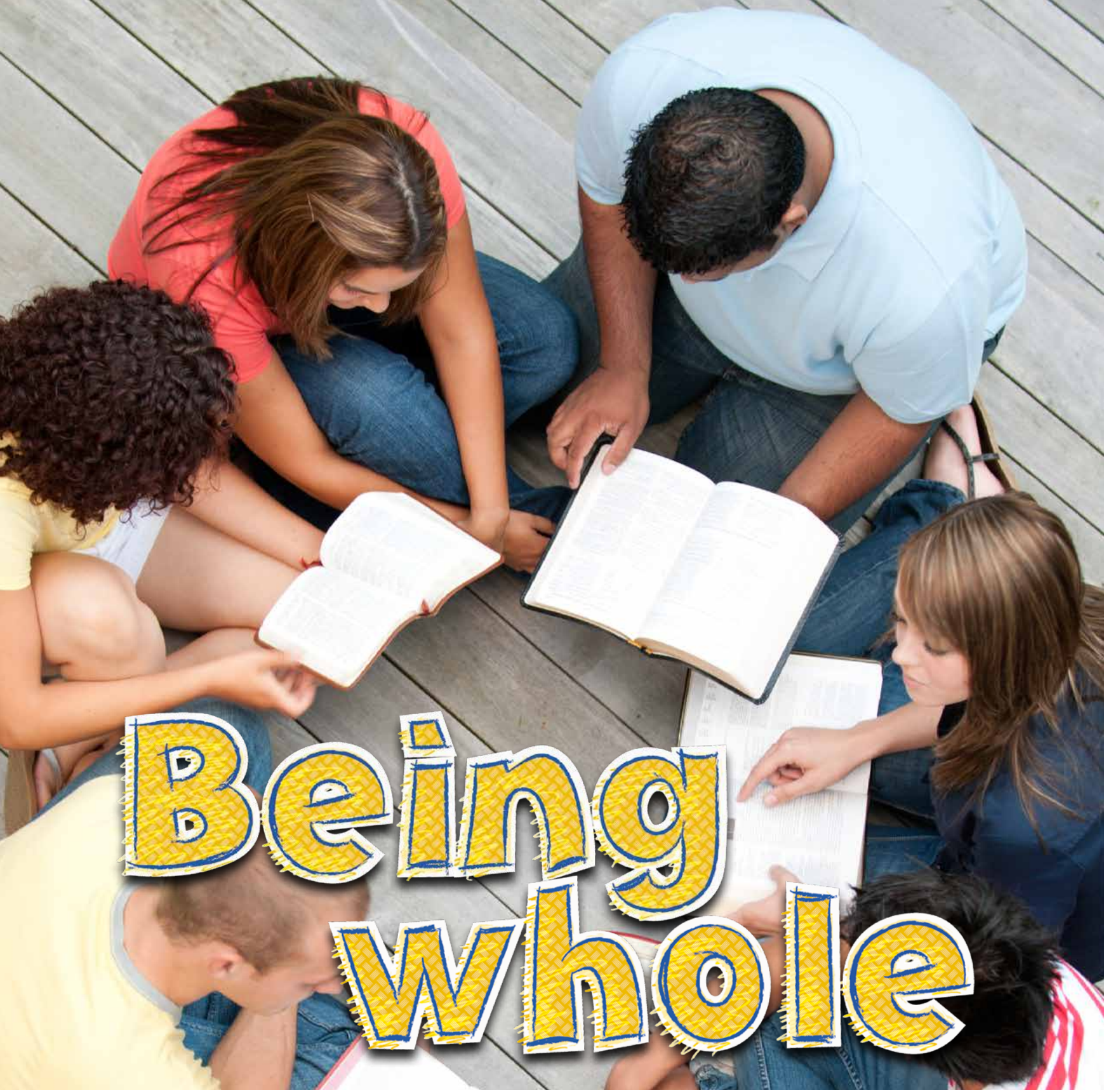
### D FAMILY DISCUSSION

Discuss the following with your family:

- ▶ Through Baptism we have become part of a larger family – the Christian family. Being part of a family means having responsibilities. What are our responsibilities as part of the family of God?

# Authenticity





**PREPARE YOURSELF:**

What space is there in your life for virtues? Or is this just plain, old fashioned teaching?

What is prejudice?

**TICK ✓ THE WORDS YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH:**

☐

Creation

☐

Potential

☐

Belonging

☐

Wholeness

☐

Virtue

☐

Relationships

☐

Healing

☐

Maturity



A woman with long brown hair is smiling and holding a baby. The baby is wearing a black and white checkered shirt and white pants. The woman is wearing a grey top and a watch on her left wrist.

# An image of God

In the Book of Genesis we read that God created "great sea serpents and every kind of living creature with which the waters teem, and every kind of winged creature, and God saw that it was good."

And God said: "Let the earth produce every kind of living creature: cattle, reptiles, and every kind of wild beast." God saw that it was good. God said: "Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves", and God looked at all that He had made and indeed it was very good.

Everything God created was good, but man is God's masterpiece, because he is created in His image. God adorned man with qualities that resemble those of God and he gave him the potential to become a whole person, endowing him with 'virtues' that help man become complete.

The word 'virtue' is translated from the Greek word 'arete' which means 'moral excellence'. The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes virtue as a habit of doing good. ".....allowing the person not only to do good actions, but to give what is the best of himself. A virtuous person, with all his or her strength, body and soul, is attracted to what is good and chooses it concretely daily in his/her actions and choices." (CCC 1903)

Saint Gregory of Nissa used to say that: "The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God." Virtues,



therefore, are attitudes or habits of doing good. So, a virtuous person is one who habitually does good, and is therefore a person with sound moral values.

The Cardinal Virtues are those fundamental to humanity. These are: justice, prudence, courage and moderation.

### PRUDENCE

“Mark did well in his exams because he had help”, Joseph told his father. “Mark did well because he studied and because he is prudent”, his father answered. “What does prudence mean?” asked Joseph. “It means always doing your duty as best you can, and not being careless. That’s why Mark did well. He studied wisely and his results were his reward”.

It is a very positive thing to call someone prudent. Prudence is that virtue that helps us think

rationally, so that in every circumstance we are able to choose what is right. The Book of Proverbs affirms that “the man of discretion watches how he treads.” (Prov 14,15)

### JUSTICE

The news was crystal clear. Tony was sentenced to six years in prison for being in possession of a kilo of cocaine. Mr Cutajar was not very happy, as he believed Tony should have got more. But Tony’s mother, who was a good woman, cried with sorrow when she heard the verdict. She had raised her son in the best possible way. She could find no consolation!

Justice is one of the pillars of society. Justice does not only deal with punishing individuals who break the law, but also works for the respect and dignity of individuals within society. Where justice is missing, society is

unhealthy. Justice is a virtue that also regulates our friendships.

### COURAGE

During her break, Rita loved going to St Mark’s Chapel to hear mass. Her friends teased her and often told her that she was wasting her time. But right from her first day at the factory, Rita kept on hearing Mass during break.

Courage gives us the determination to keep firm in what we believe in, whatever the circumstances might be. Courage helps us fight disheartenment.

### MODERATION

A person needs to use moderation in what and how much he eats and how much he works and rests. Moderation, or temperance, is the balance we need in everything we do. If there is no balance in our life, we run the risk of living without limits, and this can be very damaging.



### Live it!

Spend some time thinking on the above virtues. Are they present in your life? In which area of your life do you feel you do not have enough control? In the coming days, try and be more aware so as to live this virtue better. How does this make you feel?



# Solitude

Have you ever had the unpleasant experience of being surrounded by friends but still felt lonely? What did you do? What does a lonely person do? Why do we occasionally want to be alone? What is solitude? Why do some people suffer too much from solitude?

Solitude does not always mean being alone in a negative way. In fact, the English language has two words that nearly mean the same: solitude and loneliness. According to Henri J. Nouwen, a lonely person is someone who feels isolated and rejected by others. There is a big difference between

being in solitude because you have chosen to be so, and being lonely because you feel rejected and ignored by others. The latter is a painful experience.

Modern man suffers a lot from loneliness. It is at the root of many problems that crush him. It leads to loss of hope and can often be tragic. Sometimes, loneliness can also push a person towards vices like drugs, alcohol or gambling.

Sometimes, it is the insensitivity of others that pushes us into a period of loneliness, and sometimes, it can be our fault for wanting to be

alone, or for making it difficult for others to communicate with us.

Nowadays, technology has become a very important part of our life. It is also beneficial to society in general, and plays a very important part in relationships.

## Did You Know?

Henri J. M. Nouwen was a priest who wrote more than 40 books about spirituality. His books are very popular and are still in demand. Most of his writings were influenced by his friendship with Jean Vanier, who founded communities made up of people with disabilities and others who took care of them. In his book "Reaching Out", Nouwen explains that 'to live a spiritual life, one must have the courage to go into the desert where one feels constantly alone, and where, slowly but surely this loneliness is changed into a garden of solitude.'







Among the many presents Tony received for his birthday, his uncle's laptop was his favourite. Finally, he could stop using the computer in the living room, and work in the comfort of his bedroom. At first, it felt really good to be able to talk to his friends in peace. He even enjoyed doing his homework and searching for interesting things. But gradually, his time on the computer became longer and longer, until eventually, he was even coming across sites on his computer that were definitely not meant for teenagers his age.

At first, Tommy was shocked to see such things on his computer, but eventually, he got used to them, and even started searching for more sites. In a short while, Tommy was completely taken over by pornography and he spent hours glued to his computer. His room became his world, and he even stopped going out with his friends. Worse still, and without any obvious explanation, he became very nervous and snapped constantly at everyone, for no apparent reason. His parents were worried, but they thought it might be stress due to studies and homework, or maybe it was because of his age.

But the problem was his addiction to pornography. The more time passed, the harder it was for him to try and get out of this habit. Even his girlfriend left him because his attitude towards her had changed for the worse.

In the end he needed professional help. One evening, his father barged into his room without knocking and found him watching pornography. After a lot of shouting, his parents calmed down. Finally, they realised what had been troubling him. Together they decided what would be the best thing to do.

Thanks to modern technology, people living thousands of kilometers away from each other can nowadays communicate easily. Social networking has created a virtual world of uninterrupted communication. Yet, we do not always realize that the virtual world is not always the real world. This reality, although largely beneficial, demands that

we are always careful not to be sucked up into a fantasy world. Virtual relationships must not take the place of real relationships. At times, solitude can be positive too. Occasionally, we decide we need some time alone, not because we want to shun our friends and family, but because we really do need time on our own.

Nouwen wrote that 'true solitude is an attitude of the heart, and not a lack of people around me'. Solitude can be lived both in a big, noisy city and also in the middle of a rowdy crowd.

This solitude helps us look at the reality we live in from a distance. The silence helps us understand life better and helps form our opinions, dreams and plans.



# Belonging

All of us, at some point or other in our life, have had the desire to belong, either to a group of friends or to a club. We also want to be friends and have friends. This is all natural. In fact, it is a need felt by everyone. This need instils in us a desire for true friends, with whom we can be ourselves, and whom we can trust. In our friendships we seek intimacy, a belonging on a very personal level. We also have other needs, such as being with other friends on different levels.

We join groups that help us grow physically, mentally and spiritually.

The most important thing is to feel that we actually belong to the group. The group should be a place where we can grow and discover ourselves with the help of others and where we develop sound values, both socially and psychologically. Friendships that flourish in these environments could help us appreciate the importance of relationships, help us realize how to love truly and work with others, and also

understand what it means to trust and be trusted.

Love and trust are closely linked. Trust in others and in ourselves gives us a sense of security that is beneficial to all.

## TRUST

**Marisa and Joan were best friends and they trusted each other. They were in the same netball team and whenever they had training, they always made sure they had some time to talk. One day, Marisa confided in Joan that her mother**







## Look it up!

If you want to know more about groups that are teenager-friendly, log on to [www.kdz.org.mt/youth-groups](http://www.kdz.org.mt/youth-groups)

In 2012, the 'Aġenzija Żgħażaġh' and 'Żgħażaġh Haddiema Nsara' conducted a survey among 400 teenagers between the ages of thirteen and thirty years. Among other things, this survey showed that 22% of participants were members of a club or sports nursery, while 30% were in a youth club or were active in voluntary work. What do you think of the rate of participation? Is it high or low?

had left home. Just opening up to Joan made Marisa feel better. But when they met again for training the week after, she realized Joan must have told the whole team, because they were acting strangely. In the meantime, her mother had come back home, and things were getting back to normal.

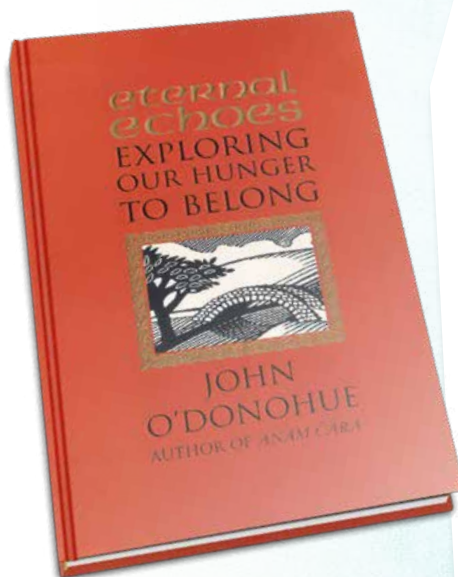
Joan eventually owned up to telling the whole team. It was not easy for Marisa to share her story with everyone. Her trust in Joan had taken a knock. She still felt Joan was a good friend, but she decided not to share personal things with her anymore. Joan was sorry, but it was too late, the damage had been done. Trust takes a long time to build, but can be destroyed in a second.

In friendship there is loyalty to each other. Where there is no loyalty there is no trust and without trust there is no real friendship.



## Delve Deeper

In his book *Eternal Echoes: Exploring our Hunger to Belong*, John O'Donohue says that: "The hunger to belong is at the heart of our nature. When we become isolated, we are prone to being damaged; our minds lose their flexibility and natural kindness. We become vulnerable to fear and negativity. A sense of belonging, however, suggests warmth, understanding and embrace. Our hunger to belong is the longing to bridge the gulf that exists between isolation and intimacy".





# Prejudice

Being prejudiced means making a judgment before having enough information to do so. Along with all the things that we inherit from our culture, it may be that we also have prejudices passed on to us. These prejudices can be based on religious belief, race, sexual orientation, skin colour, political party or culture. In society, prejudices perpetuate many differences. It is prejudice that builds walls instead of bridges. Unfortunately, it is easy

to let prejudice stop us from communicating with another person. Nowadays, in our country, even in our own classroom, we often meet persons with different religious beliefs or skin colour. Often, we exclude people just because they have a different political opinion or sexual orientation from us. In the history of humanity we come across many individuals who worked wholeheartedly to eliminate once and for all, the prejudices among

people of different race, colour or class. The opposite of prejudice is truth and justice, the two major pillars a truly humane society is built on.

Today we use the word 'icon' to describe such people. Martin Luther King was one such icon in modern America when he fought racism in the sixties. In his battle against racism, Martin Luther King always preached non-violence. Martin Luther King is best known



## Look it up

Among the things that Martin Luther King is still known for, there is the famous speech, to a massive crowd, when he shared his dream of seeing his children be judged not by the colour of their skin but by their character. Look for this speech and find out why it is still relevant today.





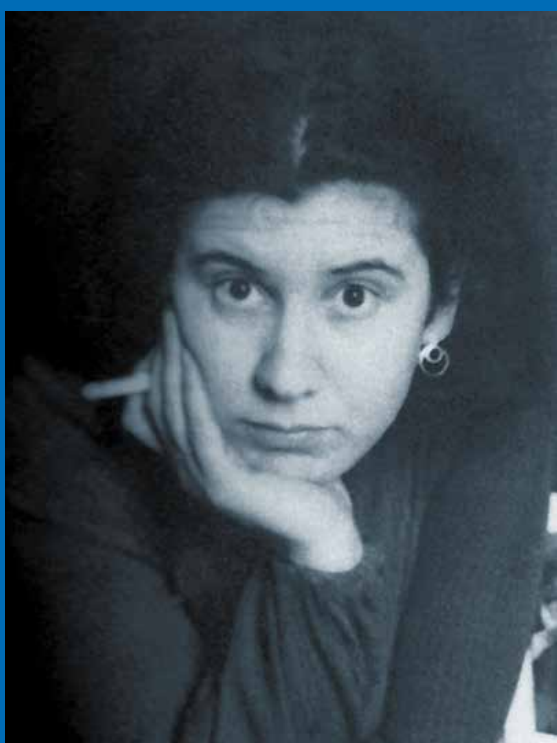
for his speech 'I Have a Dream', where he shared his desire for the world to be a just one. Even though Martin Luther King was assassinated on the 4th of April 1968, his wish lives on in the people who continue to fight his battle.

Even though nowadays we often talk of an inclusive society, many people are still excluded because of prejudices. Society everywhere

needs to be healed from these prejudices. But what could the remedy be?

Imagine you are looking at a stained glass full of different colours that together form one whole picture. It comes alive when the sun streams through it and its beauty shines through. In the same way, we need to discover how to celebrate diversity and not be scared of it.

Humanity is a rainbow of many colours. Opinions are many and varied, but this should not give rise to prejudices. On the contrary, we should discover the riches of each person and celebrate our differences. Many people have had good cause to be negative, angry, pessimistic and prejudiced. But they did not give in to these feelings. Instead they found it in themselves to fight the darkness and serve as a light for humanity.



**ETTY HILLESUM** was a Dutch Jewish girl who wrote a diary between 1941 and 1943. Her strong character shines through this diary, as does her struggle to understand humanity. In the diary we also see how she built an interesting relationship with God.

After meeting and falling in love with Julius Speer, she wrote how this experience changed her internally. She used to feel sorry for the Germans. One day a German shouted at her, but she was not afraid because she was more interested in trying to understand why a person could behave in such a way. When the Germans ordered

the Jews to wear the Star of David, in April 1942, Etty struggled not to lose hope and to keep on believing. In 1942, the Jews were transported to Poland. There Etty lived with very poor people who died of hunger every day. Yet, she used to look up at the sky from her window, believing that life should be full of beautiful things.

In the last part of her diary, after the death of her lover Julius, Etty wrote a lengthy prayer to God. In September 1943, Etty, together with her parents and her brother Mischa, were taken to Auschwitz Concentration Camp, where she died three months later.



# Mercy and forgiveness

It was quite early in the morning when some Pharisees barged into my house. They grabbed me and roughly pushed me onto the pavement. I begged them to tell me where they were taking me, but no one answered. They kept on pushing me until we got to the Temple's yard. The place was full of people and I could also see the man they called

'Teacher'. I had always wanted to meet him, but not in this way! I knew being unfaithful to my husband was wrong, but I was not ready to change. Maybe the Teacher was going to tell me what to do. I started worrying. What if he condemned me? One of the Pharisees told the Teacher: "We have caught her being unfaithful." All of a sudden, I felt breathless

and scared. To make matters worse he continued: "In our Law, Moses says that people like this woman should be stoned. What do you say?" Now I started to panic, as I realized that I was here to be judged and stoned. I was quickly losing all hope.

The crowd fell silent. To everyone's astonishment, the Teacher knelt





down and started writing in the dust on the floor. What was he writing? Was he judging me? It seemed so, because the Pharisees looked pleased. Suddenly, the Teacher turned his gaze towards them, and in a slow, steady voice, he told them: "Who is without sin, throws the first stone." Then he bent down and started writing again. Something I never expected happened. The Pharisees started leaving one by one. So I wasn't the only bad person here....it seemed like the Pharisees had sins too... When everyone had left, I found myself alone with the Teacher. I wondered what he would do. "Woman, has no one condemned you?" His gentle gaze touched my heart. I had never seen a look of such mercy and understanding. Still scared and in a trembling voice I said: "No one Lord". Then he looked at me with a look of love and said: "Then neither do I. Go and sin no more."

The Greek word for forgiveness means 'being freed from captivity' and is used to refer to a prisoner being freed. This is what forgiveness feels like, and what happens in our hearts when we are forgiven. Sin, in any kind or form, is like a weight on our heart. Forgiveness and love towards our enemies are at the heart of Christianity. Jesus tells us: "Love

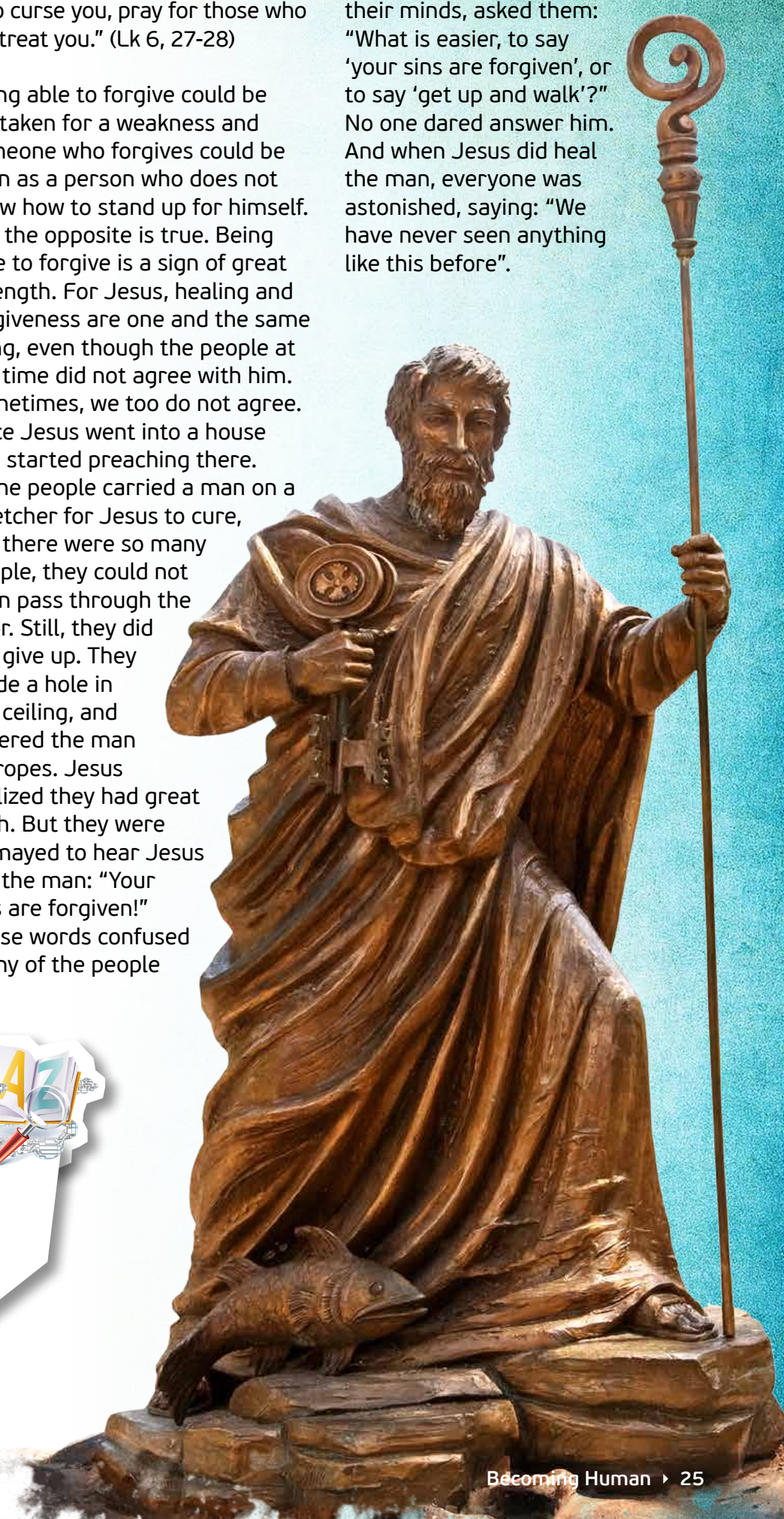
your enemies, do good to those that do you harm, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." (Lk 6, 27-28)

Being able to forgive could be mistaken for a weakness and someone who forgives could be seen as a person who does not know how to stand up for himself. But the opposite is true. Being able to forgive is a sign of great strength. For Jesus, healing and forgiveness are one and the same thing, even though the people at the time did not agree with him. Sometimes, we too do not agree. Once Jesus went into a house and started preaching there. Some people carried a man on a stretcher for Jesus to cure, but there were so many people, they could not even pass through the door. Still, they did not give up. They made a hole in the ceiling, and lowered the man on ropes. Jesus realized they had great faith. But they were dismayed to hear Jesus tell the man: "Your sins are forgiven!" These words confused many of the people

present, and Jesus, who knew what was going on in their minds, asked them: "What is easier, to say 'your sins are forgiven', or to say 'get up and walk'?" No one dared answer him. And when Jesus did heal the man, everyone was astonished, saying: "We have never seen anything like this before".

## Delve Deeper

Once Saint Peter asked Jesus how many times we should forgive each other. Read what Jesus told him in the Gospel of St Matthew 18, 21-22, and with your classmates discuss what Jesus says. Is there a limit to how much we should forgive?





# Three essential qualities

Our lives are full of people we admire, people who seem to have reached their potential. Sometimes, though, this success goes to their head and their behaviour leaves us disillusioned. On the other hand, sometimes we do come across people who feel lucky to be successful but who do not feel better than others. These people have really reached their full potential because, besides being successful, they have succeeded in growing and becoming better people. These people stand out, not only because they are admired by many, but, most of all, because they possess a very beautiful quality: humility.

## WHAT IS HUMILITY?

Our God showed us what perfect humility is when he became man and lived among us. He completely relinquished all that is godly to become man like us. In the Last Supper, Jesus teaches us what humility is when he takes off his cloak, puts on an apron and washes the Apostles' feet.

Humility is a way of looking at oneself and a way of respecting others. Humility does not mean abasing oneself. Humility has nothing to do with what we call 'low self-esteem'. Humility is a virtue that allows a person to know his abilities without feeling superior. Being humble allows space for other people in my heart; it is a virtue that helps me appreciate more and more the 'other' in my life.

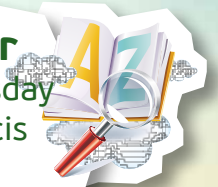
A humble person is never conceited. He is aware of the dignity in others and shows respect at all times. The word humility is derived from the Latin words 'humilitas' and 'humus' which mean floor. The opposite of humility is pretension, vanity, arrogance and narcissism.

The Bible teaches us that although being humble requires many sacrifices, it can also be very



## Delve Deeper

On Maundy Thursday 2013, Pope Francis celebrated the remembrance of the Last Supper with a group of inmates in Marmi prison. Discuss this event with your classmates, and identify the attitudes the Pope is encouraging us to live.





fruitful. In the Book of Proverbs we read that: "The reward of humility is the fear of Yahweh, riches, honour and life." Jesus was very clear about our place in society and our relationship with others: "The greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted." (Mt 23, 11-12)

Jesus' whole teaching is practically based on this principle. The Kingdom of God, that Jesus became man to proclaim, belongs to the humble and not to the exalted. One day Jesus called a little child to him and said: "I tell you solemnly, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. And so the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 18, 2-4)

### **PATIENCE**

Patience is another virtue that helps us reach our full potential. Patience sometimes means how well we can tolerate negative people and circumstances, but in the Bible this word has a slightly different meaning. In the letter to the Hebrews, the author says: "With so many witnesses in a great cloud on every side of us, we too, then should throw off everything that hinders us, especially the sin that clings so easily, and keep running steadily in the race we have started." (Heb 12,1)

So patience is also perseverance: the ability to keep on believing, hoping, loving, being merciful, understanding and respecting, in spite of the difficulties that might provoke us to stop.

No wonder the Latins used to consider patience the queen of

the virtues! Sometimes to love and keep on loving against all odds, needs a lot of patience. To persist in understanding, forgiving, respecting...all these need patience. This is not weakness, but strength, a strength in which we need to grow.

In his Letter to the Colossians St Paul writes: "You will have in you the strength, based on his glorious power, never to give in, but to bear anything joyfully." (Col 1, 11) To be able to grow in a holistic way, we need the virtue of patience.

On the other hand, if we do not strive to reach our full potential, steadily growing into a complete person, we could easily lose everything at the slightest whim. The complete person is a mature person. But a person who does not cultivate these virtues, and therefore who does not grow, runs the risk of remaining immature and unable to face life. This immaturity is most evident in our relationships with each other. An immature person finds it very hard to build and maintain friendships and relationships.

### **LOVE**

Love is the most important virtue, and it is closely connected to the virtues of humility and patience. As Christians, we cannot be happy with merely respecting others and not doing them harm. A Christian who loves has to put the needs of others before his own. To love means giving gladly what is yours, to give up your own opinions and tastes. In other words, to love means to offer up yourself. Jesus was not happy to live by justice only. In fact, he does everything in his power to heal the sick, help the poor, forgive sinners and support the marginalized, even though all this got him into trouble. With his example and teaching, Jesus showed us concretely that rather than justice, we need love. His new commandment tells us: "Just as I have loved you, you also must love one another." (Jn 13, 34) So, love must be the most important thing in our life. In each and every action or decision we take, we need to be inspired by the great love Jesus has for us.







# Being whole

## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

### A IMPORTANT WORDS

Briefly explain the following terms:

- ▶ Virtue
- ▶ Solitude
- ▶ Virtual world
- ▶ Real world
- ▶ Faith
- ▶ Liberty
- ▶ Forgiveness
- ▶ Maturity

### B MAIN IDEAS

Write a paragraph about the following:

- ▶ The meaning of the real world and the virtual world
- ▶ What does prejudice mean? Have you ever spoken against someone prejudiced? Have you ever spoken up for them? Do you really believe in what you think and say?
- ▶ Mention and explain the characteristics of a mature person.

### C STOP AND THINK

Using what you have learnt in this chapter, answer the following:

- ▶ Write a paragraph describing a person who is virtuous.
- ▶ What is the difference between loneliness and solitude? Give examples of both.
- ▶ Do you think that the Maltese are easily prejudiced? Give examples.

### D FAMILY DISCUSSION

Discuss the following with your family:

- ▶ It is not enough to forgive, I need to forget as well. Discuss how possible this is.
- ▶ How can the family work together against prejudice?





# Relationships

## PREPARE YOURSELF:

"For you have made him a little less than the angels." What strikes you in this phrase?

Have you ever thought about what is important in your life?

## TICK ✓ THE WORDS YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH:

☐

Sexuality

☐

Love

☐

Respect

☐

Process

☐

Harmony

☐

Relationships

☐

Conscience

☐

Family



# A little less than angels

It was a very windy day. I was going back home when, suddenly, some dust got into my eyes and they started to hurt. I couldn't see anything; everything was blurred. I tried rubbing them, but that made it worse. I was in pain and tears were rolling down my cheeks... I eventually found a less windy corner where I took shelter. Strangely, the more the tears flowed, the better I felt, until eventually, I was well enough to walk home. In the evening my father explained that the tears were the body's way of protecting itself from foreign objects like dust. I was amazed at the body's resourcefulness!

Many experiences in life bring out our body's marvellous way of coping and protecting itself, for the benefit of the whole person: body, emotions, feelings and soul. It seems that the body is capable of concentrating its energy exactly when and where it is needed!







### CREATED TO HIS IMAGE

Man is part of creation and therefore, needs to be seen as an important part of this creation. The creation of man in the Bible is regarded as a masterpiece: he is created to the image of God and is therefore, similar to God. Although man is limited and flawed, God has endowed him with qualities that help him reach his full potential. Man is not only flesh and bones.

In Psalm 8, a beautiful ode to man's greatness, we find the verse: "For you have made him a little lower than angels." Our body is a gift. A gift is something you receive and appreciate, especially if it is given by someone you love. We need to discover our body,

through which we experience emotions and aspirations that help us reach the full potential hidden within us. But if we are withdrawn and inward-looking, we fail to discover all the goodness and beauty within us. It is thanks to our body that we can develop our many talents, that we manage to go into relationships with other persons, that we can love, that we can even get hurt and become withdrawn.

We need to look after, feed and protect our body! The Latin expression 'mens sana in corpore sano' explains that for the mind to be healthy, the body has to be healthy too, and this is because the body and the mind depend on each other. Even the body and the

soul condition each other. To be truly healthy in the widest sense of the word, the body and soul, and the heart and mind need to be in harmony. When we ignore our feelings, when we act without thinking, when we do not listen to what our heart is telling us, we hurt our ourselves. Damage can also be done when we eat too much or too little, or when we don't sleep enough.



### Look it up!

Read Psalm 8 and discuss which emotions the author wants to express. What message does this psalm convey?



# Look after me

## Saturday 16th March

9:00am wake up and treadmill session  
10:30am Facebook & shower  
11:30am Out with Mom shopping  
2:30pm back home & snack  
3:00pm Study & again FaceBook  
5:00pm watch TV  
6:00pm bath  
6:30pm mass with parents  
9:00pm preparing for night out  
9:30pm out with friends

## Work on this!



During this week keep a diary. Write down everything you do. At the end of the week go over what you wrote and see how you spent your free time. What decisions can you take to make sure your free time is spent in the most beneficial way possible?

This page out of Maya's diary tells us exactly how she chooses to spend her time. It is important to reflect deeply on the type of life we are living, because the way we choose to live our life, affects us acutely. We need to know how we relate to ourselves and how we look at our existence.

Life is a gift we have received, and we appreciate it by living in an orderly fashion and by choosing to fill our day wisely. From Maya's diary we notice that she spends a lot of time taking care of her appearance, which is important, but needs to be regulated too.

We need to take care of our body. We need to be physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually healthy. Our challenge is how to keep these aspects balanced to live a harmonious life.

## WE NEED TO PROTECT OUR BODY

Life is made up of beautiful and ugly things. Although we go through positive experiences, we also need to keep our eyes open for dangers. Sometimes, these are hidden in attractive things which, at first sight, might seem good. We can easily feel confused. Unfortunately, we never really decide things alone, as we are always influenced by our peers. This is called peer pressure. What others do, especially our closest friends, always influences us, to some extent or another, whether it is good or bad. Of course, the influence of others can also be positive and can lead us to take good decisions. But friends can also lead us to experiment things, and take decisions, that we never ever dreamed of. We do this simply to be like everyone else, or even, sometimes, to impress others.

To say no takes a lot of strength, especially if we are worried about what others might think or say about us.

Accepting who we are also means accepting how we are physically. Unfortunately, not everyone accepts himself. In fact, today there is a thriving business that helps people arrange parts of their body that they do not like, making it seem like it were the easiest thing in the world to change anything that we don't like about ourselves. Our body is a marvellous gift, put together by love. We need to appreciate this gift. The more defects we find and the more we put ourselves down, the more we stand a chance of suffering in our life and in our relationships. When we don't accept ourselves as we are, we are already at a disadvantage and we cannot be



at peace with ourselves. And this obviously affects how we relate to others. This is a vast, complicated subject which needs to be addressed. In a world where image has become so important, we need to learn how to appreciate our body and treat it with the respect and dignity it deserves. Our body is not an object, and therefore, demands respect and love. This also applies to the language we use when discussing sexuality.

Our body and our image both have an important role in the way we relate to each other. We are loved and trusted the way we are and, we too, should try to love in this way. A relationship is built on reciprocal trust and on mutual appreciation of the persons involved. The more the relationship grows, the more we move away from what is just visible, and the more we appreciate the person for who she or he is on the inside. Appreciation and gratitude are important in any relationship. When two people are in love, communication becomes easier, and they don't need to talk all the time. They even communicate in silence, understanding each other, sensing what the other is going through, whether he or she is happy, sad, worried or calm.

It is important to ask ourselves how and to what extent we are able to communicate with others how we feel and what we are going through: our feelings, emotions and desires. Certain emotions can be very strong, whether they are negative, like anger and jealousy, or positive, like love and joy. We need to learn how to communicate both negative and positive feelings so that others can understand us. Otherwise, we run the risk of isolating ourselves and pushing others away. As persons, we carry

a genetic heritage that cannot be ignored. We all have our own personal story – how we were brought up and educated, how much love we received or did not receive, how we were treated when we were young.

This does not mean that we are ready formed, or that there is no possibility of correcting any shortcomings in our character. We never stop learning and growing. Whatever our childhood experience, we continue to grow and allow others to help us grow and move towards what is right in our life. This is an important issue because, it determines the vision we have for our life, and how we see and judge our reality.

Many of the problems we encounter in this phase of our life are not really problems, but only symptoms of problems, that we carry deep inside of us, problems that we have never faced but that surface spontaneously. Some of these problems could be eating disorders, like bulimia and anorexia. They could be problems with how we look and about our sexual orientation. These physical and psychological aspects cannot be ignored, and demand careful attention to ensure we are calm and at peace with our own selves.







# One step at a time

It was a beautiful day as I headed to my grandfather's house to help him out with some gardening. I am quite close to my grandfather and, as usually happens, we started talking. I was always very honest with him, and even though I do not always accept his opinions, I do believe he is a 'wise old man'. I asked him how he had managed to remain married to the same person for 50 years, and he answered me: 'Go up one step at a time!'

## ONE STEP AT A TIME

He continued by explaining, 'Each step is a way how two people who are in love communicate. The moment they first glance at each other is the first step. The most important thing is to go up each step together. They need to wait for each other, as not everyone moves at the same

time. I remember I had to wait a while for your grandmother, as she was quite shy! Later on, we learnt how to communicate not only with words, but also with small gestures, that unfortunately, seem to be forgotten nowadays. These gestures showed we cared, and that we wanted to make each other happy, even if this called for some sacrifice. I remember the first time I held her hand in mine. I understood how excited she was from the sweat on the palm of her hand! Sometimes people forget these simple gestures, or they associate them only with being engaged. I have never stopped holding your grandmother's hand, and I held tightly or gently according to the circumstances we went through. We held each other's hand during our engagement, on the day of our wedding, while saying our vows, and in moments of joy and sadness.

The next step was kissing and hugging. When hugging the person you love, you can hear and feel their heart beat. During precious moments like this, I have learnt to turn to God to thank him for giving me such a beautiful and important person to love. When we go through our relationships one step at a time, everything becomes precious, even the first kiss.

Every step is important. Do not hurry. Haste can lead to negative consequences. I know you are enthusiastic to experience new things, but keep in mind that if you truly love a person, you do not use her to satisfy yourself. Remember that our sexuality is a beautiful way of communicating. Everything has its time and place. And a couple in a relationship needs time to grow together.'



A couple start to express themselves sexually when they have both agreed to give themselves fully and faithfully to each other. The Bible says: "A man leaves his father and his mother and joins his wife and they become one body."

Besides love and respect, being faithful is an important aspect in the intimate life of a couple. Fidelity is the concrete sign of a deep bond. When couples are faithful to each other, they have the strength to wait, forgive, understand and even give in to one another. Someone once said that forgiveness is the highest form of love. Couples who do not build their relationship on these values, are risking tension, fear and even some form of abuse.

Although sexual expression is important in a relationship, it is not everything. In fact, if the

values we have mentioned, and others, are not at the very base of the relationship, love can remain shallow, and the giving of the couple to each other could remain superficial and lacking in trust. Instead of harmony there is disorder, and instead of serenity there is tension.

The two individuals in a relationship need to look after each other and not be scared of each other. The type of life the couple leads gives a deeper sense and meaning to the sexual aspect of the relationship and love. This love and harmony also demands that the feelings and desires of the individuals are respected. A couple is mature when the two persons are so intimate that they can understand what the other is feeling or desiring, even from a distance. Sometimes giving each other space is also a special

form of love. Nothing, and no one, should be taken for granted in the life of a couple. We understand each other a lot and we are not frustrated when faced with difficulties, because while we were engaged, we had already taught ourselves the value of waiting. In time, we also learnt many different ways and forms of love. When a couple truly love each other, a look, a hug or a kiss can be enough. When a couple lives its love in this way, being faithful becomes possible, and no matter how many years pass, love never grows old."

#### FROM EXPERIENCE

Intimacy, in a relationship of love, can be a beautiful experience bringing serenity and harmony, especially, if it is discovered and lived together, giving each other the time and space to do so.



#### Delve Deeper

The older we get, the more we realize that it is not important how many friends we have, but what type of friends they are. What qualities should we look out for in friends? Although marriage is not only a friendship, it should be built on values found in friendships, such as communication, giving the other space to grow and discover oneself, accepting the other as he or she is, having trust and sharing who you really are. What do you think are the important qualities in a relationship, before marriage and during marriage?





La Primavera / Spring  
Il Cimento dell' Armonia e dell' Invention -- Concerto I  
Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Allegro

Violino  
Principale

Violino  
Primo

Violino  
Secondo

Alto  
Viola

Organo e  
Violoncello

# Harmony

Look at this sheet of music. What impression does the title give you?

Why did the composer write the word *Allegro*?

What is the function of the notes? If you listen to this piece of music, you will realize that each time the rhythm changes, the melody does too. The same thing happens in life when our mind and ideas work together with our desires and instinct. When these work hand in hand, our life is a celebration of harmony.

God wishes the best for us. He also holds us in high esteem, so much so, that He has given us the capacity of making our life a musical harmony, that ultimately reflects His great love for us. But, harmony with the other persons in our life cannot be achieved unless there is harmony within us, between what our heart wants and what our mind wants.

## OUT OF TUNE

What a negative effect an out of tune note has in a concert! An out of tune note is always out of place, and, depending on how many times it is repeated, can actually confuse the whole orchestra and ruin the performance.

The same happens in our life. If, when taking decisions, our desires control our reason, we lose our peace, we annoy or hurt the people

we love, and we could also harm ourselves.

The following are circumstances that could lead to disorder in the relationship we have with others and with ourselves:

- » Changing sexual partners haphazardly, to the point that this means nothing to us;
- » Not being able to wait and respect the dignity of our partner, especially when we are in a stable, loving relationship;
- » When we do not realize that pornography, which is so easily accessible, reduces the body to a mere object of desire, stripping it of the dignity it deserves;
- » When we do not realize that, masturbating frequently and uncontrollably, could be a sign that we are becoming too self-absorbed.

- » When we think that accessibility and easy use of contraceptives are a licence for an unrestrained sex life.

It is egoism that shatters the harmony within us and among us, along with thinking that what we want and what we need can be acquired instantly. But it is good to keep in mind that the suffering we might sometimes face, or make others face, could be a direct consequence of our selfish acts. All this can make us feel we are at fault and cause a feeling of anger. We must also be aware that this kind of irresponsible behaviour is creating certain diseases in our society, that are unfortunately on the increase, such as gonorrhea, scabies, herpes, HIV, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.



## CONSCIENCE

The responsibility of how we make these choices, and what these choices are, falls squarely on our shoulders. Besides the moral law that guides us, we also have our conscience. In its document about the Church in the world of today, Vatican Council II states that conscience is man's most intimate place, the sanctuary where man is alone with God and where the echo of God's voice is heard. (GS 16)

In his letters, St Paul often talks about this battle we all have within us, the tension between our passions and our conscience. In his letter to the Ephesians, he writes: **"We all were among them too in the past, living sensual lives, ruled entirely by our own physical desires and our own ideas; so that by nature we were as much under God's anger as the rest of the world. But God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy: when we were dead through sins, he brought us to life with Christ - it is through grace that you have been saved."** (Ef 2, 3-5)

He warns the Corinthians: **"But the body is not meant for fornication; it is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body....Keep away from fornication. All the other sins are committed outside the body; but to fornicate is to sin against your own body. Your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you since you received him from God. You are not your own property; you have been bought and paid for. This is why you should use your body for the glory of God."** (1 Cor 6, 13.18-20)

As humans we need to be guided. We cannot be controlled merely by our needs and desires. When



this happens, disorder reigns in our life, and disorder, unlike harmony, can cause a lot of pain. St Irenaeus, one of the Fathers of the Church, wrote that the glory of God is that humans live. Because this is what God created us for, to live a full life and to be complete human beings.

### Live it!

Those who have studied music know that each piece of music carries a number of instructions that help the person playing it, to play it well. The same happens in life; we pass through happy times and sad times, moments that fly by and others that seem to drag on. In the Gospel of St John, Jesus tells us: 'I have come so that you could have life, and this in abundance.' (Jn 10, 10) How can we live the life Jesus wants us to, when we come across so many different situations?





# A rainbow of colours

The rainbow is a new start after the storm. It is even mentioned in the Book of Genesis. After the flood, Noah and the rest of the creatures saw the rainbow, and realized that the storm was over and a new era had begun.

This is why these rainbow colours are sometimes used on flags during protest marches for equality and respect. This flag is sometimes referred to as the flag

of freedom from unrest in society. This unrest includes prejudice, homophobia (fear of homosexual persons), racism and other injustices. Today this flag is being used by the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community in its fight against prejudice towards people with a different sexual orientation. Lesbians are females who are attracted sexually to other females; gays are males who are

attracted sexually to other males; bisexuals are persons who are sexually attracted to the same sex and to the opposite sex; and transgender persons are those who feel the need to dress and act like the sex opposite to theirs. Like the case of heterosexuals (persons attracted sexually to the opposite sex), we need to understand that these persons do not choose to have a different sexual orientation. Their sexual orientation is





conditioned by the level of hormones produced by their pituitary gland. Unfortunately, we come across many instances where persons with a different sexual orientation are insulted with words, actions and even in articles and books. This reality brings us face to face with why Jesus was so direct when he said: **“You have learnt how it was said to your ancestors: You must not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you, anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court; and if a man calls his brother ‘fool’ he will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and if a man calls him ‘renegade’ he will answer with it in hell fire.”** (Mt 5, 21-22). Jesus was not referring only to physically killing someone, but also to the psychological death caused by insults, name calling, bullying and any other type of prejudice that causes discrimination against persons with a different sexual orientation.

If we keep in mind what the colours of this flag signify, it will be easier for us to live in harmony and to respect persons with different sexual orientations. Therefore, heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual persons, through their mature and responsible actions, should strive never to hurt or annoy each other.

Even though this flag is often used in gay pride parades, it has a significance that can be applied to society in general because it reminds us to respect the dignity of each and every person that make up the society we live in. Red reminds us that life needs to



be respected from birth to death. Having said this, everyone can make mistakes, and therefore the next colour is orange, which signifies healing. Healing is necessary not only when a person is physically sick, but also when he is wounded psychologically and spiritually. Yellow stands for the light of the sun, and reminds us that each and every individual has the potential to be a ray of light in society. We can be a light for others, thanks to our talents and qualities. Green reminds us of the beautiful world we live in, nature and all the marvels of the world that contribute to our well-being. Just as we are called to respect each person, so too we are expected to look after the God-given environment. The colour blue signifies harmony, with oneself, with the different people around us and with God. We cannot forget that we are also spiritual beings and the colour purple reminds us of this reality.

In spite of all our diversity and different sexual orientations, we still have the same human dignity. Each person, regardless of his or her sexual orientation, is called to take up life's challenges in a holistic way. And each challenge is a way we can grow and mature in our relationships.

God wants us to reach our full potential, to be a complete person, respected and loved for who we are. We can be all of this when we learn how to give and receive love without using or abusing our dignity or the dignity of others. Regardless of his or her personal sexual orientation, each person with his or her dignity, rights and responsibilities should be respected and should never suffer prejudice and/or discrimination. Tolerance, respect and dialogue should be the founding stones of a civil society full of diverse people who live at peace with each other.



# Family and marriage

## Delve Deeper

“This is at last bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh! This is to be called woman, for this was taken from man....this is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife, and they become one body.” (Gen 2, 23-34)

This passage from Genesis explains what marriage is. From man, God creates two persons: man and woman who, in marriage, become one again. The phrase ‘one body’ refers to the permanence of marriage. In the same way as two pieces of paper once glued together cannot be separated unless torn, two married people cannot separate without consequences. Discuss marriage with your classmates and come up with a list of important attributes a marriage, as planned by God, should have.

The family is an important nucleus within society. In the family we are born, brought up, receive our first formation and experience love for the first time. Traditionally, the family has always been built upon marriage. The Church has always understood and taught, right up to today, that marriage can only be between a man and a woman who want to have children.

Today the concept of family is often discussed in the media, because it is truly an important part of society. There are nowadays different ideas and opinions as to what makes up a family. Not everyone believes that a family needs to be built

upon marriage. Many countries are even passing laws that allow marriages between persons of the same sex. Others do not agree with this and, instead, propose a ‘civil union’. This allows two persons of the same sex to have the same rights and responsibilities as a married couple, without their union being considered a marriage. Because society today is pluralistic, it has many diverse opinions on this. Moreover, values and principles have changed drastically over the years.

It is important for us to realize all this, to be aware of the changes and to understand why this is happening. The Church



understands that the world is changing and that lifestyles have evolved and are very different from the past. Yet, the Church still holds that it is important for a family to be built upon marriage, a sacrament between a man and a woman. We need to understand why the Church takes this stand; otherwise, we might think that the Church is old-fashioned or that it simply refuses to change and adapt to modern times.

**Why does the Church maintain that it is important for the family to be built on marriage?**

**Why does the Church hold that marriage is a sacrament between a man and a woman?**

**What are we Christians doing to respect the opinions of others in a pluralistic society, while adhering firmly to what the Church teaches?**

**What is the Church's teaching on homosexuality and homosexuals?**

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains in detail what the Church understands by marriage and family.

God who is love and who created man out of love, calls man to love. When God created man and woman, he called them to marriage - an intimate community of life and love "the two become one body" (Mt 19, 6) When God blessed them, He told them: "Be fruitful and multiply". (Gen 1, 28)

Jesus not only re-established the original order as God wanted, but graces marriage by making it a sacrament to be lived in dignity. This is a tangible sign of his love for his bride the Church: "Husbands should love their wives just like Christ loved the Church." (Eph 5, 25)

The family is the first cell that makes up human society and it comes before any public authority. The principals and values of the family make up the foundation of society. Society originates within the family.

Society has the duty to help and strengthen marriage and the family through subsidies. Civil authorities have a very serious responsibility: to respect, look after and favour the true nature of marriage and the family, to defend public morality and the rights of parents and the well-being of the family.







## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

### A IMPORTANT WORDS

Briefly explain the following terms:

- ▶ Image of God
- ▶ Conscience
- ▶ Diversity

### B MAIN IDEAS

Write a paragraph about the following:

- ▶ What do you think of the statement: 'Our body is a gift'?
- ▶ Living a relationship two steps at a time would have consequences. Elaborate and explain the consequences.
- ▶ What are the circumstances that could destroy the harmony in our life?

### C STOP AND THINK

Using what you have learnt in this chapter, answer the following:

- ▶ How we look has a degree of importance. But why should it not be the most important thing?
- ▶ Imagine you are writing a manual aimed at teenagers who are about to enter into an intimate relationship. What would be the main points?

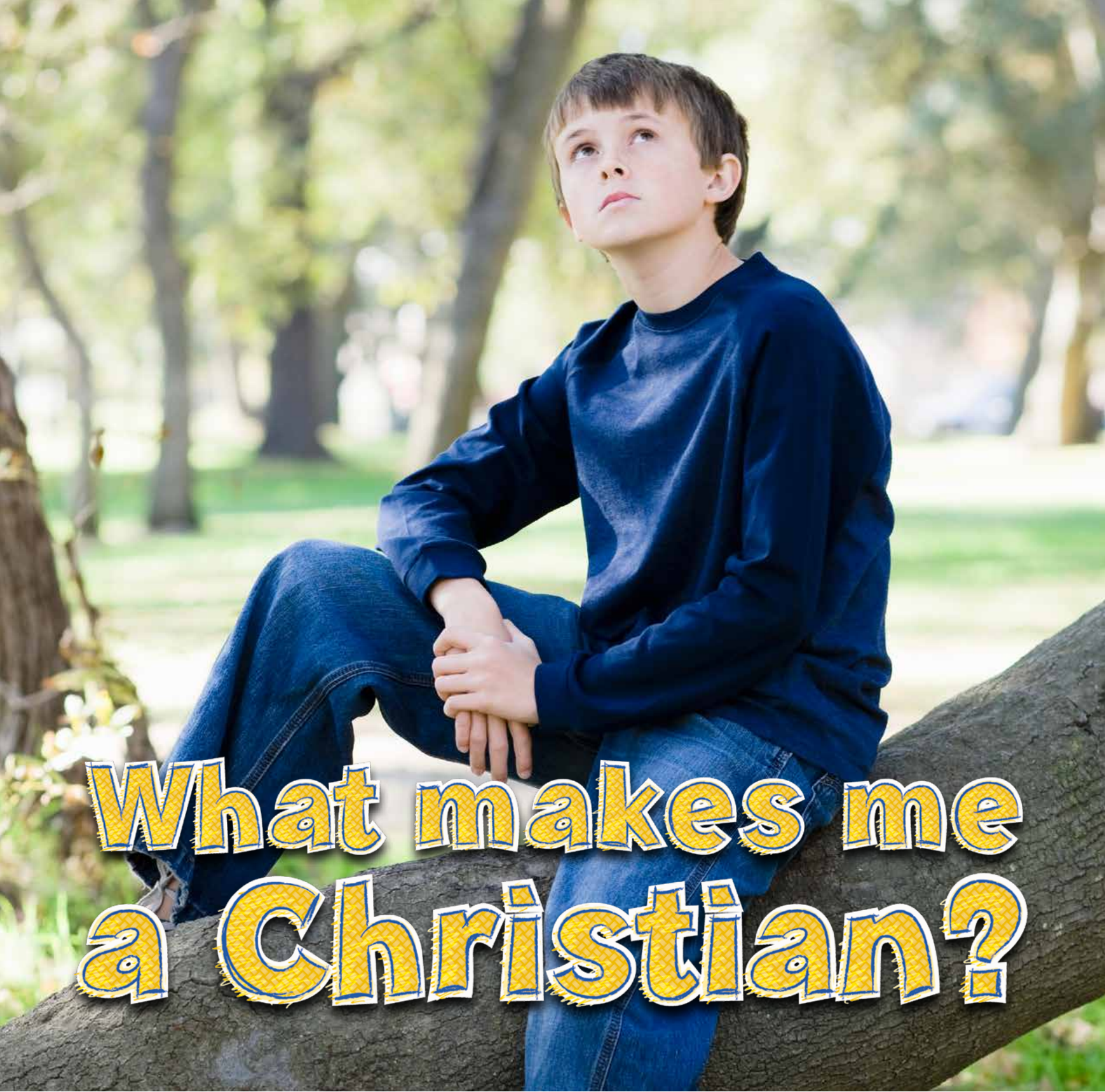
### D FAMILY DISCUSSION

Discuss the following with your family:

- ▶ On his way back from the World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, Pope Francis said: "A gay person who is seeking God, who is of good will, well, who am I to judge him?" Considering all that was discussed in class, and what is being said about persons with a different sexual orientation, what should your attitude, as a whole family, be?

# Relationships





# What makes me a Christian?

## PREPARE YOURSELF:

What are those qualities that make us truly Christian?

What does being a 'witness' mean?

## TICK ✓ THE WORDS YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH:

☐

Identity

☐

Martyr

☐

Salt

☐

Light

☐

Strength

☐

Prophets

☐

Mercy

☐

Leadership



# The search for truth

The role of religion in man's life, and in society, has always been one of the most discussed topics. The history of humanity has been greatly influenced by religion, especially in the West, where civilization was formed on the values transmitted by Christianity. In these last 400 years, reason has taken a central role. Man, who has become more scientific and who searches for the truth by reasoning things out, refuses to accept blindly all that is handed down by tradition. Consequently, the central role religion had in man's life, and in the building up of society, started to change. Man became more critical even of religion and of all the truths taught by religion.

Today we hear many people who say: "I believe in God, I believe Jesus was a special person, I pray and read the Bible, but I don't feel the need to be part of the Church." This shows that faith has become separate from religion. We have already discussed authenticity,

the search to become a complete person, and what actually makes a person complete. All this is very important. But, understanding the role religion has in all of this, is important too.

Does religion help us become complete human beings? Does faith respect our freedom to think and reason with our own minds? Or do we still have the idea that religion wants us to be like little children who are not capable of thinking with their own minds, that we must accept all that religion teaches, and that there is only one truth that we must accept?

The great contemporary conflict regarding religion is this: do religion and faith actually help or hinder the search for truth? What truth is man searching for? Does truth exist? What is truth? This was the famous question Pontius Pilate asked Jesus when he was interrogating him before sending him to be crucified. In the film 'The Passion of the Christ',

Mel Gibson invites us to imagine what happens in this scene. In the Gospel, after asking Jesus about the truth, Pilate does not wait for the answer but goes inside. But Mel Gibson adds a piece. Pilate asks his wife Claudia, 'What is the Truth?' And she answers, 'If you do not listen to the truth, I cannot tell you.'

The truth is not only the truth taught to us by the church. Man







Last Judgment Fresco Cycle by Frederico Zuccaro and Giorgio Vasari in the Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence, Italy

needs to learn to listen to himself. Most of the time we are surrounded by noise and chatter. We are not capable of stopping and listening to ourselves, to all that is going on in our heart, in the intimacy of our conscience. Being religious does not only mean going to Church, participating in the liturgy and the sacraments. If religion does not help man get in touch with his inner self and grow in faith, which is a personal relationship with God our creator, it would merely be a burden and an obstacle. This type of religion can easily turn into alienation.

A question often asked today is, "Why did Christ found the Church?" Do we still need the Church in our life today? There have been many good people who were never part of the Church. We often hear the Church being criticized. But what difference does the Church make in the life of individuals? Some think

the Church is an old-fashioned institution; others appreciate the Church in their life and are always ready to hear what she has to say, while others, still loving and respecting her, expect her to be more in tune with the world of today. In the last century, between 1962 and 1965, the Catholic Church held the Second Vatican Council. It was the Church's 21st Council. Most Councils were held to solve problems or crises that the Church might have been going through at the time. Some Councils affirmed the doctrine of the Church or corrected heresies. But the Second Vatican Council was very different. When Pope John the XXIII proposed it, many people were shocked, especially since he was already 78 years old at the time. But he felt, like many others that the world was changing rapidly. The Church needed to understand how to be relevant and how to pass on

Christ's message in a way that would still appeal to modern man.

The Council pronounced many beautiful things, such as: Jesus Christ is the key with which modern man can understand himself and discover the truth about himself. In each and every one of us there is a mystery and we need a key to open and discover this truth about ourselves. This is the journey our faith leads us through, connecting us with ourselves, with others and helping us discover what place God has in our life.

This Council also proposed a new way of looking at the world and all the different religions of the world. The Council affirmed that in other religions, some of which are very different from Catholicism, lies an element of truth. The Council placed the Church alongside the whole of humanity, which is constantly searching for the one truth.



# Identity

Vatican Council II prepared the way for the Church to renew and reform itself to be in a better position to proclaim the message of the Gospel in a way that can be understood by modern man. Many things needed to be adapted and transformed, if the Church wanted to remain relevant and modern, especially in a world that had changed and was still changing. At the same time, the Church needed to focus on the identity of the Christian in the modern world. What does it mean to be a Christian? What does it mean to be a committed Christian in today's world? Now that the world has become smaller due to instant communication, and religions have moved closer to each other, what makes a Christian?

It is important to state that Vatican Council II proposed a new attitude for the Christian in today's world. The Church in the past was known to condemn modernity, as well as diverse religions and faiths. Yet the Church of Pope John XXIII felt the need to open its windows wide onto the world and other religions and to become a Church of 'dialogue'. The Council recognized the need for serious dialogue with Christians who are not Catholics, with people of different faiths, with non-Christians who do not believe in Christ like we do, and with non-believers. The Council affirmed that the Church must show God's mercy to the world and not his condemnation.

When we speak about faith and the Christian life, we often mention the Ten Commandments because they are the law of God that must be obeyed. But we need to realize that these commandments are also universal laws. They are a set of principles that have had, and still have, a very important role in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In the Book of Exodus in the Bible we read how God gave these commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai to serve as a guide for His people.

But when we talk about Christianity, we cannot stop at the Ten Commandments, even though these remain important in the life

of every human being. The Gospel of St Matthew presents Jesus as the new Moses who goes up on the mountain and speaks about the law that each Christian should have in his heart. Jesus, though, speaks of a new law, on the importance of being authentic and sincere, especially in the way we live our life. Often, Jesus starts his discourse by saying: "You have heard what has been said in olden times, but I tell you...."

## Look it up!



Vatican Council II has been an important event in the life of the Church. Find out about it – when it started and who took part in it. Was it a council like the others before it, or was there something different about it?



"Seeing the crowds, he went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

**Happy are the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**Happy the gentle, they shall have the earth for their heritage.**

**Happy those who mourn, they shall be comforted.**

**Happy those who thirst and hunger for what is right, they shall be satisfied.**

**Happy the merciful, they shall have mercy shown to them.**

**Happy the pure in heart, they shall see God.**

**Happy the peacemakers, they shall be called sons of God.**

**Happy are those who are persecuted in the cause of right, theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you."

If we had to examine our life in the light of the Ten Commandments, it would be very easy, bar some exceptions, to pass the test! Because often the law tells us what NOT to do. The law always asks the minimum from us: do not swear, do not adore false gods, do not kill and do not steal. Every time Jesus said: "but I tell you" he gives us what St Paul calls the Law of the Spirit, commandments that are not written on stone like those given to Moses, but a law written in our heart. This law was often mentioned by many prophets in the Old Testament. It is the law we feel within us, our conscience,

the voice of the Spirit that guides us. This law does not only tell us what not to do, but it shows us the virtues that make us complete, whole persons. It is the new law of the Spirit that helps us to be poor in spirit, gentle, merciful, pure, people who sow peace and who hunger and thirst for justice. Jesus calls these types of people 'happy'. He also adds those who mourn, and those who are persecuted because of justice. These are the Beatitudes. Many consider them to be the master plan all disciples of Jesus need to follow, as they make up the identity of every Christian.



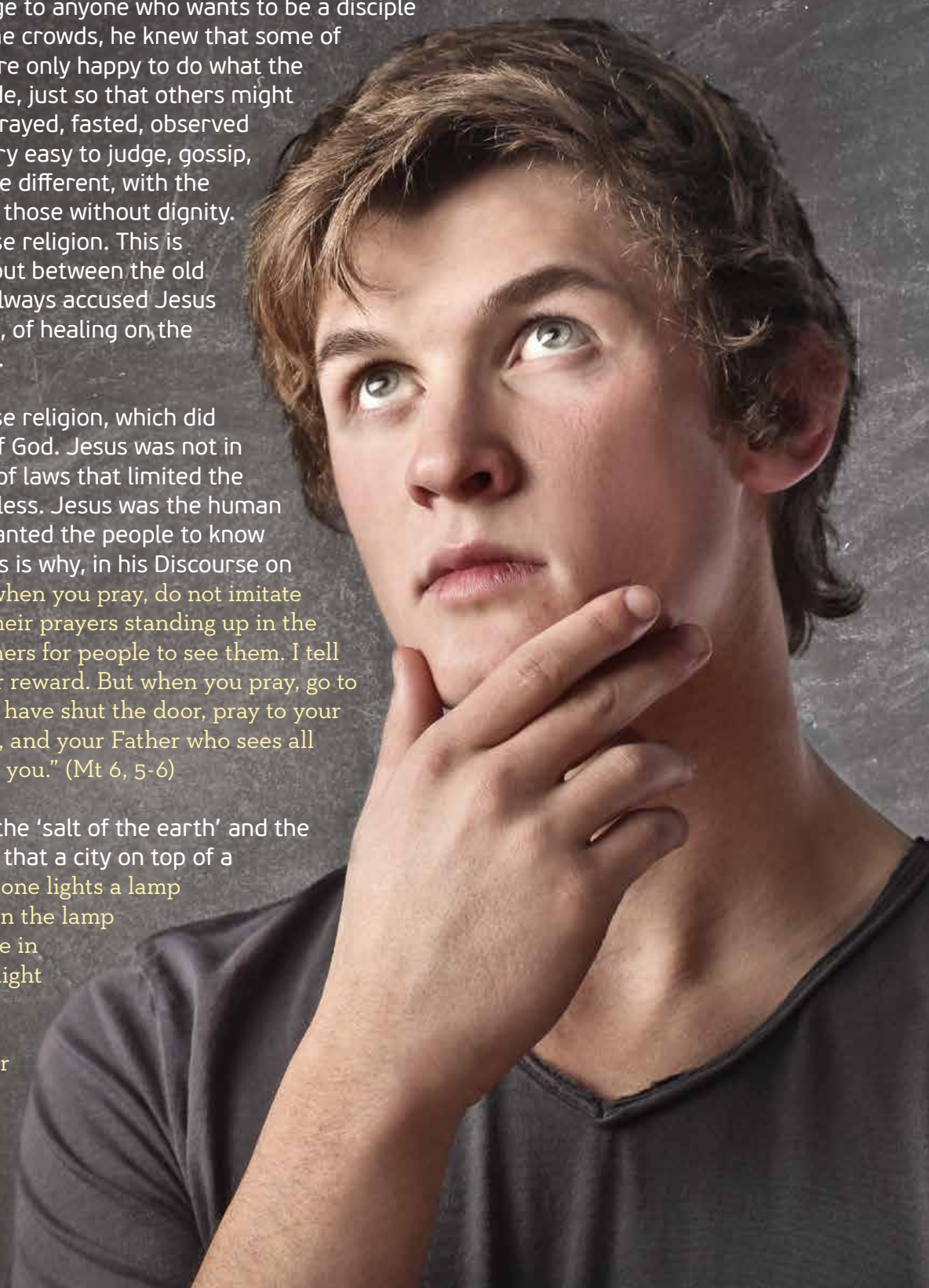


# Against the current

The Beatitudes are a big challenge to anyone who wants to be a disciple of Jesus. When Jesus spoke to the crowds, he knew that some of the people were religious but were only happy to do what the law told them to do on the outside, just so that others might see them as good people. They prayed, fasted, observed the law but then they found it very easy to judge, gossip, act unjustly with people who were different, with the weak, the sick, the publicans and those without dignity. Jesus considered this to be a false religion. This is the great contrast Jesus brings out between the old law and the new law. The Jews always accused Jesus of befriending all types of people, of healing on the Sabbath, which was a day of rest.

Jesus considered this to be a false religion, which did not lead to the true knowledge of God. Jesus was not in favour of a religion that was full of laws that limited the people and made God look heartless. Jesus was the human face of God the Father, and he wanted the people to know and adore God in their heart. This is why, in his Discourse on the Mountain, Jesus says: "And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret, will reward you." (Mt 6, 5-6)

Jesus wanted his disciples to be the 'salt of the earth' and the 'light of the earth'. He tells them that a city on top of a mountain cannot be hidden. "No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven." (Mt 5, 13-16) This is a very clear challenge Jesus puts







A mosaic by Fr Marko Ivan Rupnik at the Church of Saint Mary Mother of the Church, Saragoza, Spain.

to the people, that they might live religion truly, in their hearts, and not outwardly.

The prophets in the Old Testament often challenged the people in the same way, but they were not listened to. Jesus made the same challenge to the Jews of his time. Many accepted this challenge, believed in him and became his disciples and some, even apostles. The latter believed in Jesus and his message to the point of giving up their lives for him and becoming martyrs. The word 'martyr' derives from the Greek word which means 'witness'. They were witnesses to Jesus by giving up their lives. The first centuries of Christianity are full of these witnesses, people who were martyred.

But Jesus' challenge also confused many others. They found it hard to accept what Jesus was saying because the religion they had learned and lived meant everything to them.

These people used to listen to Jesus only to try and catch him out, because they were suspicious of him. They feared Jesus was going to destroy their religion, which was the foundation of their identity as Jews.

When Mary and Joseph presented Jesus in the Temple, Simeon the prophet told them: "You see this child, he is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected." (Lk 2, 34). Jesus was a sign of contradiction. Christians too, like Jesus, are a sign of contradiction. Often Christians, like Jesus, cannot follow the current, cannot do what everybody else is doing. Going against the current means making choices that others might not understand. At worst, some might even think of you as strange and stop being your friends altogether.

Christians are called, first and foremost, to make a difference in the world. Christians are

requested to bring hope where there is none, to bring light where it is dark and to encourage those who feel disheartened. To do this, the Christian must have a burning faith that gives him special strength. He cannot be weak and easily persuaded. He cannot be feeble, often changing his opinions just to be accepted by his friends. A Christian must be ready to go against the current; even at times going against what those closest to him think. He needs to be strong enough to say no when there is a need to say no, and yes when there is a need to say yes.

The Jesus we believe in gave up his life for us and for the world. He lived his life close to the sick and destitute. He always welcomed sinners and showed them concretely that God loves them and is ready to forgive them. Jesus loved so much that he even forgave those who crucified him. Out of his free will, he offered up his life on the cross, so that through his death, he could save the whole of humanity.



# Jesus was a leader

Jesus was a leader, but not because he had power or ordered others around. He was a leader because he was the Good Shepherd who gave his life for his flock. In the Old Testament the Jewish people had many types of leaders: Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David and many other prophets. Every prophet led the people of God in one way or another towards a greater knowledge of God, and

away from adoring and searching for false gods.

In the Old Testament, the Jewish people were surrounded by many different nationalities which adored different gods. Even the Jews themselves had their own gods. But from the moment God called and spoke to Abraham, the Jews started on their journey as the People of God, always getting to

know God more, until they finally understood he was truly God when he saved them from exile.

The comparison of God who leads his people, to a shepherd, is very common in the Old Testament. God never wanted to lead his people with an iron fist, but with abundant love and mercy. We read many stories of kings and leaders who did not always remain





faithful to God's call, and who hardheadedly led the people of God in the wrong way. But through all of this, God always remained merciful and loving.

Jesus was not any leader or prophet, but he was God himself, who became man to give his life for us humans and to save us. In Jesus we clearly see the figure of the shepherd who leaves the 99 sheep alone to go and look for the one lost sheep. In the Gospel of St. Mark we read the story of when Jesus and his disciples went to pray in a secluded place because they were tired, but "as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length." (Mk 6, 34)

In Jesus' time, the Jewish people were led by their priests and leaders, who ruled according to the Law. But Jesus made it very clear that religion in our life should save us and not persecute us. In fact, in the Gospel of St John, when they brought a woman before Jesus who, according to the law, was supposed to be stoned, Jesus showed them another way. When Jesus was in the Temple one Sabbath, and he came across a sick person, he still healed him even though healing was not allowed on the Sabbath. Jesus challenged the Jews to realize that religion is a way toward a greater knowledge of God.

Jesus still challenges us in the same way today. He challenges us to let God shine through what we do and our reactions to others. Jesus does not want to impose. The law is important for him too, but there are other more important things like mercy, love, tolerance, solidarity and



hospitality. Excluding someone in the name of religion because of sin, colour, sexual orientation or belief goes against what God wants. When this happens, religion loses its true meaning. In the Old Testament, the Jewish people knew they were the chosen People of God, but, unfortunately, they used this to impose on and dominate others.

The Prophets always fought this temptation. This is evident when the Jews were coming out of their exile in Babylon and were tempted to arm themselves to fight and conquer another people in God's name. But the Prophet Isaiah warned them that this was not the way God manifests himself. Isaiah was already talking about a God who is not powerful, but a mocked servant.

**"Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights...He does not cry out or shout aloud, or make his voice heard in the streets." (Is 42, 1-2)**

Jesus showed his love by giving up his life for all. What am I ready to give up my life for? What does giving up your life really mean nowadays? In the first years of the Church's persecution, many Christians gave up their life in martyrdom. Nowadays this is not common, especially in our country. We live a comfortable life, we are free to live as we please. But what gives sense to our life? Some people think and believe that living for themselves leads to happiness. One might think that putting oneself as the most important person in one's life is enough to save it. But Jesus says: "He who wants to save his life loses it, and who loses his life because of me, saves it."

What does 'losing your life to save it' really mean? Why does Jesus invite us to die to ourselves? Take some time in silence and solitude to ponder the question: what am I ready to die for? What must die within me so that I can be a true disciple of Jesus? We know Jesus' answer: "As I have loved you, so you too love one another". (Jn 13, 35)



# Christians as 'salt' and 'light'

The true Christian always strives to be a better disciple of Jesus. Like Jesus, he is being called to be strong enough to be able to go against the current, not to be afraid when he is contradicted and to be fearless in showing in whom and what he believes in. Along the ages, many were ready to go against the current to do what is right and to be witnesses to the truth. Many died as martyrs during the persecution of the Church. The following are some important saints who went against the current: St Benedict, St Francis of Assisi, St Catherine of Siena, St Theresa of Avila, St John of the Cross, St Thomas More and St John Fisher. The story of people who go against their culture and against political power is a long one. It is a story where Jesus manifests himself as victorious, because in these people we can

see Jesus resurrected from the dead. This is the victory of our faith. This is why we celebrate the feasts of our saints, because, although they were people of flesh and blood like us, they had a strong faith. They lost their life in such a way that they saved it.

The saints are our role models because when we see how faithful they were in what they believed, they give us hope. When we ask, 'What makes me a Christian?' we cannot answer only 'because I am baptized' or 'because I go to mass every Sunday'. These are of course very important, but what truly makes me a Christian is how I live, what I believe in. How capable am I, even when I don't feel like it, to forget myself and help those in need? Am I ready to convince my friends not to exclude anyone, for whatever reason? How ready

am I not to remain silent just to be liked, and instead speak out for what is good and against what is bad? Many people suffer pain and abuse simply because they are not scared to show what they believe in. These people are the 'salt' and 'light' of their times, and their life shines like a beacon showing us the way forward. Their strength encourages us to persist and to believe that we can make a difference in the world. Above all, we realize that our faith in Jesus makes sense, if it bears good fruit. As Jesus himself says in the Gospels, it is from our fruit that we can be recognized.

## Look it up!

Nowadays, many give up their life and bear witness as Christians by the life they lead. Find out about people who, in recent times have lived or are still living, showing that they are the "salt" and the "light" for others.







St Paul in his letter to the Galatians speaks about the fruit of the Spirit in us and the contrast between this fruit and living according to the body.

**“The fruit of the Spirit are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control.” (Gal 5, 22)**

These are the positive attitudes that we need to overcome the evil around us. Evil exists and is victorious precisely when good people do nothing. The existence of evil is one of the biggest problems in our faith because humanity has often asked whether evil really exists.

In the story of creation, in the Book of Genesis, when God created man and the world with all there is in it, he: “saw all the he had done, and it was good.” (Gen 1, 31) Many, throughout history, have questioned whether God created evil, and if God did not create evil,

why does evil exist at all? Many people question why God remains silent before the evil in the world and in humans.

**If God is good, why does evil exist in the world and in the life of humans?**

**Why do bad things happen to good people?**

**Why do so many innocent people suffer?**

**If we believe that God is omnipotent and takes care of everyone, why does He permit so many bad things to happen?**

These are important questions that, at times, even if we have faith, cannot be answered. They can be a very difficult test and temptation for our faith. Jesus too

was faced with similar questions about evil. In addition, in those times there was the mentality that evil was a punishment for sin.

**“As he went along, he saw a man who was blind from birth. His disciples asked him: ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?’ (Jn 9, 1-13)**

Jesus could not accept this, because the God we believe in is not a God who punishes sinners. Once, Jesus was asked about the twelve people who died after being crushed by the tower of Siloam. He answered very clearly.

**“Do you suppose they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not I tell you.” (Lk 13, 4-5)**

As Christians, we do not have the answer to every question. Even Jesus was saddened by the death of his friend Lazarus. He was also sorrowful when he saw how determined Judas was, during the Last Supper, to keep to his plans. In the Garden at Gethsemane, Jesus felt the weight of the suffering that he was about to go through. In these circumstances, Jesus always turned towards the Father. His solution was complete faith in the Father. The Christian who wants to be the salt and light of the earth, rather than having the answers to all the questions, needs to have an inner strength that comes from his faith in God the Father. Our spirituality, which comes from our relationship with God, helps us to remain faithful and strong in the face of temptation, evil and challenges. Only in this way can we be true witnesses to Jesus, who rose from the dead and who is victorious over all evil. Jesus lives on in all those who believe in him and who are a living witness to him in the world of today.



# A renewed strength



## Delve Deeper

Read the story of the Disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24, 13-35). Often we too go through periods when we lose hope and move away from God. What are the things, in moments like these, that remind you that God really is walking with you and that he has not abandoned you?



Stand up and be counted! This is a phrase we hear often. It challenges us not to be carried away by the current and to speak out against things we don't agree with. It challenges us to stand up to injustice and prejudice and to fearlessly oppose what is bad and support what is good. Isaiah's warning makes a lot of sense even today:

**"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness, who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."** (Is 5, 20)

In the Gospel, Jesus shows us how his disciples live in the world but are not of the world. This might sound like a contradiction, but Jesus promised us that he is with us always. Often, we resemble the two disciples of Emmaus we read about in the Gospel of St Luke.

This is a very important story about the first Christians which is still relevant today.

It is the story of two disciples of Jesus who believed in him. But when Jesus was captured and killed, they became very sad and confused. Some days after Jesus had died, they returned to their hometown Emmaus. But in all that sadness and disappointment, Jesus re-entered their life. Without getting angry or arguing, he walked with them to Emmaus. Along the way he explained all that was written about him in the Old Testament. They listened intently without recognizing him. Finally, they recognized him when they arrived home and Jesus took the bread, gave thanks and gave them to eat. Their sadness melted away and their disappointment changed to courage. They got up immediately and returned

to Jerusalem to share what had happened with the Apostles and the other disciples.

The following passage from the Acts of the Apostles shows how the life of the Christian and the Church are built on two pillars: the Word of God and the Holy Eucharist.

**"These remained faithful to the teachings of the Apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers."** (Acts 2, 42)

**"The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and shared out the proceeds among themselves according to what each deemed. They went as a body to the Temple every day but met in the houses for the breaking of the bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone."** (Acts 2, 44-47)



The witness of the first Christians was authentic and full of love, especially towards the sick, poor and destitute. They kept the Word of God, with which they prayed and praised God, and the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, at the centre of their lives. This was the beginning of the Church. The presence of God in their lives gave them the strength to be true witnesses and to continue proclaiming the good news.

We ask ourselves if this special strength is still felt in the world of today. Two thousand years have passed since the beginnings of the Church. Throughout these years the Church has at times been strong and at times weak. There were times where she witnessed unequivocally to the presence of Jesus in the world, and other times when she was carried away by the current.

Throughout these two thousand years though, there were many people who lived the same special strength which had led the first Christians to give up their life to martyrdom. In the Old Testament, the people of God had the Prophets to remind them to repent and return to God. The Church too has had many important prophets who, along the years, have testified that Jesus really is the Son of God, that his Gospel is truly the Good News that enables all human beings to become complete.

These individuals were prophets in their times, both in the political and religious fora. They are visionaries who managed to use religion and politics as tools to build a more humane society. Pope John XXIII issued a letter on the 11th April 1963 called *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), and

some of the points mentioned make it one of the most important letters ever issued by a Pope. At the time, the world was still being threatened by war, by the armaments race, by divisions in Europe between East and West, and by the lack of many fundamental human rights. In this letter, the Pope insists that peace can be achieved and sustained only if it is built on justice, love and freedom. These are the three pillars on which the new social order can be built, a more humane world which respects the whole person.

More than ever before, the Church was aware that her mission in the world was to preach the good news of the Gospel by proclaiming and working for the dignity of the person, regardless of race, religion, colour or class.



Pope John XXIII

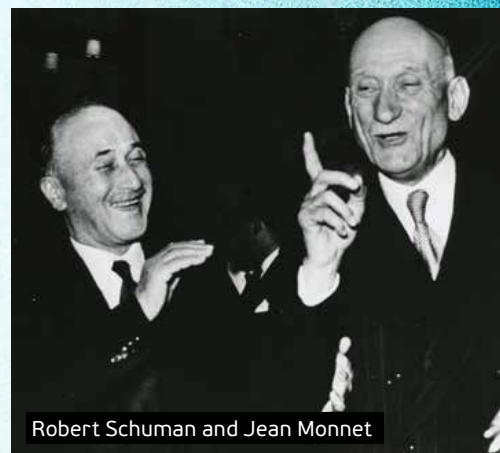
Do you know who these people are? Have you heard of them? Look them up and read about their life and how they managed to do great things.



Mons. Oscar Romero



Alcide de Gasperi



Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet



Mahatma Gandhi



Frère Roger Schütz



Martin Luther King Jr



Konrad Adenauer



Mother Theresa





## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

### A IMPORTANT WORDS

Briefly explain the following terms:

- ▶ Truth
- ▶ The identity of a Christian
- ▶ Saints

### B MAIN IDEAS

Write a paragraph about the following:

- ▶ How does religion help us in our everyday life?
- ▶ Describe the 'true Christian'.

### C STOP AND THINK

Using what you have learnt in this chapter, answer the following:

- ▶ "We know that by turning everything to their good God co-operates with all those who love him, with all those that he has called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8, 28) From all that you have learnt and discussed, what do you think the above statement means?

### D FAMILY DISCUSSION

Discuss the following with your family:

- ▶ We have seen that Jesus was a really good leader. How does he contrast with contemporary leaders?

# What makes me a Christian?





# Good vs evil

## PREPARE YOURSELF:

Why do you think human beings have the capacity of thinking 'bad' things?

What do you do before taking a decision?

## TICK ✓ THE WORDS YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH:

☐

Choices

☐

Freedom

☐

Evil

☐

Responsibility

☐

Formation

☐

True happiness

☐

Forgiveness

☐

Justice





# The original plan

## ? Did you know?

The oldest remains made out of clay seem to have been formed by hand and cooked at a very low temperature, and not in a furnace like today. These remains help archeologists understand antique cultures. Since clay takes very long to decay, it allows archeologists to form theories about the culture, economy, religion and society of those times. The potter's wheel was invented about 6,000 to 4,000 years before Christ in Mesopotamia.

If we had to stop the frenetic tempo of the life we are living, even for a moment, we would realize that life is full of contrasts. There are people who love and others who hate, people who are generous and others who are misers. Some people accept life as it is with all the good and bad, while others only see the bad. These realities make us ask: why are we so different from each other? Why is there good and bad within us? Why do we seem to be attracted towards evil? These are questions that man has asked since his creation.

The first book in the Bible, the Book of Genesis, tries to answer these questions with two stories about creation. The first story is found in Genesis chapter 1 up to Genesis chapter 2 verse 3, and is

written in the form of an ode or poem, presenting creation over a period of seven days. After God created the world and all the creatures, "God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them". (Gen 1, 27) The author wants us to realize that God created everything, even man. God created man to his own image, which means that in some way man reflects God in his life, in the same way that a painting reflects the creativity and qualities of its painter or a clay pot reflects the ability and opinions of the potter.

The first account shows how all that God created was good. And this includes the sixth day, when God created man, "and God saw all he had made and indeed it



was very good." (Gen 1, 31) This signifies that man, as created by God, was very good. Man's primary call is to love and be loved.

In the second account of creation (Gen 2, 4-3, 24), which is written in the form of a historic parable, the author's main aim is to help us rediscover God's original plan for man: to live in complete harmony with God, with himself, with the rest of humanity and with all creation. Man is seen living in his full potential; he communicates without

difficulty with God and understands that God loves him. Here man is living at peace with himself and the world. "Both were naked...but they felt no shame in front of each other." (Gen 2, 25) This shows how in God's plan, man was meant to live freely, without fear or shame.

"Yahweh God took man and settled him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it." (Gen 2, 15) This shows how God created man to live in peace with the rest of creation. Man had a special,

privileged place in creation. God fashioned all the wild beasts and birds from the earth, and he showed them to man so that he could name them; and the name man chose for them, that was their name from then onwards (Gen 2, 19). God gave man the power to recognize, understand and decide what to name the animals. For the biblical author 'giving a name' means giving identity. This shows, therefore, that God made man his collaborator in creation.



"The word that was addressed to Jeremiah by Yahweh: 'Get up and make your way down to the potter's house; there I shall let you hear what I have to say.' So I went down to the potter's house; and there he was, working at the wheel. And whenever the vessel he was making came out wrong, as happens with the clay handled by potters, he would start afresh and work it into another vessel, as potters do. Then this word of Yahweh was addressed to me, 'House of Israel, can not I do to you what this potter does? - it is Yahweh who speaks. Yes, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in mine, House of Israel. On occasion, I decree for some nation, for some kingdom, that I will tear up, knock down, destroy; but if this nation, against which I have pronounced sentence, abandons its wickedness, I then change my mind about the evil which I had intended to inflict upon it. On another occasion, I decree for some nation, for some kingdom, that I will build up and plant; but if that nation does what displeases me, refusing to listen to my voice, I then change my mind about the good which I had intended to confer on it.'" (Jer 18, 1-10)

"And yet Yahweh, you are our Father, we the clay, you the potter, we are all the work of your hand." (Is 64, 7)

Reflect about what you have just read. Do you agree with the idea of likening God to a potter and ourselves being the clay He works with? Was there a time when you did not understand what God wanted of you, what form He wanted to give you? Did you ever disagree with the form the potter wanted to give you? Pray, so that when you are feeling broken and sad, when life loses its colour, you will leave everything in God's hands, so that He will create the masterpiece He has in mind.





# Bad choices

Mark and Sonia decided to get something to drink as they were very thirsty. The shop they entered was full of elderly persons waiting to be served. Mark was annoyed to see so many people, so he decided to skip the queue. Leaving Sonia at the door, he pushed, shoved and inched his way forward, until finally he was at the front. The shopkeeper was serving a woman who had been waiting for about 15 minutes. Mark called him and ordered an iced tea, but the shopkeeper kept on serving the woman. When he realized the shopkeeper was ignoring him, Mark raised his voice and aggressively asked again for his iced tea. But the shopkeeper insisted on ignoring him. Mark was livid by now, and started banging on the counter and swearing. But the shopkeeper immediately told him to stop and to behave decently. Mark walked out of the shop in a huff. Sonia scolded him for being so rude in a shop full of people, and for not managing to get a drink. This was the last straw for Mark - he started calling Sonia names and blaming her for everything. But she could not bear to be treated like this, so she just turned and left him there.

*What are your feelings when you read this passage? Do you realize how aggressive and rude we become when we are self-centred and proud? Looking at the world we realize that suffering and separation are part of life. Yet, have you ever tried to think where these hostile attitudes, that give human beings such a negative image, come from?*



In the second narrative of creation, found in the Book of Genesis (Gen 2,4-3, 24), the Word of God shows us how man lost the original grace with which God had created him, because of sin and pride. In this narrative we read how God warns man to be careful how to use his freedom, when he tells him: "You may eat indeed from all the trees in the garden. Nevertheless, of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you are not to eat, for on the day you eat from it, you will most surely die." (Gen 2, 16-17)

When man wants to decide for himself what is good and what is bad, he is being proud and this pushes him away from God. Once man decides to do this, his nature, as created by God, changes once and for all. God's plan was for man to live in harmony, but this plan has been disrupted by sin. Man



loses the unity and trust he once enjoyed, since the consequences of sin are suffering, confusion, division and death! When man uses his free will mistakenly, these are the consequences. With his disobedience, man is saying 'no' to God's love.

Because of sin the nature of man changes; he moves away from God, from himself, from others and from creation. We are created free, but any wrong choice we make has its consequences, which ultimately affect us: how we live our relationships with ourselves, others and with God.

Some of the suffering we experience is part of life. It is not easy to explain this suffering which man has always struggled to understand. But there is another type of suffering, that is the consequence of wrong choices we make, and this we bring on ourselves. It is this suffering that many go through because of the egoism of others, because of pride, jealousy, hate and other negative attitudes, that bring separations in our relationships and in society in general.



### Look it up!

There are a number of wrong choices in the Bible: Cain and Abel, Isaac and Rebecca and their children Esau and Jacob, David and Uriah the Hittite, Peter's denial of Jesus, Saul and his persecution of Christians. Look up these episodes and discuss with your colleagues where they went wrong and what was God's will.



# Freedom

Freedom is one of man's greatest gifts. But it is something that can be lost easily. Whenever we become attached to something or someone in the wrong way, we could easily lose our freedom. Even though these things or people could be important or useful, once we become slaves to them, our freedom is lost.

God created man in his image because he desires to have a

sincere friendship with him. But man accepts to live this friendship only if he remains truly free from all that might hinder it.

With freedom comes responsibility. Man is endowed with intelligence and this helps him reflect and think before acting. When making decisions, man needs to think about his actions and the consequences these might bring on himself and others. And if God is important,

man also needs to see how these decisions affect his relationship with God. Man cannot base his decisions on what he feels on a whim, because this shows a lack of wisdom. In the Gospel we read Jesus' parable about the sensible man who built his house on rocks, and the stupid man who built his house on sand. Jesus here is not referring to actual houses, but our lives – whether we are building them on rock or sand.



## Work on this

Imagine that there is a fire in your home and you only have 5 minutes to pick up things you treasure. What would you choose? Make a list of these objects and write down why they are important to you. Finally, discuss with your classmates which objects you saved and how much they mean to you.



"Therefore anyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and hurled themselves against that house, and it did not fall, it was founded on rock. But anyone who listens to these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and struck that house, and it fell, and what a fall it had." (Mt 7, 24-27)

Probably both men wanted to take the right decision. Maybe the one who built his house on sand wanted to be near the sea while the other wanted security. What do you think is the best thing to do before making a mature and wise decision?



What does 'building your life on rocks' mean?

How can you 'build your life on sand'?

When we sometimes lose our joy and peace, we realize that we must have made a wrong decision. This makes us feel guilty and at a loss, and we lose our happiness. This is the sense of sin in us, when we know and feel that we did not pay attention to the voice of God within us, when we put our own wishes before God. Separated from God, pride and arrogance can easily dominate our relationships with others, fear and uncertainty rule over our heart creating a vicious circle which destroys all harmony.

Ultimately, sin destroys God's original plan for us and stops us from being who we really are. The story of Adam and Eve demonstrates this clearly when they were scared of God and hid from him. When we lose our freedom we become slaves. When we stop adoring the creator, we start adoring all that we think could make us happy.

In his letter to the Galatians, St Paul teaches: "When Christ freed us, he meant us to remain free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery." (Gal 5, 1) God created us in his image, and this image remains in us even when we are confused and make mistakes. God himself remains with us and helps us realize our mistakes. His

love is infinite. And he waits like the father in the parable who, when his son came back aware of his mistakes, not only forgot all his sins but prepared a big feast. God is rich in mercy, and his forgiveness heals us from all that separates us from ourselves and others.



**Look it up!**

Once Nelson Mandela said:

'To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.' Find other quotes on freedom by famous people on the Internet, and discuss them with your classmates.



# People of conscience

What a day! Two of my friends got into a fight at school. Since I try not to get into trouble, I decided to walk away. I heard they were sent to the Headmaster's office, and that they aren't on speaking terms anymore. Now I feel I should have done something even though I preferred not to. Did I do the right thing to ignore the fight? What should I have done? What can I do now?

And to make matters worse, the Headmaster told us that some money was stolen from a student's schoolbag. Yesterday, I overheard some boys talking and I strongly suspect they know who the thief is. What should I do? Should I report what I heard? And what happens when my friends find out I reported them? I don't know what to do!



## Live it!

Have you ever experienced anything similar? What is the most important thing for you: what your friends think of you or doing what is right?





We face decisions every day of our life. When we were young, we usually did whatever pleased us, without thinking twice. While growing up, we are guided to choose what we think is good and to avoid what we think is bad. In fact, when we do good, we are satisfied and happy. But when we do something bad we feel somewhat guilty, and something inside bothers us. But why do we feel this way?

All this is coming from our conscience. But what is conscience? As we know, each person has a responsibility in the way he takes his decisions. He is guided by moral law. But as Vatican Council II states in the document about the Church in the world, conscience is the 'most secret core and sanctuary of man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths.' (GS 16)

Conscience is considered to be the most hidden, intimate point where God meets man and where man can hear God's voice. But to listen to God and hear his voice, we need to be prepared, and actively make the time and space, preferably in silence. When we find it difficult to spend some time in silence, then it becomes very difficult to hear our conscience.

Our conscience is in fact an internal voice, deep within us. It is here that we decide what is good or bad and what we should do when we need to take a decision. Our conscience guides us like a friend, but it also judges us. It judges us with the help of reason and free will. It is thanks to these qualities that, together with time

and reflection, we manage to make mature decisions.

### A FORMED CONSCIENCE

Throughout our life, we keep on forming our conscience. It is a process that never stops, and it goes through many ups and downs, which at times stop us from seeing clearly what is good and what is bad. It is very important to always be on the alert for anything that might stop us or hinder us from freely choosing what is good. Ignorance, or not being well informed, can be a serious hindrance. Strong and confused emotions that carry us away, also limit our freedom to take the right decisions. What goes on around us affects us too, especially when we feel we have to conform to others, and the decisions they take.

Often, when we do not learn from our mistakes, we tend to repeat the same errors. This happens also when we cannot control strong emotions, like extreme anger or jealousy, which lead us to making wrong choices. When we start growing up but we don't mature, it becomes more and more difficult to control bad habits. Even extreme emotions can enslave us and hinder us from making the right decisions. Conformity, too, is very tempting, as it is easy to do what others are doing, making sure we are liked by all and that we don't lose friends.

It is very important to constantly remain open to the truth, and to search for it actively. A healthy conscience must be built on the truth and not on opinions. Our conscience needs to be informed. As Christians, our conscience is

formed by the Word of God and by the teachings of the Church. If and when we need it, we should be humble enough to ask for help from people who can really help us, and to always pray for light and guidance.

**"A good and pure conscience is enlightened by true faith, for charity proceeds at the same time 'from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith.'" (CCC 1794)**

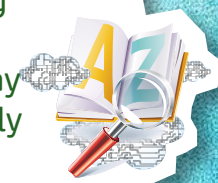
Jesus invites us to a joy that is not simply a fleeting moment or sensation. What Jesus offers is more permanent than this and is concretely applicable to the experiences and circumstances we go through. The person who manages to put his whole faith in God succeeds in remaining truly free, genuine and happy.

### Delve Deeper

A few of the things I can do to form my conscience:

1. Reading, learning and praying, if possible every day
2. Receiving the Holy Eucharist and confessing regularly
3. Becoming more acquainted with the teachings of the Church

Do you think there are other things you can do to form your conscience?





# True joy

Jesus teaches us that true happiness does not depend on how much we have, but how able we are to give to others and how open we are to their needs. "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in his love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy may be complete." (Jn 15, 9-11).

We have already discussed what being authentic means and what makes us complete persons. When we discussed the identity of a Christian, we read the Beatitudes which can be found in the Gospel of Saint Matthew 5, 3-12 and in the Gospel of Saint Luke 6, 20-23. Jesus shows us how the person who finds true happiness also understands what it means to live freely. True happiness is often the result of the good and correct choices we make in life.

The Beatitudes are God's answer to the temptations, wishes and desires that stop us from being authentic, and which hinder us from searching for true happiness. We all desire to be happy. Imagine you are in a treasure hunt, reading the clues that will lead you to the treasure. The Beatitudes are these clues; they are a road map that Jesus has given us. We can never find the treasure, which is complete and a true joy, on our own.

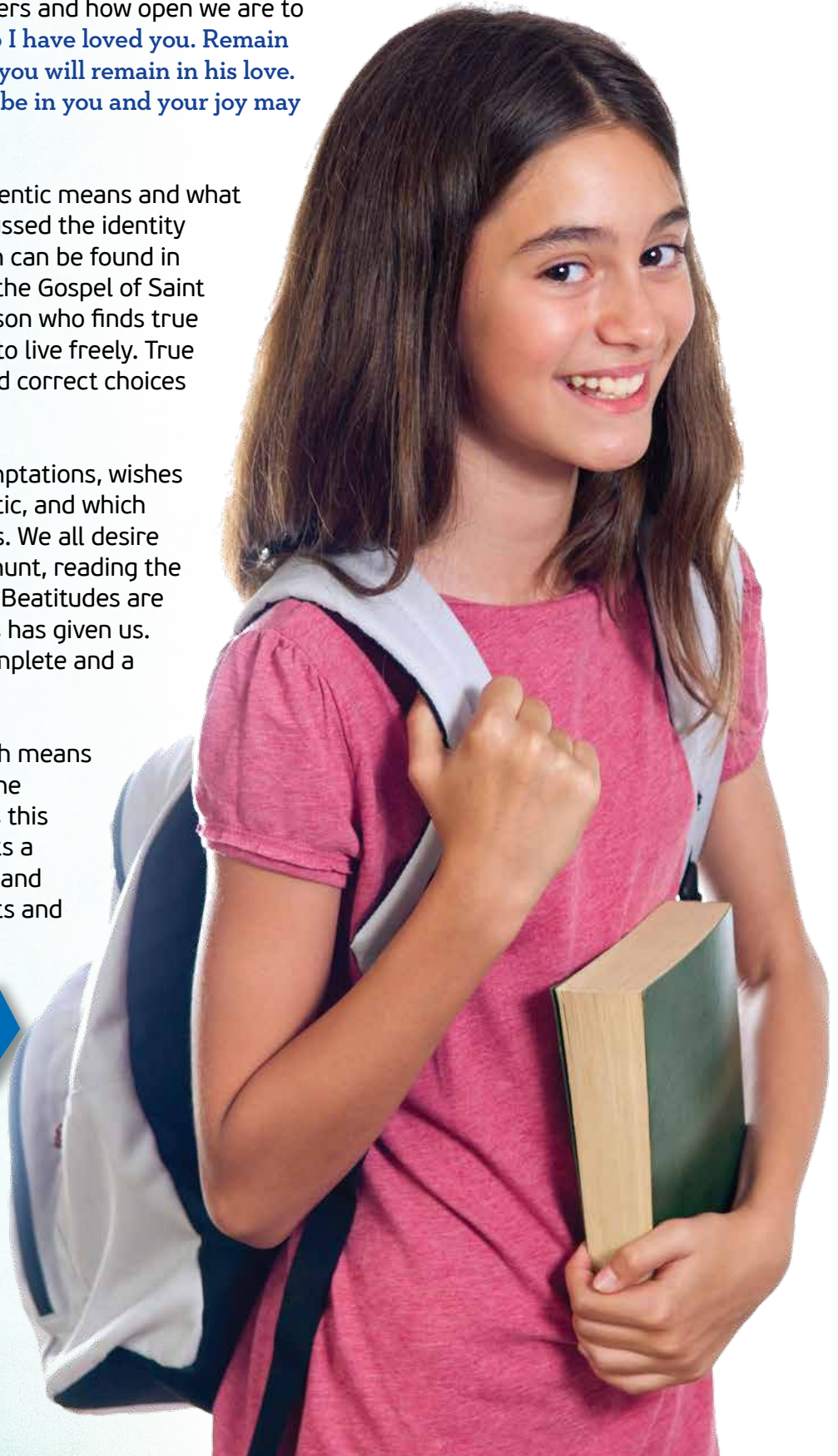
In the Beatitudes, Jesus says 'blessed' which means 'happy'. It is difficult to imagine that someone who is suffering can be happy, but for Jesus this is possible. In the Beatitudes, Jesus suggests a way of virtue that heals us from all the bad and negative habits that often grow in our hearts and which separate us from true happiness.

## Pray

Ah, how happy those of blameless life who walk in the Law of Yahweh! How happy those who respect his decrees, and seek him with their whole heart, and doing no evil, walk in his ways!

(Ps 119)

Stop and reflect. From all that we discussed above, what is the most difficult thing to live in your life?





**Happy are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.**

The opposite of this is pride, being full of yourself, egoism, thinking only of yourself and your needs.

**Happy those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**

The opposite of this is jealousy, and not wanting others to be happy.

**Happy are the gentle, for they shall have the earth for their heritage.**

The opposite of this is anger, not being open to good, and allowing negativity to take over your life.

**Happy are those who hunger and thirst for what is right; they shall be satisfied.**

The opposite of this is laziness, being carried by the current, not fighting evil, not believing in good ideals.

**Happy the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.**

The opposite of this is greed, and not thinking of others' needs.

**Happy are the pure in heart, they shall see God.**

The opposite of this is lust and giving in to the desires of the body to the point that peace of heart is lost.

**Happy are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.**

The opposite of this is when you sow dissent.

**Happy are those, who people abuse and persecute on account of the Son of Man, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.**

The opposite of this is constantly wanting things, never having enough and never being happy with what you have.

## Did You Know?

In his masterpiece, *La Divina Commedia*, Dante Alighieri imagines he is on a journey which takes him through hell, purgatory and finally heaven. In the canticle of Purgatory, he describes Purgatory as being a very high mountain, which souls need to climb to be purified of their defects. Each level is a stage that allows the souls to overcome these defects and reach their full potential. Dante lists these defects as the seven deadly sins: pride, greed, envy, anger, lust, gluttony and sloth.





# With the community

## Delve Deeper!

The film *Invictus* (Warner, 2009) is about the South African rugby team Springboks, which manages to win the Rugby World Cup in 1995. Not only did the team rise from the last place in the championship, but they also managed to unite a country living in conflict between white people and black people, which had been going on for years. The film opens with President Nelson Mandela choosing both white and black people to be his bodyguards. But the head of security, Jason Tshabalala, does not agree with this, and tells him that until recently they had been trying to get rid of such people. This is the President's answer: "Yes, I know. Forgiveness starts here, too. Forgiveness liberates the soul. It removes fear. That is why it is such a powerful weapon..."

Freedom and abundance should never be seen from a personal point of view, and can never be the property of one person. Upon reflection, we immediately realize that the freedom and benefits of each person depend on the freedom and benefits of the rest of the people in society. Every action, whether good or bad, has an effect on society in general.

### THE COMMON GOOD

We should all be aware of our right and responsibilities towards the common good. The document of Vatican Council II concerning the Church in the world of today,

explains the common good as 'the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment' (GS 26)

For these conditions to be present, there must be, first and foremost, a fair distribution of goods, so that each and every person has, as a minimum, the basic needs. In societies where people are still dying of hunger, where they are still being arrested or killed for their religious or political beliefs, the common good is very far from a reality.



### AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

An inclusive society is one in which each individual is free, and where his or her own particular rights and needs are seen to. We all have the same dignity as persons, but we are all created unique and special. In an inclusive society, besides the fair distribution of goods, one must find an array of opportunities relating to education and work, adapted to each individual, and where talents and capabilities can be developed for personal gain and for the enrichment of society at large. Only in this way can true freedom be experienced and lived.

### INJUSTICE AND DISCRIMINATION

The worst injustices are those that undermine man's basic fundamental rights. Since they are basic and fundamental rights, the more these are lacking, the more

man suffers. These reduce, and eventually eradicate, freedom.

The document *Gaudium et Spes* issued by the Second Vatican Council says this: "every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent." (GS 29)

St Paul in his Letter to the Romans says: "**Do not let your love be a pretence, but sincerely prefer good to evil. Love each other as much as brothers should, and have a profound respect for each other. Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with great earnestness of spirit. If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come; and keep on praying. If any of the saints are in**

**need you must share with them; and you should make hospitality your special care. Bless those who persecute you: never curse them, bless them. Rejoice with those who rejoice and be sad with those in sorrow. Treat everyone with equal kindness: never be condescending but make real friends with the poor. Do not allow yourself to become self-satisfied. Never repay evil with evil but let everyone see that you are interested only in the highest ideals. Do all you can to live at peace with everyone. Never try to get revenge; leave that, my friends, to God's anger. As scripture says: 'Vengeance is mine - I will pay them back', the Lord promises. But there is more: 'If your enemy is hungry, you should give him food, and if he is thirsty, let him drink. Thus you heap red-hot coals on his head'. Resist evil and conquer with good."** (12, 9-21)







# Good vs evil

## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

### A IMPORTANT WORDS

Briefly explain the following terms:

- ▶ Image
- ▶ Sin
- ▶ Responsibility
- ▶ Joy
- ▶ Common good

### B MAIN IDEAS

Write a paragraph about the following:

- ▶ What does 'God's original plan for humanity' mean?
- ▶ Why does sin affect man so negatively?
- ▶ What does being truly free mean?
- ▶ What does an 'inclusive society' mean?

### C STOP AND THINK

Using what you have learnt in this chapter, answer the following:

- ▶ Man's nature has changed because of sin. How?
- ▶ Choose one of the Beatitudes and paint, draw or find a picture to illustrate it.

### D FAMILY DISCUSSION

Discuss the following with your family:

- ▶ How are we concretely helping each other to grow in true freedom?
- ▶ How can we, as a family, help society be more inclusive?





# Part of a far larger world

## PREPARE YOURSELF:

Should we take interest in  
other religions?

Is our faith a private  
matter?

## TICK ✓ THE WORDS YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH:

☐ Diversity

☐ Religion

☐ Dialogue

☐ Truth

☐ Unity

☐ Tradition

☐ Wisdom

☐ Walls



# A living tradition

The moment we are born, we become part of a tradition made up of religion and values. In every society, these elements are passed on from one generation to another and they shape the identity of peoples and individuals. The word 'tradition' comes from the Latin word 'tradere' which means 'to pass from one hand to another'. We inherit what our parents received from their parents. We too, then, are required to pass on what we

have received. This is how a chain of continuation is woven out of living traditions that characterize peoples and nations.

We receive all this in the process of our education and this is how our identity is formed. Religion plays a very important role because it touches on those important questions that man has asked since the beginning of time, and for which no generation has

found satisfactory, definite answers. Science, technology, informatics and other fields of knowledge are all founts of wisdom that enrich our lives, and make them better and more beautiful. But there is yet another aspect in our life, which is just as important, and this is our spiritual side. When we ignore this part of our being, we are ignoring a fundamental aspect of our very existence. Rational man can think, reason, be creative and imagine.

In his book *No Man is an Island*, Thomas Merton states that no man is created to be alone, cut off from society. On the contrary, Merton holds that man needs others in his life to be able to reach his full potential.

**"This is why it is important to live not for ourselves, but for others.... When we do so, we are first and foremost able to face and accept our limitations...we realize we are human, like everybody else, with our faults, which faults are important in our life. It is because of these faults that we need others and others need us. Some of us are weak in one thing, and others are weak in another and so we complement each other, and by filling in on each others' faults we make each other more complete."**



But man has a heart too, which is a completely different world. This heart is capable of feelings, emotions and love which make the person complete. "Our heart has been made for you Oh Lord, and it will not rest until it rests in you", says St Augustine. Religion, which unfortunately, is often reduced to laws and regulations, deals with all that goes on in our hearts and all that forms us during our life time.

The identity of an individual and of a society is always formed by values, feelings and emotions that mould the perfect culture. Sometimes religion stands out in certain cultures. Looking back at how cultures developed, and how the important religions arose in different parts of the world, we realize it was always so. Religion sometimes becomes entwined with culture and influences every aspect of society and the individuals that make it up. In last year's

religion book, we discussed how religion can help us discover 'the world within us'. This year we are realizing that religion can help us move out of ourselves and support us in our relations with others and with the world at large.

Religion is not only doctrine and truths we must believe in. Religion is also made up of emotions and feelings. It can be a tool that helps us get closer to one another. Unfortunately, we must admit that many times in the past, religion separated nations and even people within the same country. This is exactly what religion should not do, and contradicts what religion stands for. Nowadays, dialogue among the chief religions in the world is a must and a necessity. For a long time it was argued that there cannot be multiple religions, which are all good, and which all state that they are right. This often led to arguments and wars

among religions. Nowadays, religious diversity is appreciated for its contribution to a wisdom that has developed along the years, and which confirms that man, of every race, religion and culture, has been asking the same questions about humanity since the beginning of time.

### Look it up!

Over the years, every religion develops a number of traditions.

As Christians, we celebrate the feasts of saints, while Muslims eat and drink with their left hands, the males wear a mantle called the 'tallit or tallis' to pray. Find some other religious traditions and the meaning behind them.





# Religion in Malta

For many centuries in Malta, the Catholic religion and culture were one and the same thing, and they formed the identity of the Maltese people and of our island. Religion was at the very centre of life. Everything revolved around religion to the extent that even our calendar was structured around the Church's calendar. Our villages were built around the church, and if you look at Malta from a high

place, you cannot but notice the large number of church domes and bell spires strewn all over the island.

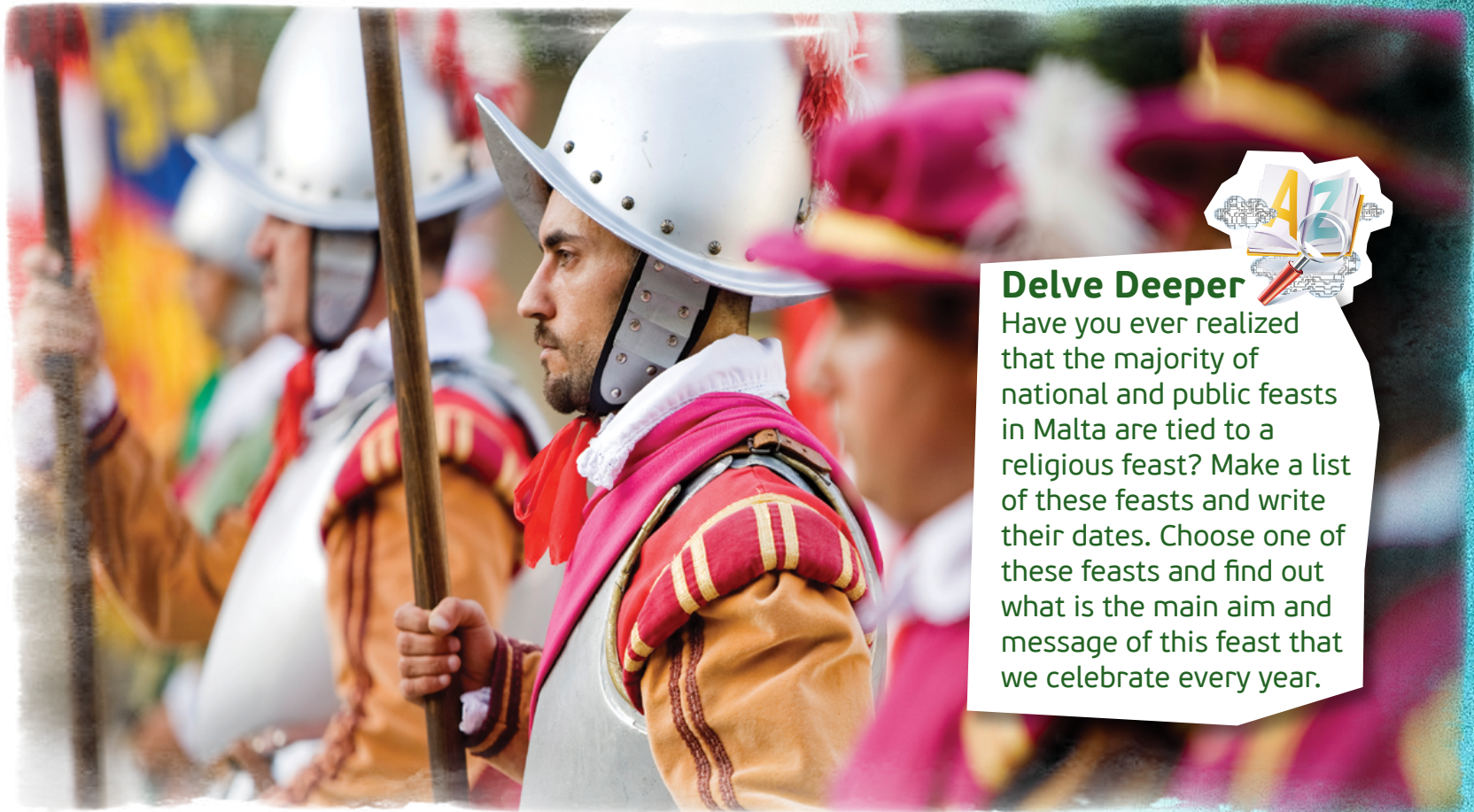
The Christian community in Malta originated in 60AD when St Paul visited the island. At the time, Malta was part of the Sicilian province, and the 'Protos', who was the leader appointed from Sicily, was called Publius. Tradition holds

that Publius was immediately converted to Christianity and became the first bishop of Malta. Since that time, the Maltese have kept to the Christian religion, with a decrease – about which we know very little – of believers only during the Arab reign (870AD – 1090AD).

After the Arabs left, Christianity spread again and the number of







## Delve Deeper

Have you ever realized that the majority of national and public feasts in Malta are tied to a religious feast? Make a list of these feasts and write their dates. Choose one of these feasts and find out what is the main aim and message of this feast that we celebrate every year.

chapels found in the countryside is a proof of this. During the reign of the Knights of St John (1530-1798), Christianity was very strong. Many traditions commenced during this time and are still with us today. Many big and beautiful churches were built, the most famous of which is St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta. During the Great Siege in 1565, the Maltese not only defended their country, but also their faith. The same thing happened when they ousted the French from Malta after their two year reign from 1798 to 1800. This happened because Napoleon, amongst other things, ordered his men to plunder the churches the Maltese loved so much.

The Christian religion was always at the heart of Maltese tradition. It is etched into the way we live, with the large number of churches spread all over the island, the numerous feasts and celebrations that have withstood the test of centuries, and which are still alive

today, in spite of all the social and cultural changes Maltese society has gone through.

As a nation, the Maltese wanted to carve their faith even in the Maltese Constitution, first during that of Independence in 1964 and then during that of the Republic in 1974, attesting that Malta's religion is the Roman Catholic Apostolic religion. The Constitution still states that the Catholic faith is an integral part of the education process in our schools.

In Malta, though, religious freedom is respected. Our religion has been passed down from one generation to another, but this does not stop us from respecting the importance and richness of different religions. Today, not only is Malta no longer cut off from Europe, but it serves as a bridge between Africa and Europe for many refugees who are looking for a better future. The presence of so many immigrants, besides challenging us to be

hospitable, as our very religion demands, brings us face to face with different religions. Different religions should not threaten what we believe in. Malta has culturally and geographically always been part of Europe. Politically, Malta chose to be an integral part of Europe, and as with every choice, this has brought its good and not so good consequences. Even though Malta is still a tiny island surrounded by water, it is not cut off from the rest of the world.

One can say that the European culture was based on Christian values. But in these last 400 years, this continent has been taken over by a wave of 'secularism', which has changed, and is still changing, the role of religion in modern society. Today, even Malta is going through this change. When compared to the rest of the region though, Malta is still relatively religious. But, the way religion is perceived and how it effects the Maltese way of life is changing drastically.



# A faith formed over the ages



While we acknowledge the importance of our cultural identity as a nation, intertwined as it is with our faith, we must continue on this journey as Christians with the rest of the Church spread all over the world.

Christianity is two thousand years old. It grew and developed in the life and cultures of many different peoples and nations. When religion stops developing, it risks becoming irrelevant to its believers. The Catholic faith passed through many different phases, first through persecutions, then through strife and disagreement over heresies and similar arguments. The Church, or rather those who believed in

Jesus, went through times of division that have left a mark that can still be felt today.

Let us clarify the meaning of some words we often use. The word 'Christian' refers to all those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, even though they might have different ideas about some particular aspects of the faith, or how to celebrate the faith. The word 'Catholic' means 'universal' and its use hails back to the very first centuries, where we find it in the writings of the Fathers of the Church and early liturgical texts.

Christianity initially developed from Judaism and kept on

developing in spite of different cultures, forming its own unique identity. Christianity took off from Judaism and eventually took on board the Greek culture, especially thanks to the Apostle St Paul, which is why he is called the Apostle of the Nations or the Gentiles. Generally speaking, the Gentiles were people who did not believe in the Judaic God. At the beginning, small Christian communities started to form. But within these communities, the Greek and Jewish believers accepted and understood the faith in different ways. As a consequence, heresies came to light, with different interpretations of the same teaching, eventually



leading communities to split into different groups. It was during this time that clarifications with regard to doctrine were needed and Councils were held to explain and formulate teachings.

The first persecutions ended with the Edict of the Emperor Constantine in 313 AD. This was followed by a period of heresy, which forced Christianity to establish its identity as a religion and a faith. The Fathers of the Church had a very important role to play during this phase. Most of them were Bishops, leaders and teachers of their own communities. Their sermons, writings and teachings are based on the authentic teachings of the Apostles. At this time, Christianity was spreading in a world that was still establishing itself politically, especially after the fall of the

Roman Empire in the fifth century, and the beginning of the Islamic religion in the seventh century. Both the political developments and the Islamic religion had an impact on Christianity.

After the first Millennium, in 1054 Christianity suffered a major division between East and West. Although the argument was about doctrine, the division was more the result of political differences. The Christians in the East, called 'Orthodox', felt that the Church in the West, with Rome as its centre, was becoming more important than Constantinople. Things came to a head when the Pope and the Patriarch, head of the Orthodox Church at the time, excommunicated each other, in 1054. This excommunication was nullified in 1964, during the Second Vatican Council, when

Pope Paul VI and the Patriarch Atenagoras met in Jerusalem. Pope John Paul II, himself a Polish man brought up in Eastern Europe, insisted that the Christians of the West and East needed to be united once again, because he said Christianity needed 'two lungs' to breathe.

During the second Millennium, Christianity suffered another major division which had a very big impact on believers in the West. In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther, a German Augustinian priest wanted to reform the Church. In truth, the need for reform had long been felt, but things were not changing. Luther felt that Rome had too much power and that the Church needed a change in structure. In 1517, Luther wrote a long list of what he considered to be errors that were occurring within the Church. This led to the excommunication of Luther and his followers, and a large number of believers, who are referred to as Protestants.

Throughout the ages we have seen that the close tie between religion and politics in Europe has led to divisions that were not only the result of doctrine and teachings. Unfortunately, this tie also led many times to what we refer to, as religious wars.



### Work on this



Martin Luther was an Augustinian priest who started the Protestant reform. He is most famous for nailing his 95 theses to the door of the Church at Wittenberg. Look up Martin Luther's 95 famous theses.



# Bringing down the walls

Religion should be a unifying factor, guiding humanity to go beyond materialism, helping man to come in touch with the Creator within. Unfortunately, many times religion had the opposite effect on humanity, causing wars and division between peoples and nations. The twentieth century, which was supposed to be the century of peace, saw two major wars that destroyed entire civilizations. One of the worst examples of violence and hatred is the

Holocaust which took place during the Second World War, shaming the whole of humanity. This human disaster convinced various leaders to work for the rebuilding of Europe and to write and sign the Declaration of Fundamental Human Rights in 1948.

Even the Church, after many efforts even from within, recognized the need to open itself once again to the novel needs of the modern world. Pope John XXIII was instrumental in convening

the Second Vatican Council, recognizing the need of the Church to be more accessible to the world, and to work for more unity within Christianity itself.

## CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS

Conflicts between Christians and Muslims started with the spread of Islam in the seventh century. These conflicts gave rise to the Crusades which took place between 1095 and 1291. This was one long conflict between Christians and Muslims for the control of

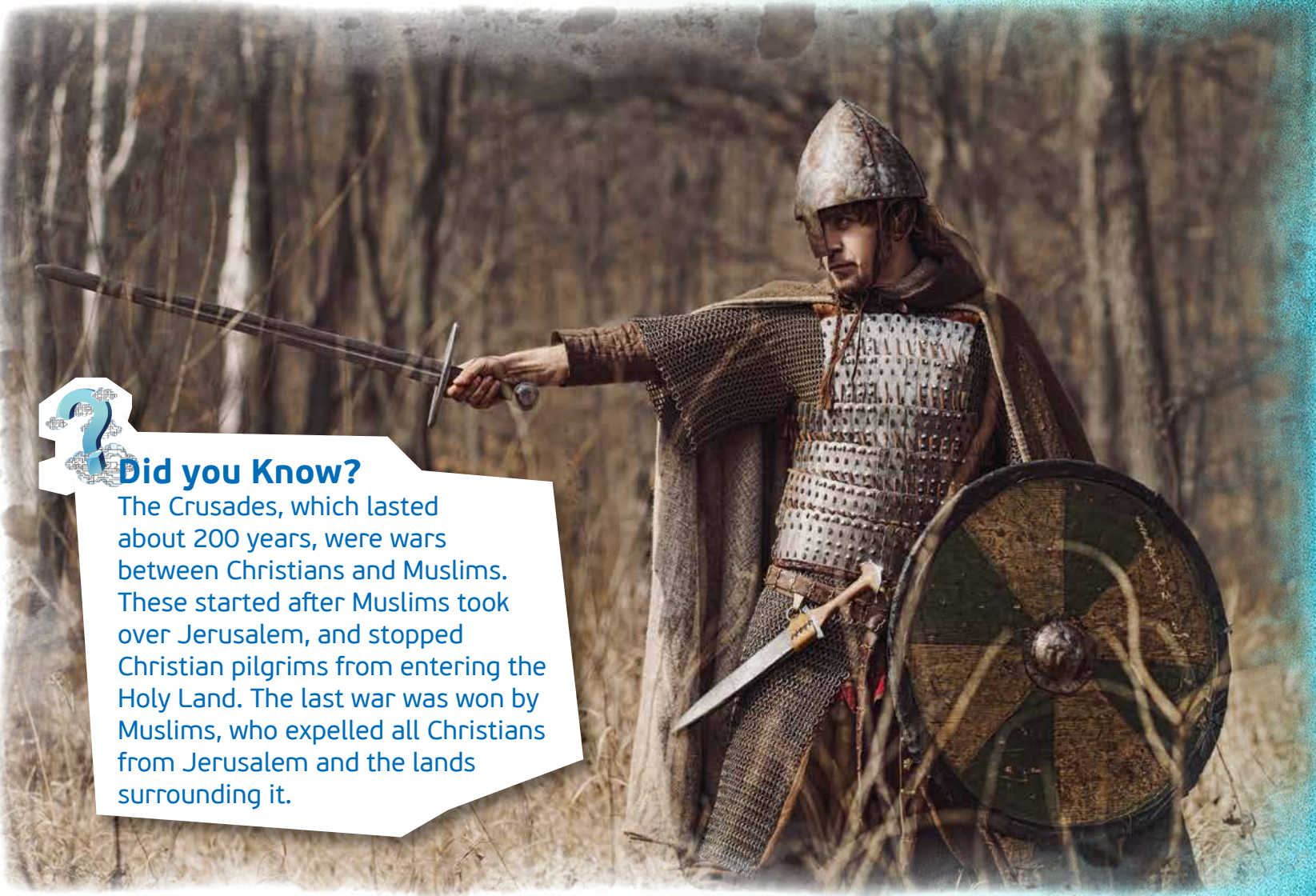






### Did you Know?

The Crusades, which lasted about 200 years, were wars between Christians and Muslims. These started after Muslims took over Jerusalem, and stopped Christian pilgrims from entering the Holy Land. The last war was won by Muslims, who expelled all Christians from Jerusalem and the lands surrounding it.



Jerusalem. This city was important for two reasons. For the Christians it was the place that Jesus died and rose from the dead, and for the Muslims it was the place where Mohammed was last seen.

The Order of the Knights of St John was founded at this time, with the aim of taking care of the sick or poor Christian pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. In fact, they are named after a hospital near a monastery dedicated to St John the Baptist. When the Crusades started, though, the Order's role changed to a more military one and they coordinated the defence of the Holy Land from Muslim attacks. With the fall of Jerusalem, they were forced to leave, and were relocated to Acre, then to Cyprus and eventually to Rhodes. Eventually, they were

also expelled from there and thanks to the providence of God, ended in Malta.

### CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

After Jesus died, the Christians started to blame Jesus' death not only on the Jewish Leaders of the time, but eventually, on all the Jewish race. This is called anti-Semitism, which culminated in the Holocaust during the Second World War. Few are aware that Jews have been persecuted as early as the 9th century. The biggest attack on the Jews took place when the first Crusade was pronounced in 1095. This news triggered a wave of anger against anyone who was not a Christian. In France and Germany, many argued that there was no need to go to the Holy Land to fight the enemies there,

when Jewish enemies were all around! Unfortunately, year after year during the Crusades, Jews were attacked indiscriminately, and many consider this occurrence the first major anti-Semitic drive.

Over the years, too many walls have been built between the three major religions in the Mediterranean which look to Abraham as their Father. The Church put a stop to this when she started appreciating the riches that flow from the good points and values of these religions. For this reason, inter-religious dialogue was a strong and important reason for the Church to open itself towards the world, believing that it makes no sense for religion and faith to create prejudice and increase divisions within humanity.



# Dialogue... the magic word



## Did you know?

The Iron Curtain is an ideological conflict that split Europe into two after the Second World War. The countries with Communist ideals and beliefs were in the East, and the Capitalist countries were in the West. Winston Churchill was the first person to use the phrase the 'Iron Curtain' in his speech on the 5th of March 1946. The wall of Berlin was a very tangible example of this division. This wall split East Germany from West Germany. Work on this wall started on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 1961 and no German was allowed to cross freely from one side to another. On the 9th of November 1989, the authorities of East Germany gave in to protests and allowed German citizens to cross over freely to West Germany.

Vatican Council II is called an ecumenical council because it worked on what was essential: bringing down the walls of division once and for all. In the past there had been more than one attempt at ecumenism, the most important of which is called the Parliament of Religions which took place in 1893 in Chicago, in the United States of America. There were also many efforts for unity among different Christian Churches, Traditions and denominations, and for greater dialogue between religions spread across the world. In 1986, Pope John Paul II called a meeting in

Assisi, Italy between the leaders of all the religions of the world. This meeting surprised many people, as it opened new avenues of dialogue among religions. In the same year, Pope John Paul II visited a synagogue and whilst there called the Jews 'our big brothers'. In 2011, Pope Benedict XVI called for a similar prayer meeting, which was attended for the first time by four atheists, persons who do not believe in the existence of God. This fruitful dialogue concentrated mostly on world peace.

Inspired by this religious dialogue, which goes beyond different religious





beliefs, many new initiatives took off within the Christian faith. Two of these are the Community of Taizé' in France and the Community of Bose in Italy.

The Community of Taizé' is a monastic community founded by Roger Schutz in 1940. Taizé' is the name of the village where this community is situated. The members of this community live in celibacy, poverty and simplicity, and strive to help those in need. From the very beginning, this community was an ecumenical one, made up of brothers from different Christian Churches and Traditions. In spite of the difference in beliefs, they live a life witnessing Jesus' message to the full. This community has nowadays become a sort of oasis in the middle of the desert of life, a space that attracts thousands of young people and people of all ages every year. Once there, these pilgrims discover the Word of God and prayer, two basic elements upon which any real spiritual experience must be built. In this oasis, the participants come face to face with themselves so as to, eventually, be able to share their lives with others and with God.

Similarly, just after the Second Vatican Council came to an end in December 1965, Enzo Bianchi



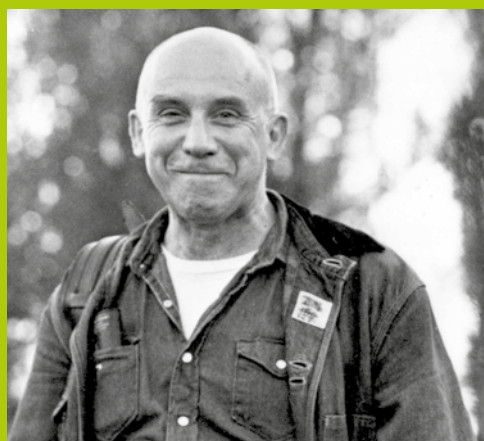
The Monastery of Bose in the north of Italy



The Community at Taizé in France

started the Bose experience in Italy. This is an ecumenical monastic experience which offers a space to people of all ages and beliefs to make a serious experience of prayer. This community has grown and now consists of both men and women, Catholics and Protestants and a few priests. Many of the monks study scripture and old sacred texts from the East and West.

During the Second Vatican Council, the Church understood that it must continue the dialogue of salvation with man and the world which Jesus Christ himself had started. The Catholic Church could no longer preach reconciliation while she was divided within herself. The Church understood that she herself must be an instrument of peace and unity between man and God and humanity.



**Thomas Merton** was born on the 31st January 1915. His family was Anglican, but when he turned 18, he converted to Catholicism and eventually entered the Order of Trappists, a religious order that emphasizes silence and being completely cut off from the world. When he was 22, he started discovering the religions of the East, such as Buddhism and Hinduism which he eventually

studied in detail. He always held that it was a great pity that as Catholics, we had lost the ability to pray and meditate, and that the eastern religions have a lot to offer, especially on the understanding of self. He died in Thailand when he was attending a meeting between Catholic priests and non-Catholics, in 1968. He wrote more than 70 books, which makes him one of the most prolific writers of the 20th century.



# Keeping religion alive

At the beginning of the chapter we discussed how religion, in our case Catholicism, has always been intertwined with the culture of our country, and has formed our identity as a nation. Throughout the ages, religion remained alive in tradition, bound to the normal everyday life of the Maltese, making sense to each individual personally. Nowadays though, in view of world developments, which have effected radically the way we think and act, many questions have been raised about the role of religion in society and in the private lives of individuals.

## **What is the role of religion in a society that has changed?**

*Nowadays that man is more able to think and reason things out for himself, religion could be seen like an obstacle to freedom. What do you think?*

## **If we need to respect all the different religions that exist, how can we know which is the right one for us?**

*Many think religion or being religious is old-fashioned. How can we show them this is not true?*

Today we live in a large, globalized world, full of different religions and beliefs. At the same time, the world has become smaller because of the advance in technology and communication, which are more instant and effective, changing drastically the way we communicate with each other. Even though all this effects religion, the changing world should not become hostile to religion. Religion, any religion, remains valid in as much as it helps man express himself, what he feels and believes. Often though, many refuse to continue practising the





"Go and make disciples of all nations". This was the theme for the 28th World Youth Day which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 2013. In the sermon of the mass which took place in Copacabana, the Pope said: "Go, without fear, and serve". He continued explaining that Jesus did not say "if you want" or "if you have some time..." but "go and make disciples of all nations". The Pope explained that Jesus ordered us to share our faith experience with others and to give witness while spreading the Good News. We might say, 'But what can I do? I am not capable...' Even the prophet Jeremiah, when God called him to be a prophet, was filled with fear, but God spoke to him and told him: "Do not be afraid...for I am with you to protect you" (Jer 1, 7-8) God tells us exactly the same thing. Spreading the Gospel is giving witness to God's love through our own lives; it means overcoming our egoism; it means serving in humility and washing our brothers' feet in the same way Jesus did.



religion they were brought up in, when they become adults. Religion does not seem to answer the new experiences they go through. Once religion stops helping it becomes irrelevant.

On the other hand, many people still practise and believe in the religion they were brought up in, making an effort to make it relevant and valid in their life today. Others, have completely abandoned the idea of religion, arguing that religion is now outdated, and was only useful when man did not have the knowledge and wisdom of today. Many, on the other hand, are only partial believers, practising religion only because it is part of their culture. But their life decisions are not affected by their religion.

### **A CHURCH THAT MOVES WITH THE TIMES**

The Second Vatican Council was held precisely for the Church to study and understand what is going on in man's heart. In this way, the Church wants to walk with him and support him in all he goes through. The Church wants to be in the world, patiently and lovingly helping man arrive at the truth, without imposing. This is what Jesus does in the Gospels. And it is what the Church has always been called to do. Like Jesus walking the streets of Palestine, the Church must be present in the world by accompanying man in all that he experiences. The joy and the hope, the sadness and the worry experienced by humans today, especially the poor and those who are suffering, are the same joy,

hope, sadness and worry of the true Church of Christ.

This can be done by proclaiming Jesus' message in a language that can be understood today, fully respecting the freedom of each individual, and without fear or coercion. The Church can only accomplish this with humility, fully aware that she is just one voice among many, that man experiences in the world of today.

Faith is very personal, but it is never private. The Christian is asked to be a light in society, just as the Church is asked to reflect the light of Jesus Christ. To understand himself deeply, to discover what makes him truly happy and complete, and to find reason in a world where often there is no sense, man needs only one key, Jesus Christ.



## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

### A IMPORTANT WORDS

Briefly explain the following terms:

- ▶ Tradition
- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Ecumenism

### B MAIN IDEAS

Write a paragraph about the following:

- ▶ Is it true that religion has made a great impact on Maltese culture? Give reasons for your answer.
- ▶ What does anti-Semitism mean?
- ▶ The community of Taizé'.

### C STOP AND THINK

Using what you have learnt in this chapter, answer the following:

- ▶ "There were many occasions when religion divided peoples and nations". Does this still happen in today's world? Give examples from current affairs.
- ▶ What do you think should be done to ensure religion remains relevant and alive today?

### D FAMILY DISCUSSION

Discuss the following with your family:

- ▶ Discuss religious traditions your parents and grandparents kept in the past and which today have died out.
- ▶ How can your family be a light in today's society and Church?



# Part of a far larger world



## NOTES

















The role of religion in today's society is going through radical changes. Contrary to what some might think, these changes need not necessarily lead to the total eradication of religion from man's life and from the positive influence it can have on society. Religion, when presented in the right way, does not limit man's freedom, but helps him grow in a holistic way.

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