

My Adventure





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A Religious Education resource book for the first year of secondary education

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Our Adventure has begun!

education is a process that involves the whole person, both mind and heart. If this is true for the entire educative process which the students go through as from their very first years, it is even more applicable in the case of Religious Education.

Religion is not about duties and rules, and even less should it be associated only with traditions and folklore. This does not mean that these should be excluded. But, above all, true religion helps us live a holistic life, and I believe that it also gives us joy – joy to the full.

Within the school environment, it is very easy for Religious Education to become another study subject. However, as far as it is possible, we should do our utmost to raise Religious Education above other subjects, and make it a true 'education of the spirit'.

The human person has a spiritual part. For those who believe in God, this refers to the image of God within us. The ultimate aim of Religious Education within the school is to help this spirit emerge. This has to be done with great sensitivity and patience, but also as an integral part of the educative process, nonetheless. Religious Education should help the developing students allow this spirit to emerge more clearly in their lives, and this should affect the way they live and the way they relate to themselves and to others, rather than simply the way they behave.

On my part, it is a great pleasure to be writing an introduction to this book that initiates the process of secondary education for our students. I am very grateful to all those who have worked and are still working on this book, and on others which are planned for the coming years.

I also appreciate the fact that this book, which is addressed to a specific age-group, is providing such a vivid link between Religious Education and the sense of an adventurous journey. This book should help the students discover that their energy and exhaustion, the good and bad times, and the challenges and difficulties involved when making important choices are not only found in the book in front of them, but in the life that is opening up like a book before them. Above all, the students may come to realise that an important feature of their journey is the fact that they are never alone. And this is an element that will bring about a change in one's outlook, and make the journey truly beautiful.

I hope and pray that this book will provide students and teachers with the means to make Religious Education a process that will help us discover the beauty of life and the beauty of a faith that makes life so much richer.

Rev. Dr René Camilleri Delegate for Catechesis

Before using this book

Religious Education is an essential part of a truly holistic education. This is the reason why we have prepared this book with so much care and attention. It is intended to help you, as a student in your first year of secondary school, learn about your religion. This book may be used in class and also at home. You may also use other resources instead of it, or in addition to it.

This book was written for boys and girls. It was not always possible to address the students without choosing between the masculine and the feminine pronouns. Hence, wherever we have used the masculine pronoun, the situation applies also to girls, and vice versa: when we used the feminine pronoun, the situation applies also to boys.

As you use this book, you will discover that there are links with other learning areas such as Languages, Citizenship Education, Health Education and Arts Education. These links are not coincidental. The whole aim is to help you see the relationship between the different learning areas at school, and to help you realise that all education helps you develop holistically.

The book has six chapters and every chapter has a number of lessons. Every lesson is spread over two pages, which include the main text of the lesson, as well as other material you may use. In the case of some lessons, there are two versions, and the most appropriate one will be chosen for your class.

Every chapter starts with a short exercise called **PREPARE YOURSELF**, which should provide a link between what you already know and what you will learn in the chapter.

Then there are two pages which give a general outline of the chapter, and a more detailed summary of every lesson.

In the middle of every chapter, there are two pages entitled **GOING FURTHER**. These deal with other topics related to the chapter, and you will definitely find them interesting.

In the lessons, there are a number of icons that indicate different types of information or exercises:



Did you know? provides interesting information related to the lesson.



Delve deeper helps you reflect more on some aspect of the lesson.



Look it up! asks you to use the internet or other means of research to find information.



Live it! helps you put what you have learnt into practice.



Work on this! involves work that may be done in class or at home.



Pray invites you to pray in a way that will be different from what you are used to.

At the end of every chapter, there are a number of questions that will help you go over what you have learnt, confirm what you have understood and find out whether you can put what you have learnt into practice.

I hope this book helps you and your friends to mature and develop into well-rounded young people.

David Polidano on behalf of the team that helped to write this book



PREPARE YOURSELF:

Have you ever thought of your life as an adventure or as a journey?

Which word interests you most, 'a journey' or 'an adventure'?

Is there a link between the two words?

Tick ✓ the words you are familiar with:

- ☐ change
- ☐ growth
- ☐ choices
- ☐ pilgrimage
- ☐ Jews
- ☐ Christians
- ☐ Muslims
- ☐ Salvation History
- ☐ Jerusalem

My Journey



In this chapter we shall explore what it means to say that our life is a journey. We shall examine the relationship between our life journey and that undertaken by other people. We shall also seek to become more familiar with the spiritual dimension of our life journey.

My Journey



I'm changing, I'm growing

We begin the chapter with a look at the changes we experience as we grow older. In so doing, we become more aware of the important role these changes have in our life.

Choices in my life

We then consider the choices we make in our daily lives. We see that every choice leaves a mark on our life journey.

On the road

In the following lesson we focus our attention on the word 'pilgrimage'. We learn more about this important aspect in many religions of the world.

God is with us

After this, we take a quick look at the story of the Bible as one where God journeys with his chosen people. This journey finds its fulfilment in the person of Jesus.

Abraham's or Ruth's adventure

We then turn to important characters in the Old Testament to see how their story was also a personal journey with God.

Jesus' journey

In the next lesson we delve into Jesus' life journey. We become aware that it was, in a special way, a journey towards Jerusalem; towards the fulfilment of God's plan of salvation.

Mary's or Paul's adventure

The New Testament records the story of other important characters such as Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Saint Paul. Therefore we will study the life journey of one of them as one great adventure with God.

... and my journey?

As we get to the end of the chapter, we focus on ourselves to see how willing we are to allow God to accompany us on this journey, the adventure of our life.



I'm changing, I'm growing

Delve deeper

Who knows how many times an aunt or one of mummy's friends said to you, "God bless you, how you have grown!" Indeed, you are growing up fast. When you see Form 5 students, you may feel small, but don't worry. Even though for you it may seem something far off, soon you will be like them. Time passes quickly. Your own body gives you clear signs that you are growing. These changes should neither frighten you nor make you feel embarrassed. The changes you are experiencing are all part of your life journey and they are great gifts from God.

your life is an adventure that began nine months before your birth. The day you were born was one of the most important days in your life; the day you took your first breath and began to discover the world around you. From that very moment you turned to those closest to you for love and protection, to talk and play with you.

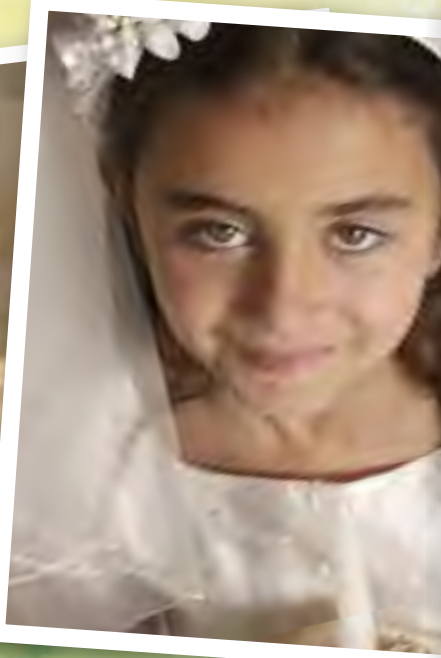
A few weeks later, your parents, wanting to share with you their gift of faith, took you to church to be baptized. You were welcomed into the Christian community. As you grew up, many were those people who spoke to you of God's great and generous love for you.

Time went on quickly. You went to playschool and learnt to talk



Did you know?

An ancient tradition, in some Asiatic countries, such as China and Korea, consider a new born baby as a one-year old child.



and play with other children. You made new friends. You discovered many different talents as you learnt to paint, to sing and to act, to recognize letters and numbers.

You attended catechesis classes and at seven years of age you received your first Holy Communion. This was a very important occasion in your life, for you learnt more about God's great love for you and his desire to become one with you.

As you moved through primary school, you may have been keen to develop a talent: take up a sport, go to dancing, singing or music lessons. If this is what you did, then today you probably feel good about yourself for what you have accomplished. You may probably wish to develop your talent even further.

Not only have you developed your talents, you are also more intelligent and you are growing up fast. You are much taller now than

you were when you received your first Holy Communion!

Not everything was plain sailing. You could have had a few bad days and some moments may have been worse than others. But these ups and downs are all part of our life journey and help us as we are growing up.

Now you are in a secondary school ...

Probably keen to make new friends ...

This is a stage where you will continue to grow and develop physically ...

You want to learn new things and develop your talents further ...

From the Gospel according to Luke

“He went down with them then and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and with people.” (Lk 2, 51-52)

This passage shows us that like us, Jesus grew up mentally and physically. If you learn to use the Bible, you can read the whole passage for yourself and discover how old Jesus was when this event took place.

The journey continues

...

This is the adventure of your life...



Choices in my life

Life is full of choices. From the moment you wake up, to the moment you close your eyes at night, you choose what to do. Suppose you choose not to eat at lunch time, soon you will be hungry. If, on the other hand, you choose to eat too much you will be sick. Getting into the habit of eating unhealthy food often, may

make you prone to sickness and disease later on in life. But if you make it a point to choose healthy food, you will be doing what is in your best interest and you will be in a better position to enjoy a healthy life.

If you reflect on your life journey so far, you will see that you have already made many choices.

What would you choose?

And if this is always your choice, what will be the result?



From the Gospel according to Luke

/// Mary said, "You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said." And the angel left her. (Lk 1, 38)

If you read through the rest of the passage in Luke's Gospel you will see that Mary had to make a very important decision. She questioned, she reflected carefully and then she made her choice. Mary chose to give first place to God in her life and to do his will. What consequences did Mary's 'yes' have?

Certainly, some of your choices were influenced by your parents, but, many a time, they also depended on whether you saw eye to eye with them, and on how much you made the choice really yours.

As the saying goes, you must "think before you act". As you grow older, you realize how important it is to weigh up the consequences of the choices you make. Thus the decision-making process begins. You consider the pros and cons before deciding on

one particular course of action and not another.

Although in life some things just happen, most are linked with the choices you make. Therefore, the responsibility for your own life is in your hands.

Are you ready to give God a place in the choices you make?

The choice is yours

Imagine that when you were six years old, you showed interest in a particular sport, such as gymnastics, football or swimming. Your parents sent you to training sessions once a week. When you were about eight years old, your coach saw great talent in you and wanted you to train more often.

Should you go for more training sessions? Go to page 117
Should you stick to one training session a week? Go to page 31



Look it up!

Look up the harmful effects of having too much sugar, fat or salt in your daily diet. Create a poster to show the importance of a healthy balanced diet.



Did you know?

The verb 'to decide' comes from the Latin 'decaedere' that means, 'to cut out, to eliminate'. Thus, when you decide, you choose to eliminate certain possibilities because you believe others are better.

On the road

Have you ever been to a place you had never been before?

Have you travelled abroad?

Did you feel that sense of adventure as you made new discoveries?

many people like to travel. Some go overseas for their holidays, others go abroad to study. Several people love that great sense of adventure that comes when visiting a foreign land. A number

of people go on a religious journey, on what is known as a pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is more than just a visit to a shrine or a holy place. It is also a way of strengthening and deepening the pilgrim's faith. Many religions of the world give great importance to pilgrimage.

Live it!

Ask your parents or your guardians, to organize a visit to a shrine in Malta or in Gozo. Your teacher can suggest a number of places you may visit and what you can do on the way and once you get there.



The Shrine of Our Lady of Ta' Pinu

While the Temple was still standing, Jewish men were required to go to Jerusalem once a year, for the three major feasts – Easter, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. Often all the members of the family journeyed to Jerusalem. Jesus also took part in these pilgrimages. For the Jews, these feasts were a way of reliving the major events in the story of their ancestors.

The pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the five pillars of Islam. All Muslims, both men and women, who are physically and financially able to, are obliged to make a

pilgrimage to this sacred city at least once in their lifetime.

While pilgrimage is not one of the precepts or rules of the Church, many people journey to places that are holy for Christians. Pilgrimages are organized to the Holy Land, the country where Jesus was born, lived and died; to Rome, the place where, from the time of Saint Peter, the Pope led the Church community. Pilgrims

also go to other shrines such as those in Lourdes and Fatima.

Many people from Malta and Gozo, also go on pilgrimages. Among the shrines they visit we can mention Saint Paul's Grotto in Rabat, Malta, Our Lady's Sanctuary in Mellieha, and the Sanctuary of Our Lady in Ta' Pinu, Gozo.

Jerusalem is a holy city for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The Al-Aqsa Compound:

For Muslims, Jerusalem is the third most important city after Mecca and Medina. The Al-Aqsa Compound stands on the place where the Temple once stood. It is linked to a very extraordinary event Muslims believe Muhammad experienced there. During one particular night, he was transported from the sacred Mosque in Mecca to al-Aqsa from where he was taken up to Heaven. Here God spoke to him before Muhammad returned to Mecca.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre:

Christians visit Jerusalem to relive with Jesus his last days, his passion, death and resurrection. The most sacred place is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, also known as the Church of the Resurrection. It is built on the place where Jesus died and on the tomb in which he was buried and from where he rose from the dead.

The Western Wall:

Jerusalem has been the centre of Jewish life since the time of King David. His son Solomon built the First Temple there. Today, Jews pray in front of the Western Wall, the only part that is still standing of the Second Temple after it was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70.

Did you know?

The Knights of Saint John, who ruled Malta between 1530 and 1798, were originally Knight Hospitallers. Their mission was to provide care for poor, sick or injured pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land.

Work on this!

Listen attentively to your teacher's instructions on how to surf the net for pictures and information about the places of pilgrimage for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Good is With us



m any events in the Bible together form what is known as "Salvation History". When God created human beings, he created them in his image and likeness. Thus, human beings are all called to live in an intimate relationship with God. The opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, tell us that God would walk in the garden with Adam and Eve. These words are a sign of the intimate relationship that was to be between all human beings and God.

Even though our first parents chose to ignore God and do things their way, God was ready to give them another chance. He made a plan that, when fulfilled, would make it possible for people to enter into a new and everlasting relationship with God.

When God called Abram, he told him to leave his country and go to a land that he would show him. He obeyed God. Both Abram and his wife Sarai were old and they had no children. He believed God when he told him that he would be the father of a great nation. He welcomed God in his life and he became known as 'Abraham', 'father of many nations.' Sarai became known as 'Sarah'; from 'my princess' she became known as 'the princess.' Isaac was born and God's promise to Abraham began to be fulfilled.

Isaac had Jacob, who had twelve sons, among them Joseph who had been sold by his brothers. He ended up in Egypt. In spite of all the difficulties he came across in this country, Joseph realized that God was with him; he was never alone. Joseph became Pharaoh's right-hand man. When a famine that struck the region reached the land of Canaan, the land of Joseph's birth, his father Jacob and the rest of the family emigrated to Egypt where they were well received. Once again, they experienced God's great love for them as he guided them on their life-journey.



Many years passed and a new pharaoh feared that the Israelites had grown too big. They could be a threat to Egypt. So he enslaved them and made them work very hard. Once again, God showed that he was with the Israelites. He sent Moses to free them from their Egyptian slave-drivers.

The Israelites' journey with God continued during the years they spent travelling in the desert. God gave them food and water, and above all, he entered into a special covenant with them. He was to be their God and they his people. God was also with them when they entered the Promised Land. He sent them people like Samson and Deborah who became known as the Judges.



After a time, the Jewish people wanted a king. God, through the prophet Samuel, anointed Saul king. However, he was not loyal to God and David was chosen king. God sent his prophets, men like Nathan during David's reign, to advise the kings and the people and to warn them and correct their behaviour when they strayed away from him.



Even when the nation was conquered by the Assyrians and the Babylonians, God had not forgotten them. He guided them so that the bitter experience of the exile became, for them, an opportunity for growth. They came to know God and his plan for humankind better.

God's journey with the people of Israel reached its climax when the promises he had made to Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets were fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of God who became man and gave his life for us. Through his resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit, every person, without distinction of any kind, can become one with God, our Creator.



The pilgrima

A pilgrim saint

Look carefully at the statue of Saint Roch. Which symbols help you to identify the saint? What has he got attached to his clothes? Why it is there? What does he have in his hands?



Santiago de Compostela

After the Holy Land, the birthplace of Jesus, and Rome, the seat of the Pope, the place that through the centuries was most famous for Christian pilgrimages is Santiago de Compostela in Spain. According to tradition, the remains of the Apostle James the Great, the first martyr among the apostles, are preserved there. In fact, pilgrims from all over Europe, used to and still travel along what is known as the Way of Saint James, or El Camino de Santiago, and walk towards Santiago de Compostela.

The Cathedral of St James in Compostela



age



The shell is an important marker of this pilgrimage. The grooves, which come together at a single point, represent the various routes pilgrims travel from across Europe to get to the tomb of Saint James. The shell is attached to the pilgrim's hat or outer garments as a sign that they are walking the way. The shell also had a practical purpose. It could have been used by a pilgrim as a scoop for water or as a small food dish - they would beg for as much food as the shell could hold. It also served as a spoon to eat.

Also linked to the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela is the pilgrim's staff. Generally, the staff has a hook on it so that the pilgrim could hang his belongings from it. Thus, Saint Roch the pilgrim saint, is also recognized from the shell that adorns his garments and the staff in his hands.

Today, thousands of people walk the way of Saint James. Some do this as an adventure or as a cultural experience. Many others, however, walk the way as a pilgrimage just as many Christians did in the past. As they walk they think of their life as a journey towards God and everlasting union with him in Heaven.



Abraham's adventure

**Abraham
narrates
his story**

I was born in Ur of the Chaldeans. My father named me Abram. In my youth, I married Sarai and we lived in Haran. We were wealthy but we never had any children. When my father died I felt God calling me. He told me to leave my homeland and go to a land he would show me. This was no easy decision. I had to leave the comfort and security of my home and go to a foreign land. But God promised that I would have many descendants, so many that they would become a great nation. Through me, all nations on earth would be blessed. To tell you the truth, I did not understand God, but I trusted him and let him guide me. So we set off and reached Canaan.

Life was not easy in Canaan. There were times when we suffered hunger and had to do without many things. The natives were not always very welcoming. God, however, remained close to me and, although everything seemed to suggest the opposite, he kept promising that I would have a son. My wife Sarai lost all hope of ever having a child, so she took things into her own hands. Following the custom of the time, she persuaded me to lie with her slave girl Hagar who became pregnant and gave birth to a son Ishmael. This, however, was not what God had planned. He was going to fulfil the promise he made to me in his own time.



The son of the promise was to be Sarai's son. So much so that God now called me 'Abraham', the father of many nations, and Sarai became 'Sarah', 'the princess'.

Once, as I was sitting at the entrance of my tent, three men came to visit. I welcomed them and looked after them. They told me that within a year my wife, Sarah, would have a son. Sarah could not believe what she was hearing and laughed. Although this seemed very unlikely even to me, I realized that this was a message from God. A year later, Sarah bore me a son, Isaac, which means 'laughter', for God brought laughter into our lives.

But more was still to come. Some time later, God tested me and told me to offer my son Isaac as a sacrifice. Again, I did not understand. How could it be possible, that the God who gave me Isaac, the apple of my eye and the son of the promise, was now asking me to kill him?

In all of this, I believed that God, who always accompanied me in my journey through life, had a plan. I trusted him and took Isaac to the place God instructed. But just as I

Name: Abram/
Abraham

Place of birth: Ur

Status: Married
(to Sarai/Sarah)

Children: Isaac
and Ishmael

Main characteristics:
Always
trusted in
God even
when things
weren't
going well.

picked up the knife to kill my son, an angel of the Lord stopped me. And so, my conviction that God was always with me grew stronger. He renewed his promise that my descendants would be a blessing for all nations.

You can read more about my adventure in Genesis 11, 27 – 25, 11.

Did you know?

Abraham has a very important place in three major religions of the world: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The Jews look to Abraham as the founding father of the Jewish people through his son Isaac. We Christians believe that God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would be a blessing for all nations was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Muslims see Abraham as a prophet of Islam. Some believe that he is the ancestor of the prophet Muhammad through his son Ishmael.

Delve deeper

In the time of Abraham it was not uncommon practice in pagan societies to offer human beings as a sacrifice to please the gods. Many Jewish scholars maintain that when God stopped Abraham from offering Isaac as a sacrifice, he was showing that human sacrifice is not pleasing to him.

Ruth's adventure

Ruth
narrates
her story

I was born in the land of Moab, today part of Jordan. I fell in love with a young man from Bethlehem of Judah named Chilion. His family emigrated to Moab because of a famine in their country.

I did not know his father. He died some time before I met Chilion. We got engaged and were married. For ten years we were happy together. We longed for children but never had any. Then Chilion grew ill and he died soon after. His brother Mahlon, also became sick and like my husband, died at a young age. His wife Orpah and I were now both widows and childless.

Noami, my mother-in-law, wanted to return to Bethlehem. She loved us both as though we were her own children. She wanted us to return to our parents' home in the hope that we would make a new future for ourselves there. She insisted that we stay on in Moab. Orpah finally gave in, but I could not leave her alone. I loved her as I loved my own dear mother, and while my mother had my father and my brothers and sisters, Noami was all alone.

How could I leave her behind? After all, Noami was the only person with whom I could share my faith in

The choice is yours

(Continues from page 89)

You went for more singing lessons and after a while you participated in a national festival for junior singers. You did so well that you were placed among the first three. Since your appearance on television you have had many offers from the people in the music industry who want to help you to develop your talent further. A bright future lies ahead.

THE END



Did you know?

According to the Law of Moses, when Jews harvest the grain, or pick olives or grapes, they were required to leave what fell, or forgot to gather up. In this way, the poor, foreigners, orphans and widows in particular, could find something to eat.

God, in the one true God I came to know through my husband Chilion.

So I left my homeland and together we travelled to her country. I firmly believed that this was what God wanted from me.

When we got to Bethlehem, carrying our few possessions, I asked Naomi if I could gather the grain harvest

workers left behind. I felt privileged when the owner of the field singled me out and gave me permission to gather as much grain as I wanted. From the way he addressed me I sensed that he was a man of great faith in God. Boaz, as was his name, even allowed me to eat with the other female servants who worked in the field.

Soon I realized that it was really God who was showing me the way.

It was evident to all that Boaz was attracted to me. Shortly after, we were married and had a son, Obed. Today, I know that my son was to be King David's grandfather, from whose descendants the Messiah was to be born.

You can find out more about the adventure of my life by reading the Book of Ruth in the Bible.



{ Cast }
RUTH <i>A Moabite woman</i>
MAHLON <i>Ruth's first husband</i>
CHILION <i>Mahlon's brother</i>
NAOMI <i>Chilion's and Mahlon's mother</i>
ORPAH <i>Chilion's wife</i>
BOAZ <i>Ruth's second husband</i>
DIRECTOR <i>God</i>

Jesus' journey

When Jesus was about thirty years old he travelled all over Galilee teaching and healing the sick.

before he was transfigured on the mountain, in front of Peter, James and John, Jesus had already spoken about his bitter passion and death upon the cross, and his resurrection on the third day. Soon after the Transfiguration "as the time drew near for him to be taken up, he resolutely turned his face towards Jerusalem" (Lk 9, 51).

This passage, from Luke, shows us clearly that at this point Jesus began his journey towards the place where he was to fulfil all he had come into the world to do: to sacrifice his life for our salvation and rise victorious over sin and death. Luke's account of Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem is about ten chapters long. It begins just after the Transfiguration and continues right up to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey.





Did you know?

The Samaritans still exist today. The majority of them live close to Mount Gerizim where their ancestors had once worshipped in a temple that rivalled the Temple in Jerusalem.

In Cana of Galilee Jesus performed his first miracle, where he changed water into wine.

When Jesus was about thirty years old he went out to preach and cure people in the towns and cities of Galilee, among these we can mention Capernaum. It was here that Jesus chose his first apostles – Peter, Andrew, James and John.

This is where Jesus was brought up and lived for the greater part of his life with Mary and Joseph.

Most probably it was in this location that the Transfiguration of Jesus took place. His last journey to Jerusalem also started here.

In Nain, Jesus brought a widow's son back to life.

In one of the villages of Samaria, the people heard that Jesus was going on to Jerusalem and did not welcome him. Shortly after, however, Jesus relates the parable of the Good Samaritan. He uses a Samaritan as model of how one should love his neighbour.

We may think of Jesus' life as a journey, not in the ordinary sense of travelling from place to place. It was above all, a spiritual journey. With every step he took, Jesus knew that he was closer to fulfilling his Father's will, and that this would demand great hardship to the extent of giving up his own life.

Are you ready to walk along the path that God shows you even if this may mean suffering and hardship, for the sake of doing what is right?

On his way to Jericho, Jesus cured a man born blind. When he entered the town, he saw Zacchaeus in the tree and invited himself to his house.

We know that before he went to Jerusalem, Jesus visited his friends Martha and Mary, Lazarus' sisters, who lived in Bethany.

Like many other Jews, Jesus often went to Jerusalem for the major Jewish feasts and festivals. On his last journey to Jerusalem, Jesus knew that he was going there to accomplish his mission – to die and to rise again victorious, for our salvation.

Where Jesus was born.

The choice is yours

(Continues from page 126)

You studied hard and did so well that your parents have given you permission to attend more training sessions. You are very happy now because you are doing well both in school and in sports.

THE END



Mary's adventure

In his gospel, Saint Luke gives a detailed account about Mary, especially in those passages where he narrates the events in the early life of Jesus. Here we imagine Luke interviewing Mary.



Luke: When did your adventure, as the Mother of the Messiah, begin?

Mary: I was engaged to Joseph when the angel of the Lord appeared to me. He greeted me and called me "full of grace". I was very confused and wondered what his words could mean.

Luke: And ...?

Mary: Then he told me that I will give birth to a son and I will name him Jesus. He was to be called the Son of the Most High God and his kingdom would last forever. I became even more confused. Enough to say, how could I bear a son if I wasn't even married?

Luke: Rightly so! And what did the angel reply?

Mary: He told me that the Holy Spirit would come upon me. I was still puzzled but I felt that this was God's will and said, "Let it happen to me as you have said."

Luke: Which events have left the greatest mark on you, as his mother?

Mary: Just like every mother, I

will never forget the day Jesus was born. We had no choice but to go to Bethlehem for a census. While we were there, the time came to give birth. There was no room in the inn and my son was born in a stable. I was very upset that the only place to lay my baby was a manger, but I understood that this too formed part of God's plan of salvation. Shortly after, some shepherds came to visit. The angels had announced the birth of Jesus and they came to worship him.

Luke: From the start, your adventure was not trouble free.

Mary: That's right! In fact, when we went to present him in the Temple, the prophet Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce my soul. By this he meant that I would experience great suffering on account of my son. I will never forget how worried I was when Jesus, who was twelve years old, stayed behind in the Temple. We went to Jerusalem for the feast of



Did you know?

According to the Law of Moses, every first born Jewish son was to be presented to the Lord. The infant's parents went to the Temple for the ceremony and offered their son to God thus recognizing that he belongs to him. They would sacrifice a lamb in exchange for their son. Poor people, like Mary and Joseph, offered instead a pair of doves or two young pigeons.

the Passover and when we could not find him, we thought he was lost. But I don't want you to think that my life was all suffering and hardship. I cannot describe the happy times we shared as Jesus was growing up. He was a fine boy and knew how to love. He was attentive to my every need and always obedient.

Luke: And when he grew up?

Mary: When he grew up he lived at home until he was thirty years old. Then he left to do what God, his heavenly Father, sent him to do. Up to a certain extent, he was no longer mine; now he belonged to all people.

Once I went to look for him. They told him about me, but he did not come immediately. He said that, his mother, his brothers and his sisters are those who listen to God's word and put it into practice. This wasn't an easy moment for me, but one thing is definite, Jesus helped me understand better how greatly God had blessed me. Jesus was not only my son, he was God's gift to all of humankind.

Luke: What do you remember about the last few hours in the life of Jesus?

Mary: I was there, near him at the foot of the cross. Had you asked me then, I don't know how I would have replied ... I was heart-broken ... But my sufferings did not last long. Jesus was risen, victorious over death. Now I praise God always for the great things he has done to me. I never imagined what was to happen to me when I said yes to the adventure God had planned for me!

Look it up

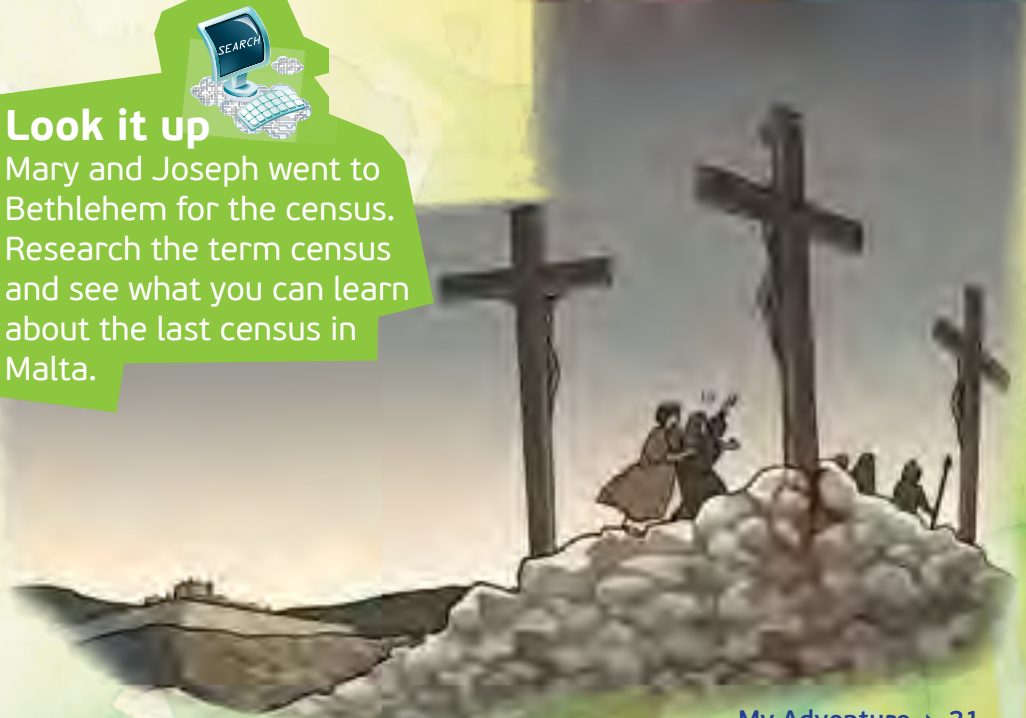
Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem for the census. Research the term census and see what you can learn about the last census in Malta.

From the Gospel according to Luke

My soul proclaims
the greatness of the Lord
And my spirit rejoices in God
my Saviour
Because he has looked upon
the humiliation of his servant.
Yes, from now onwards all
generations will call me blessed,
For the Almighty has done
great things for me. Holy is his
name.

(Lk 1, 46-49)

Look up this passage to find out where and with whom Mary was when she uttered these words.



Paul's adventure

Saint Luke also wrote the Acts of the Apostles, a book which describes the beginning of the Church. He wrote especially about the work of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Here, we imagine Luke interviewing Paul about the most important events in his life.

Luke: What can you tell me about yourself before you discovered Jesus?

Paul: I am a Roman citizen, born in Tarsus, today a town in Turkey. As a young man, I studied in Jerusalem, with Gamaliel, the best Jewish teacher of the time. My greatest desire was to be a true Pharisee full of zeal for God's Law.

Luke: Wasn't it in Jerusalem that you first heard about Jesus?

Paul: Yes. The Jewish leaders were alarmed because soon after Jesus was crucified, his disciples boldly went out to proclaim that he was risen from the dead. Many Jews followed them. I was angry, full of hatred for those who were threatening the Jewish faith. When they stoned a certain man

named Stephen, one of their disciples, I was there holding their cloaks.

Luke: And then what happened? I have often heard you say that you hunted down the Christians and had them sent to jail.

Paul: That's right. I even got permission to go and search for them in the city of Damascus where many of them went in order to escape from us. It was just



as I was on my way to that city that I met Jesus. I saw a light from heaven and fell to the ground. I heard a voice telling me that he was Jesus of Nazareth whom I was persecuting. He told me to get up and go to Damascus where I would be told what to do. The bright light had blinded me and my friends led me to Damascus.

Luke: And for how long were you blind?

Paul: I didn't see, eat or even drink for three whole days. Then a man named Ananias, who was sent by God, came and restored my sight. He baptized me. Now I belonged to Jesus and gave myself over to him, body and soul to preach the Good News of Christ's salvation to all people. My conversion changed my life journey forever. God had always been in the first place in my life, but I realized how little I truly knew him before I met Jesus. Now that I have found Jesus, I understand that God's love does not

depend on how much you love him or how much you obey his Law. God had loved me long before I got to know him and before I could do anything to deserve his love. More so, he even loved me while I was persecuting his Church.

Luke: I know that apart from this spiritual journey, you went on various journeys, travelling from one country to another and from one town to the next.

Paul: That's right. I can say that my life became one long journey. I visited as many places as I could. Sometimes my programme was planned, at other times it was not. As you know, on my last journey to Rome, we had no intention of stopping on the island Malta. But that is what happened ... It was God's will that we would be shipwrecked on the island. My life, you can say, was one long adventure. One day I am in one place but I had no idea where I will be on the next. Sometimes, I spent several months in one place; at other times they threw me out immediately. I cannot count the number of times I was imprisoned, beaten, stoned, or about to be drowned during this journey. But I have no regrets! Jesus has given me great joy and peace in my heart. He has filled me with great courage; with him at my side, of whom should I be afraid?

Delve deeper

Saint Paul, like Jesus, was a Jew. Many of the first Christians were also Jews. But the majority of the Jews at that time did not believe in Jesus. These saw fellow Jews who converted to Christianity as a sect that betrayed the religion of their fathers. Christians, on the other hand, were convinced that in Jesus all the promises of the Old Testament were fulfilled and that they were doing the right thing. Today, we realize that while the many differences between Christians and Jews cannot be ignored, many beliefs are held in common. For this reason, the Church teaches us to respect the Jews and to think of them as the older brothers in the faith.

Luke: And now?

Paul: Now I am here, in Rome, under house arrest. I cannot go wherever I want. But that's ok! Many people come to see me here. I continue to teach people by writing letters to the different communities I founded on my journeys. The Lord, who guided me along the way, will lead me to the end. Now my time to go has come. I feel like that athlete who is about to reach his goal.

Did you know this?

Paul was originally a Pharisee. The Pharisees were devoted to observing the Jewish Law. They kept aloof from the people they considered unclean. Among these we can mention, the Romans (as they were pagans), the publicans (because they collected taxes for the Romans) and sinners (for they broke the Law when they sinned).



... and my journey?



Live it!

Do you want to strengthen and deepen your relationship with God along your life journey? Then start keeping a journal and write in it what has happened to you during the day and how you felt about it. Talk to God about all this. Keeping a journal is one way you can learn to trust God with your journey through life.

as in the times of the biblical characters referred to in this chapter, today many people also choose to walk their life journey with God. Others however, think only of material possessions and just want to have fun here and now. They do not even stop to think about their own life, let alone about God's place in their life journey. What about you?

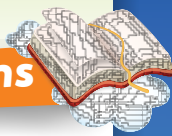
God is always ready to accompany you on your life journey, but the decision, as to whether or not you are going to let him into your life, is yours. Your choice is very important. As we saw in the second lesson, every decision has serious consequences. Have you ever stopped to think of the effects of choosing God? What will happen if you choose to let him accompany you on your life journey? What will happen if you choose to put him aside?



Work on this!

Write a letter, or send an email, or write a poem to God. Tell him how you feel about his offer to accompany and guide you on your life journey.





The Lord is my shepherd,
I lack nothing.
In grassy meadows
he lets me lie.

By tranquil streams
he leads me
to restore my spirit.
He guides me in paths of saving
justice as befits his name.
Even were I to walk in a ravine
as dark as death I should fear no
danger, for you are at my
side. Your staff and your crook
are there to soothe me.

You prepare a table for me
under the eyes of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my
cup brims over.

Kindness and faithful love
pursue me every day of life.
I make my home
in the house of the Lord
for all time to come.

(Psalm 23)

Did you know?



The Middle East,
where most of the
Bible was written, is a
land characterised by dry
climate and desert land.
In such a place, "grassy
meadows" and "tranquil
streams" represent
an ideal life of great
bounty and happiness.
In Psalm 23, God is thus
acknowledged as the
source of true bliss.

Footprints in the Sand

One night I dreamt I saw my life
journey on a big, sandy beach.
In each scene I noticed two sets of
footprints in the sand.
I noted that they were my
footprints and the Lord's footprints.

But as I moved from one scene to
the next, I noticed that in some
scenes there was only one set of
footprints. I was amazed when I
realized that these were the most
trying periods of my life. I asked
myself, how could the Lord leave
me alone just when I needed him

most? I plucked up courage and
asked him: "Why is it that when my
life journey was most difficult and
dangerous there was only one set
of footprints in the sand?"

The Lord looked at me and said,
"My child, I love you too much to
leave you alone during the difficult
moments in your life. If you look
carefully at the sand, you will see
that those are not your footprints
but mine. When you could not walk
alone, I carried you."

**Do you believe that,
if you allow him,
God is willing to
accompany you on
your life journey?**

**Do you believe he is
ready to carry you
during your most
difficult times?**



My Journey

Review

A Key words

Briefly explain the following terms:

- ▶ Pilgrimage
- ▶ Salvation History

B Main ideas

Write a paragraph about the following:

- ▶ Explain why we can think of our life as a journey.
- ▶ Explain carefully why it is important to make the right choices in our everyday life.
- ▶ Write about the importance of pilgrimages in the different religions.
- ▶ Choose a character or a period in Salvation History to show God's presence among his people.

C Stop and think

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

- ▶ How is God journeying with people today as he walked with his people throughout Salvation History?
- ▶ From what you have learnt about a biblical character in this chapter, what qualities may encourage you to let God guide you in your life journey?

D Family discussion

Discuss the following with members of the family:

- ▶ How much space do we give God in our daily lives? Do we pray together? Do we think about what God wants before we decide on something that affects the family?



PREPARE YOURSELF:

Have you ever asked yourself what is most important for us human beings?

What makes us really happy?

Why were we created?

Tick ✓ the words you are familiar with:

- ☐ fulfilment
- ☐ image
- ☐ Pentecost
- ☐ the Holy Spirit
- ☐ temple
- ☐ Baptism
- ☐ Confirmation
- ☐ hero

The power within



In this chapter we shall reflect on what makes human beings fulfilled. We shall discuss the calling in the heart of every person, to be one with God, the Creator. We shall see that this intimacy is possible only if we are truly living as temples of the Holy Spirit.

The power within





In search of fulfilment

We begin by taking a look at what, in our search for fulfilment, we believe we need to be really happy.

What about God?

We then see what God's Word in the Bible teaches us about our identity and about that which truly fulfils us.

Confusion vs Harmony

After this, we have the opportunity to reflect on the consequences of choosing either to allow God to work in us or to leave him out of all our decisions.

Temples of the Holy Spirit

In this lesson we look at the role of the Holy Spirit in our life; in us who in Baptism have become temples of the Holy Spirit.

The Power of Confirmation

Confirmation or Chrismation is the next step we take on our journey as Christians. In this lesson, we reflect on what this sacrament means in our life.

From the life of Saint George Preca

We then look at the fruits of the Holy Spirit as seen in the life and the work of Saint George Preca. The Holy Spirit gave him the strength to overcome all problems.

Real Heroes

At the end of this chapter, we consider the works accomplished by various Christians who were strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Thus, we will be able to conclude who the true heroes of history really are.



In search of fulfillment

did you ever get stuck whilst playing a game on the computer? You know there is something you should do to move on in the game but you have no idea what this might be. You have to ask a friend who knows the game well and is on a higher level than you. You could also look for the game walkthrough on the web to find out what you should do next.

The same applies in our daily lives. It can happen that all is well in our life when suddenly we have a problem ... as if we get stuck, we are stuck and we do not know what to do or what to choose. Even here, just like in the game, we require assistance. We need to ask an older person who is more experienced, or perhaps a friend who had the same problem.

No person on earth knows all there is to know about everything. Moreover, no one person is self-sufficient. We all have our limitations. Even the most intelligent person on earth needs other people to help him live a comfortable and enjoyable life. No matter how wise he is, he does not know how to do everything, and even if he did, he wouldn't have the time to do it all alone.

Read the following facts about a person who wanted to be happy and content:

He inherited a large sum of money from his parents who died when he was still very young. As a young man he tried to buy happiness but without much success.

He liked to drink and to eat well and sought happiness by having fun with friends. But he did not find it there either.

He had a girl friend called Mimi. He lived with her without being married to her. Still he felt that his life had no meaning.

He looked for success in a military career but was suspended because of his relationship with Mimi. Shortly after being reinstated, he resigned of his own free will.

He became an explorer and looked for happiness in work and adventure. But even then he was not content.

If you want to know who this person was and whether he did eventually find that peace and happiness he was searching for, move on to the next lesson.

Besides all this, it is very common that a person feels that to be really happy he needs something, but he does not know what that something is. He may argue that he will be happy if he acquires some beautiful object, one he has long been after. Or he may imagine that what he needs is to make friends with a person he admires or is attracted to.

Have you ever felt like this? Did you ever long for something - a new computer, some designer clothes - and felt that if you get it, you will be up in the highest heaven? Or, have you ever thought that if you make friends with a particular person you would be so happy that you would never be miserable again? But what actually happened when the computer was bought, or when the clothes were hanging in your wardrobe, or when

you made friends with that person you admired? At first, you were happy, but it was not long before life became routine again. You may have even started to dream of buying something else or of having different friends who would make you happier.

Experience shows us that human beings are always searching for true happiness and are never really satisfied until they find it. But can we ever find that which makes us really happy? Or is this just a dream, a figment of the imagination? Besides, does God feature in our search for fulfilment?



The choice is yours

(Continues from page 7)

You have an aptitude for singing. You heard that two of your classmates attended lessons in another village. Would you join them?

Yes turn to page 89

No turn to page 105



Delve deeper

Have you ever noticed that most advertisements of clocks and watches show the time at ten past ten? Why is this? One of the reasons is that in this position, the clock or watch seems to be smiling, much like a smiley face. This suggests to the viewers, "buy me and you'll be happy." All advertisements try to convince people that they need the particular object being advertised to be happy. While advertisements serve an important role, namely to inform consumers about the new products on the market, and thus offer them a greater choice, we should not be gullible and believe all they try to sell. We must think carefully before we buy what is being advertised!

What about God?

as we noted in the previous lesson, no person is an island; we always need people to help us. We also saw how people are always searching for that which makes them really happy. Do you think God has a say in this search for happiness?

The first book of the Bible, the Book of Genesis tells two stories whose aim is to teach us about the creation of humankind and of the world around us. The two narratives are very different both in their literary genre and in the story they tell, but they both teach us the same truths about God and human beings. Both emphasize the truth that God alone created everything and that all God's creation is good. They teach us that human beings

were created by God to be with God. The first story tells us clearly that "God created man in the image of himself, on his image God created him, male and female he created them" (Gen 1, 27). The message of the second story is the same, that "The Lord God shaped man from the soil of the ground and blew the breath of life into his nostrils, and man became a living being" (Gen 2, 7). God so loved human beings, that he made them special. He created them in his image, with his own breath in them. God, who is love, created us because he loves us, so that we too love as he loves.

It is for this reason then, that human beings feel the need to be with others. Humans were created first and foremost to be with God. This desire to be with God makes itself manifest in our search for friendship.

The same applies when we seek to be happy and content in life. In actual fact, what we are searching for is God himself. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, "Only in God will man find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for" (CCC 27).

The existence of so many different religions in all parts of the world, throughout the story of humankind, confirms this strong desire for God. This is why people strive to learn more about God and the kind of relationship they should have with him. When prehistoric people in Malta built the megalithic temples thousands of years ago, they too were expressing their desire for God and their need to communicate with him.



Work on this!

Research about the prehistoric temples in Malta and Gozo. List five temples and give the approximate date when each one was built. Draw the outline of one of these temples. Can you find a temple in Malta that was built to mark the beginning of the four seasons?



Pray

Be still and think of the words of Saint Augustine of Hippo. Repeat the following words ten times, pausing briefly between each time. Share your feelings with God.

“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”



Did you know?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church was first published in 1992. It is a compendium of Church teachings on God and on how to look for him, find him and befriend him.



Confusion vs Harmony

The story of the Tower of Babel

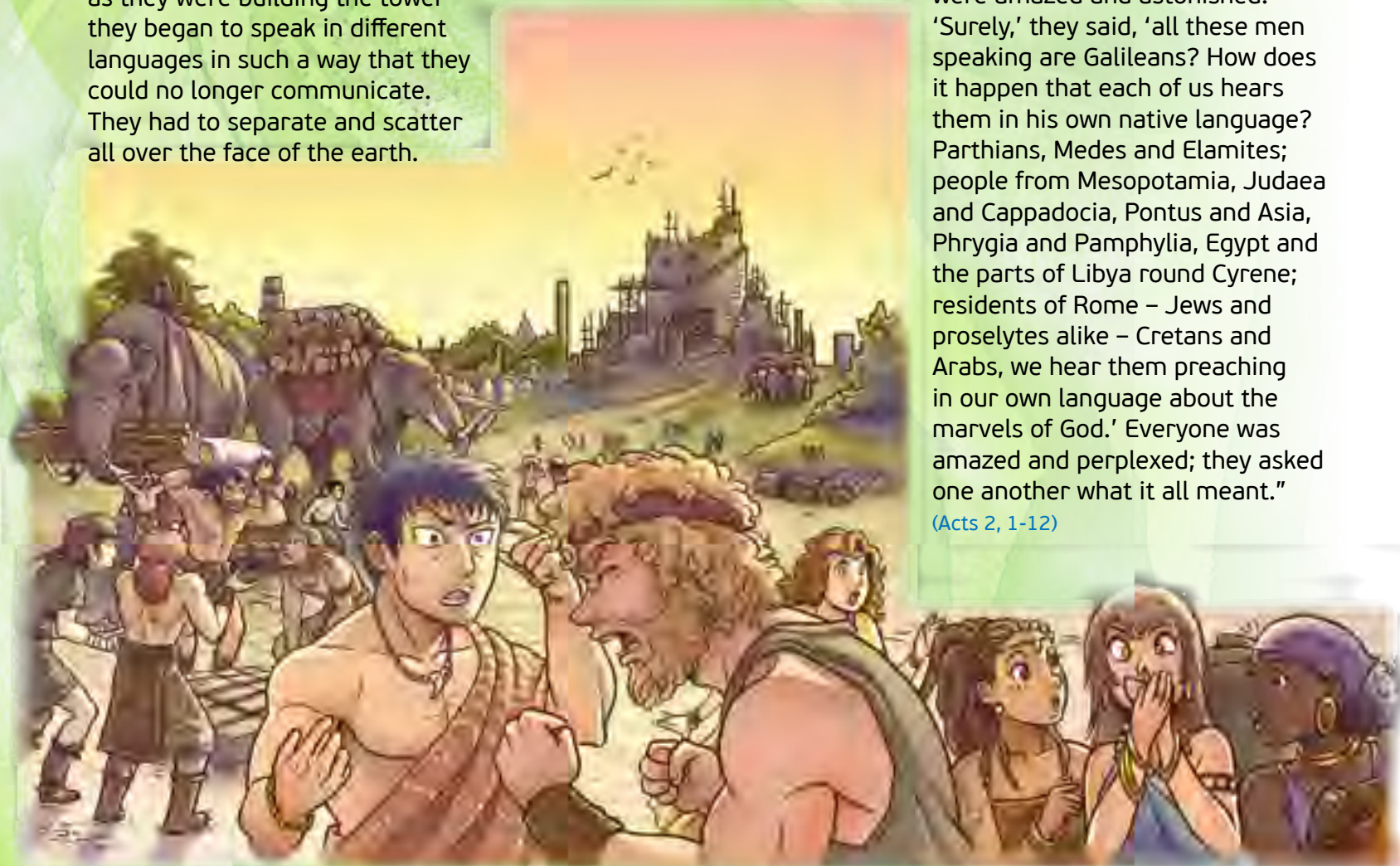
In the Book of Genesis there is a story known as the Tower of Babel. It tells of a group of people who decided to build a tower that reaches to the sky. By this they meant that they could accomplish anything they set out to do. They wanted to show that they did not need God in their life. However, as they were building the tower they began to speak in different languages in such a way that they could no longer communicate. They had to separate and scatter all over the face of the earth.

The story of Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles

"When Pentecost day came round, they had all met together, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a violent wind which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and there appeared to them tongues as of fire; these separated and came to

rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves. Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled, and each one was bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language. They were amazed and astonished. 'Surely,' they said, 'all these men speaking are Galileans? How does it happen that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; residents of Rome – Jews and proselytes alike – Cretans and Arabs, we hear them preaching in our own language about the marvels of God.' Everyone was amazed and perplexed; they asked one another what it all meant."

(Acts 2, 1-12)





Did you know?

The Feast of Pentecost is for the Jews a renewal of the Covenant God made with their ancestors, through Moses on Mount Sinai. They relive the occasion when God gave them his Law. A custom that still exists today among Jews is to spend the night before this big feast reading and studying God's Law.

Babel and Jerusalem

Look carefully at the passage from the Acts of the Apostles and compare it to the story of the Tower of Babel. In what way are the stories similar? In what way are they different?

The people in the story of the Tower of Babel try to take God's place. Although the details of the story, such as when they started talking in different languages and their spreading all over the world, are not historical facts, the moral of the story is true.

The truth the author wants to convey is that when human beings put God aside they lose the ability to communicate with other people.

On the other hand, the Pentecost story shows us that with the

descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples they could communicate with people who spoke different languages. When people welcome God and allow him to work in their life they are given strength to enter into a relationship with others and together build a new community. This is what happened on Pentecost when about three thousand people joined the disciples.

Pentecost Sunday was therefore, the opposite of the Tower of Babel. In order to communicate amongst ourselves and to live in peace and harmony with other people, we must first of all, allow God to live in us.



The Holy Spirit in my life

Who is the Holy Spirit?

What place does he have in your life?



In the Creed we recite during Mass on Sunday, we profess our belief “in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life.”

The Holy Spirit is the presence of God in you. Just like breath is necessary to live in this world, so also the Holy Spirit is needed to help you live as a child of God. Often you are not aware you are breathing because it is so basic to life. Similarly, perhaps you have not often stopped to think of the breath of God in you, to think of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life.

On the day you were baptized, you received the Holy Spirit for the first time. He came to live in you and you became a temple of the Holy Spirit, a house of God.

Have you ever stopped to ask why so many of our churches are so beautifully decorated? Our ancestors wanted the best for the

house of God. Also today, we continue in the tradition of our fore parents and look after the church because it is a temple of God. But if we look after the church building, how much more then should we look after our body in which God himself lives! Again, if we show respect when we enter a church, how much more respect should we have towards ourselves and other people who are also a temple of God!



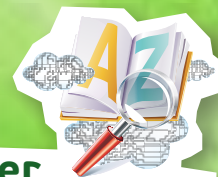
What difference does the Holy Spirit make in you?

The Holy Spirit gives you an indelible mark; one that cannot be removed. He makes you Christ-like; he makes of you another Christ.

He is the one who, in your everyday life, reminds you of Christ and gives you strength to follow his

teachings. He also teaches you to talk with God the Father through prayer, just as Jesus did when he was here on earth. Above all, the Holy Spirit gives you the courage to be a true disciple of Christ.

The Holy Spirit also calls you to use his gifts to build the Church community.



Delve deeper

Water is the main symbol used in Baptism. Just as we grew in our mother's womb surrounded by water before we were physically born, so too, in the baptismal waters, the Holy Spirit gives us new life spiritually.



Did you know?

Usually a bishop, a priest or a deacon administers the Sacrament of Baptism, but in an emergency any person can baptise. The baptism takes place when, with the right intention, the words of the Trinitarian formula are pronounced, "[Name] I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," as water is poured over the baby's head three times.

The choice is yours

(Continues from page 126)

You refused to listen and did not care about school. By the end of the school year you did not achieve the required standards, not because you were not capable, but because you did not take your studies seriously. Now your parents must decide whether you should repeat the year.

THE END



Live it!

When you are not sure if what you are about to do or say is right or wrong, ask yourself "Does it suit me, as a temple of the Holy Spirit, to say or do this thing?"

the seven gifts OF THE HO

What are these gifts?

What changes do they bring about in my life?



WISDOM

Wisdom is the gift that *enables us to recognise the work of God in and around us.*

Wisdom enables all people, even someone who has never been to school, to move closer to God and to see everything – joy and sorrow, happiness and sadness, success and failure – through God's eyes and to realize that everything that happens has purpose and meaning.

UNDERSTANDING

Understanding is the gift that *helps us comprehend how we should live as true disciples of Jesus.*

The person who has this gift stands firm when he encounters ideas that are contrary to the teachings of the Gospel.

HOLY SPIRIT



In Baptism we receive the Holy Spirit who gives us many special gifts that enable us to live God's plan for us, and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. In the Sacrament of Confirmation the Holy Spirit strengthens his gifts in us. The list of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is based on what we find in Isaiah 11, 1-3.

COUNSEL

The gift of counsel or right judgement helps us *to know the difference between right and wrong and to choose to do what is right.*

Counsel helps us make choices that lead us closer to God rather than away from God.

FORTITUDE

The gift of fortitude, also known as courage, helps us not to be afraid to take risks for Jesus and *to do what is good in God's eyes*, even if this means being ignored, labelled or hurt in some way or other.

KNOWLEDGE

The gift of knowledge does not mean information, such as the scientific facts we learn in school. This gift helps us *understand better who God is* so that we do not give importance that is due to him to other people or to material possessions.

PIETY

The gift of piety, sometimes called reverence, *gives us a deep sense of respect for God.* Piety helps us look to God as our Father who loves us and to one another as children of the same Father. This gift helps us to do what is right willingly and out of love.

FEAR OF THE LORD

The gift of fear of the Lord *makes us aware of God's greatness and power.* Fear of the Lord does not mean that we are afraid of him, but rather that we are careful not to ruin the relationship we have with him. We fear not loving him as we should, as we do not want to be separated from him.

The power of Confirmation

among the seven sacraments, three are called the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. These are Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. Just as in life we were born, we are growing and we need food to remain strong, so to in our life as Christians we were born spiritually through Baptism, strengthened to grow as followers of Christ in Confirmation, and nourished spiritually on the Eucharist, the bread of everlasting life.

The word 'confirmation' explains what happens through the sacrament that bears this name. The Holy Spirit confirms and strengthens his presence in us. He

gives us strength which enables us to grow as Christians and makes our relationship with the Church more complete. The Holy Spirit also helps us to become more committed in our mission to witness Christ wherever we are, both in words and in deeds. He helps us, for example, to say no when we are tempted to do something we know is bad. He gives us courage to help needy people. In the Sacrament of Confirmation we too confirm our commitment as Christians. Now we ourselves freely confirm the decision, made by our parents on our behalf when we were infants to witness Christ always.

The other name for this sacrament, 'Chrismation' used in some countries such as Malta (*Griżma tal-Isqof*)

also helps us understand what takes place here. It comes from the Greek word which means anointing and refers to the anointing with oil that takes place when a person is chosen to carry out a special mission. In fact, the Sacrament of Confirmation is given through the anointing with oil of chrism on the forehead and the laying on of hands, as the bishop pronounces the words, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." In this way, the Holy Spirit unites us more closely with Christ, the Anointed One of God, the Chosen One.

To understand better the gift the Holy Spirit gives us in the Sacrament of Confirmation, we now look at some symbols associated with the third person of the Holy Trinity:

Did you know?

The oil used in the Sacrament of Confirmation for the whole diocese, is consecrated by the bishop on Maundy Thursday during the Chrism Mass.



WIND

When on Pentecost Sunday, the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles, there was a loud noise from the sky that sounded like a strong wind blowing. The same word 'spirit' translates the Hebrew word '*ruah*' (similar to *ruħ* in Maltese) which also means wind (*riħ* in Maltese). We cannot see the wind, but we can see its effects. In the same way, although we cannot see the Holy Spirit, we can see the effect of his work in us and in those around us.



FIRE

The Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire. Fire can change things. For example, think about baking – a cake that has been baked is completely different, both in texture and in taste, from the mixture that goes into the oven. The same thing happens when clay is baked; the pottery that comes out has different characteristics from the clay that was put into the oven. Fire also purifies precious metals such as gold and silver. In the same way the Holy Spirit cleanses us from our sins and our faults. He has the power to give us new characteristics and make us into better persons.



DOVE

During the baptism of Jesus, by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit came down upon him like a dove. The dove is a symbol of peace. As we read in the Book of Genesis, it was the dove that showed Noah that peace between God and humankind had been restored. The Holy Spirit is God within us who gives us true peace and the virtues we need to live in peace with one another.



Work on this!

Look up Saint Paul's teachings on the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5, 22-23. Which of these fruits shows that inner peace of the Holy Spirit? Which fruits are needed for us to live in peace and harmony with other people? Write a paragraph to describe what a person, filled with the Holy Spirit, would be like.



Live it!

During the coming week pay more attention to the needs of others and see how you can be of help to them. For example, if you see that your classmate has forgotten his lunch box, give him some of your own food. If an elderly person gets on the bus get up and give him your seat. If you see someone standing alone go up to speak to him and see if you can play together. Let the Holy Spirit make of you another Christ!

From the life of Saint George



Saint George Preca is the first Maltese to be canonised, that is, declared a saint by the Church. We are all familiar with the Society of Christian Doctrine he founded, made up of men and women who dedicate their lives to spreading the Gospel, and most especially to the formation of children and youths. However, few know that George went through some very difficult experiences in his life.

Did you ever feel hurt because your friends put you aside and did not want you to play or go out with them? As a young boy, George Preca, often experienced this same

situation. When the children tossed to get into groups for a game, they always left him for last. Worse still, when all the children were chosen, they would turn to the others and say, "You can take George for free!" Who knows how hurt he was when they said these things! George was even bullied by other children. Only God knows how he felt in those situations.

As he grew older George had health problems. When he was about to be ordained a priest he was very sick, so much so, that his doctor predicted that George would soon die. Some time later, however, George recovered, and

became a priest. It was not long before he continued his work with the group of youths that was to be the beginning of the Society, or as it is locally known, the MUSEUM. But soon other difficulties arose. Many people did not understand Fr George's work and criticized him in the papers. Even the leaders of the Church sent for him and ordered him to close all the centres he had opened. He, who had dedicated so much time and energy to the spreading of the Gospel message all over Malta, now faced all these difficulties. Who knows how you would have felt and what you would have done if you were in his shoes? Do you know what he did?



Fr George was always ready to forgive those who did not understand his work or criticized him in the papers. He told the members of the MUSEUM not to reply to any criticism against their society. Fr George bowed down to the leaders of the Church and was ready to obey them. He agreed to close all the centres he had

Preca



Did you know?

The acronym 'MUSEUM' represents the words *Magister Utinam Sequatur Evangelium Universus Mundus* which means "Master, may the whole world follow the Gospel." Saviour Muscat had come up with the name. He felt that Museum was appropriate for in it precious and valuable objects are kept and the teaching of the Gospel is very precious. Saint George then found a motto to match the letters of the word.



opened. This did not materialize, not because Fr George changed his mind or stood his ground, but because a number of parish priests spoke favourably about the good work being done by the MUSEUM.

What was it that kept Fr George strong in the faith and in the values he embraced during the most difficult moments of his life? What can also keep you determined to choose to do what is right?

It is very important to be surrounded by people who



help and encourage us – God loves us and sustains us through these people. For example, when George was seventeen years old, he found solace in the words his teacher of Italian and Latin, Fr Ercole Mompalao, told him: "Preca, when you grow up, people who revere God, will befriend you and you them. You will find your good fortune through them and they through you."

Above all, however, it is the Spirit of God that works in us and gives us the power we need to face and overcome even the most difficult of situations, both those which are of our own doing and those that come from other people. It was because Saint George was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit that he could restrain himself from replying to his critics. It was the power of God in him that helped him obey his superiors even to the extent of closing down all the teaching centres as he had been instructed to do.

Do you give the Holy Spirit a chance to work in you and change you into a person of great strength and courage; one capable of always choosing to do what is good?

Real Heroes

Who knows how many films you have watched, or books you have read, where the main character behaves in a way that singles him out as the hero of that story! Do you have a favourite hero? Which qualities make a person a hero?

The qualities that make a person a hero are courage in front of hardship and danger. Heroes in stories often find themselves in great difficulty. In spite of this however, they do not give up, rather they are ready to risk everything for the good of others.

In this lesson we look at the achievements of a number of men and women who were filled with the Spirit of God; deeds that make them the true heroes of history.

Saint Perpetua martyr

Perpetua was a young twenty-two year old woman. She came from a well-to-do family and was married to a man who had a top position in society. What more could a woman her age, living in Carthage in the year 203 A.D., want?

There was one thing Perpetua greatly desired - to be baptised and become Christian. Her mother and one of her brothers had been baptised some time before. She was a catechumen, that is, she was preparing to be baptised.

However, according to the decrees of the emperor of that time, no one in the Roman Empire could become Christian. Perpetua and four other catechumens, among them a woman named Felicity, were arrested. Soon, the catechist

who was preparing them for baptism chose to share their punishment. For some time they were kept under house arrest. It was during this time that Perpetua was baptised. Her father, who was pagan, did his utmost to get her to give up the Faith. Although Perpetua felt very sorry for him, she remained determined to follow Christ to the end. When they were taken to prison Perpetua shivered when she saw how ugly, dark and overcrowded it was. The soldiers treated them very badly.

The day came when Perpetua and her friends were taken to the procurator who asked them to offer sacrifices to the emperor. They refused and confessed that they were Christian. The sentence was tough: to be thrown into the arena with wild beasts. As

Perpetua herself writes, they went back to the prison full of joy.

The joy of these Christians while in prison and their courage, led one of the guards and some of the prisoners to convert. On March 7 they were taken down to the arena with wild animals. Though wounded, Perpetua did not die and was killed by the gladiator's sword.

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

Why do you think that the more Christians who died for the Faith, the greater the number of conversions?

What do you think gave people like Perpetua such power in front of suffering and death?

ST LAWRENCE

DEACON AND MARTYR

10 August 258 A.D.

In the fifth year of the reign of the Emperor Valerian.

The Christians in Rome have ended up once again, victims of a terrible persecution. For about a year they are no longer allowed to meet. Neither can they go and pray for their dead in the catacombs. Now, it has been declared that every bishop, priest and deacon of the Church is to be killed immediately. Christians who hold important positions are to be demoted and their property will be confiscated. If they still refuse to offer sacrifices to the Roman gods, they will be killed.

A few days ago, the leader of the Christians, Pope Sixtus II and six of his deacons were captured and killed by the emperor's soldiers. Lawrence, the last deacon was to die on the following day. Rumour has it that the Prefect of Rome heard that Lawrence had been responsible for the wealth of the Church and thus he ordered him to bring before him all its riches. Some thought this was a final opportunity for Lawrence to save himself. Lawrence gave the impression that he was going to cooperate with the Prefect and asked for three days grace.

But, from what we have heard, Lawrence quickly gave out as much as possible of the Church's wealth to the poor of the city. As was agreed, yesterday he appeared before the Prefect. When he was told to present the treasures of the Church, Lawrence presented him with the poor, the blind and the sick, for as he told the Prefect, they are the true treasures of the Church. No one ever dreamt that this deacon could be so courageous. In great anger, the Prefect condemned Lawrence to a slow, cruel death. Instead of being beheaded like his friends, later today, the saint will be tied on top of an iron grill over a slow fire.



Did you know?

The first deacons in the Church were chosen by the early Christian community and confirmed by the Apostles. They chose seven men, among them Saint Stephen, to help them in their work, especially among the needy people. This work of charity is still today, an important part of a deacon's work.

What was it that made Lawrence the hero of this story?

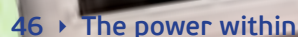
What gave Lawrence the power to be a real hero?

How did Lawrence benefit from the choices he made?

And what can we learn from him today?

Probably, however, the greatest threat to Christian values and

to fight against this form of evil. Saint Maximilian Kolbe was one of these. Like him, there were many others. We know, for instance, that imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp alone there were 2,579 Catholic priests; more than a thousand of them lost their lives in this place of suffering and death. We will now read about two of the many Christian heroes of World War II.



Irena Sendler

Irena was born in 1910. Early in 1944 her name was among the list of names of people who were killed by the Nazis in Poland. Irena, however, died in 2008 when she was 98 years old. Why was she to be killed? How did she escape death?

When the Nazis occupied Poland, Irena was a Catholic social worker, in the capital city Warsaw. Although she knew that anyone who, in any way, assisted the Jews would be killed, Irena worked very hard to help them: giving out food, finding refuge for them and providing them with false documents. When about 450,000 Jews were forced to live together in a restricted area, or ghetto, in Warsaw, Irena did her best to free as many people as she could. When she entered the ghetto, out of solidarity with the people, she wore the Star of David, the same star that the Nazis forced all Jews to wear for identification.

She knew what was awaiting the Jews in the concentration camps, so she did her utmost to persuade parents and grandparents to let her take the children. This was no easy task, and many did not want to part with their children. In all, Sendler freed and sought refuge for about 2,500 Jewish children. She smuggled them out of the ghetto in sacks, suitcases, boxes or even coffins. She would go in dressed as a nurse and take the children out who pretended to be sick. Then she placed them with generous Polish families, or in orphanages or in convents with nuns.

Irena's plan was to reunite the children with their families,



Scene from the movie *The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler*

when the war was over. She kept a record of the names of the children and the new names they were given. She hid these lists in jars and buried them in the soil.

Irena was eventually caught by the Nazis. She was tortured and threatened with death, but she never gave them any information as to the whereabouts of the Jewish children or of the friends who helped her. She was sentenced to death and it was only because a friend bribed the German guards that she was spared. She was found by her friends in the forest, unconscious, beaten, with broken hands and legs. From then on Irena went into hiding just like the many Jews she had saved.

After the war she wanted to reunite the children she had saved with their parents, however, almost all of the parents had been killed mainly at the Treblinka

extermination camp or had otherwise gone missing.

In 2003, Pope John Paul II wrote a personal letter to Irena Sendler praising her courageous work during the difficult times of the Second World War.





The power within

Review

A Key words

Briefly explain the following terms:

- ▶ Finding fulfilment
- ▶ Chrismation
- ▶ Confirmation

B Main ideas

Write a paragraph about the following:

- ▶ Explain why it is God who alone can make people really happy and fulfilled.
- ▶ Explain why at Babel there was confusion and lack of communication among the people, while on Pentecost there was communion and harmony.
- ▶ What do we mean when we say that Baptism makes us temples of the Holy Spirit?
- ▶ Choose one of the main symbols of the Holy Spirit and explain its significance in detail.

C Stop and think

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

- ▶ How could your life change if you really live as a temple of the Holy Spirit and respect other people in the same way?
- ▶ In which situation do you think you have most need for the strength of the Holy Spirit?
- ▶ The true hero is the one who is not afraid of evil and is ready to sacrifice himself for what he believes is right. Think about the evil that surrounds us. What can we do to overcome it?

D Family discussion

Discuss the following with members of the family:

- ▶ How much are we respecting one another and caring for each other as temples where God lives?



PREPARE YOURSELF:

Have you ever considered to what extent you are influenced by your friends and other people with whom you hang around?

Have you ever thought about the effect they have on your decisions?

Would you like to have a friend who will always help you make the right decisions?

Tick ✓ the words you are familiar with:

- ☐ friendship
- ☐ a positive influence
- ☐ a negative influence
- ☐ priorities
- ☐ disciple
- ☐ sinner
- ☐ conversion
- ☐ teacher
- ☐ parable
- ☐ witness

Choosing the way



In this chapter, we shall reflect on Jesus' offer to be our Way, our Truth and our Life. We shall discuss how his friendship helps us take decisions which will benefit us and other people around us.

Choosing the way





With whom do I hang around?

We start the chapter by discussing how we are influenced by the people with whom we spend our time. We reflect on how important it is for us to be careful with whom we form a relationship, if we have a choice in the matter.

Choosing my friends

Here we discuss how Jesus offers to be our true friend. We also consider if we want to reciprocate his friendship and why. We have to decide whether we want him to be a priority in our lives.

Jesus' disciples

In this lesson, we learn about Jesus' influence on his disciples. We do this by seeing the change in the life of Mary (Martha's sister) or that of Peter when they met Jesus and accepted him as their greatest friend.

Zacchaeus – a sinner who changed

We then consider the change which Jesus brought about in the life of Zacchaeus, who was a tax-collector and was thus considered a thief.

Jesus – the greatest teacher

Here we explore Jesus' greatness as a teacher, who always lived what he taught.

Young followers of Jesus

In this lesson, we see how, in our times, two thousand years after Jesus was present as a teacher in the world, there are still many people who choose to follow him as his disciples.

The way, the truth and the life

At the end of the chapter, we reflect on Jesus' words when he said that he is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We consider what this means in our life, if we too choose to be Jesus' disciples.



With whom do I hang out?

Shut your eyes for a few seconds and think. Who are the most important people in your life? Why are they important to you?

When you came into the world, your first contact was with your mother. You depended on her for

everything. Gradually, you started forming relationships with other people. We can say that, to a certain extent, you became what you are today because of the people you met. For example, you speak Maltese or English because

these were the languages these people used to talk to you.

Like all other people, you were created to live in a relationship with others. The people around you will definitely have an influence on the way you think,





Work on this!

Use a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = not at all; 5 = very much) to rate the extent to which you agree with these proverbs.

Tell me with whom you hang around and I will tell you what sort of person you are.

MALTESE PROVERB

A friend in need is a friend indeed.

LATIN PROVERB

A loyal friend is a powerful defence: whoever finds one has indeed found a treasure.

SIRACH 6,14

If you want to make a friend, take him on trial, and do not be in a hurry to trust him.

SIRACH 6,7

Hold a true friend with both your hands.

NIGERIAN PROVERB

on how you behave, on how you speak, on the clothes you wear, on the jokes you make and on so many other things.

A new method which many people are using in order to communicate with others is known as 'social networking', where the internet is used to get in touch with people who are not near you. However, these people still have an influence on your values and on your behaviour.

On your journey through life, you will meet many different people. In some cases, you are the one who chooses with whom you want to form relationships, but there are other instances where you have no choice, for example, in the case of the members of your family. However, you do choose your own friends, especially your very close friends. Hence, it is important to choose friends who will help you become a better person and make the right choices in life.



Did you know?

There are adults who use the internet to pretend they are children or young people, so that they can make friends with people your age. Never give personal information on the web, such as your address, telephone number or the name of the school you attend, without your parents' permission.

The choice is yours

(Continues from page 105)

You joined the choir and since they could see how talented you were, they asked you to sing a solo part. On the day of the Mass, you really enjoyed singing. Everyone congratulated you on the contribution you gave. Today, you have many lovely memories of that evening.

THE END



Choosing my friends

do you like listening to stories? What follows is an old story, but it has a beautiful message that will always remain relevant. There was a king who had many servants, and he wanted to choose one as his special friend. Therefore, he invited all his servants to go with him on a long journey. He

mounted a camel and placed two sacks on each side. In the sacks, he placed jewels and gold items. Then he made a small hole in each sack.

As he travelled, with the servants following him, the treasures started falling out of the sacks. However, the king simply rode on, without looking back. The servants started picking up the treasures that had fallen and ran off with them. After they had travelled for quite a distance and the sacks were empty, the king looked back and realised that there was only

one servant walking behind him. He turned to him and asked: "Why are you still walking behind me? Why haven't you left?" And the servant answered: "Because for me it is the king himself who is important, not the king's treasures."

How do you choose your friends?

Do you start off by seeing what you can get out of them?

Do you check whether they are popular, so that you, too, will have many friends?

Do you make sure they are strong so that they can stick up for you?





Two thousand years ago, many people followed Jesus because they were amazed at his teaching and the miracles he performed. Many went to him because they wanted something from him. Some people wanted him to perform a miracle. Some wanted advice to help them solve a problem. However, as in the case of the story we have just read, some followed him just because they wanted him. These were his disciples. Jesus called them his friends. He spent time with them; he loved them; he taught them; and he wanted them to continue spreading the Good News.

Jesus invites everyone to follow him. However, not everyone accepts his invitation to become his friend. In the Gospel, among the people who accepted his invitation we find Peter and Mary of Magdala. On the other hand, the rich young man is an example of someone who did not accept Jesus' offer of friendship. This

young man asked Jesus what he had to do to possess eternal life. He only wanted to obtain something, but he did not really care about Jesus. Jesus asked him to leave his wealth and follow him. However, the Bible tells us that he did not accept Jesus' invitation and left sadly.

What are you going to do? Are you going to choose the king's treasures, like many of the king's servants in the story? As in the case of the rich young man, do you simply want what Jesus can give you? Or will you act like the loyal servant and choose the king

as your friend, and thus be one of the true disciples of Jesus? If you choose Jesus as your friend, you will grow and develop and he will help you make the right choices in life.

If you choose Jesus as your friend, you will have a guide and also someone who will give you shelter in moments of difficulty. On the other hand, if you choose to travel alone through life, you cannot be assured of true happiness. You may become very rich, like the young man who went to speak to Jesus, but what is the point of this if you are unhappy?

Did you know?

At the time of Jesus, being a disciple meant being a student looking for a Rabbi, that is, a teacher, who would show you how you should be living. The disciple would live with the master and would serve him and listen to him, until he knew enough to become a teacher himself. However, Jesus did not want his disciples to venture alone after he had taught them. He wanted them to remain his friends forever.



Disciples of Jesus

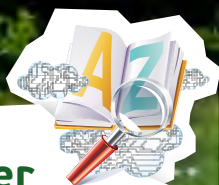
MARY, MARTHA'S SISTER, narrates:

I used to live in Bethany together with my brother, Lazarus, and my sister, Martha. Bethany is close to Jerusalem, and when Jesus travelled to Jerusalem with his apostles, he would often call at our house for a rest. He and everyone who was with him would also have something to eat. You can just imagine how crowded the place would be! My sister Martha would become panicky because she liked to prepare some really good food when they called. In

those days, there were no phones, and thus they could not tell us they were coming and we would simply find them at the door! Don't misunderstand me ... I could understand why my sister would become so anxious. However, I would be so happy to see Jesus that I would forget everything.

Jesus was my greatest friend. I would enjoy his presence so much, and I would simply sit at his feet and listen to him. In those days, only men could listen to a Rabbi in order to learn from him. However, Jesus never sent me away.





Delve deeper

As you read through Mary's experience, what makes you realize that Jesus had a very great influence over her life? How did she become a better and more beautiful person through her friendship with Jesus?



His words made so much sense and they really touched me. He used to speak about genuine love, the love of someone who is ready to give up his or her life for others. He spoke about forgiveness, even of our enemies, about humility, and about so many other things. I would keep quiet and listen; I preferred not to say anything at all, but just allow his words to fill my heart with joy. From one visit to the next, I would think about his words and try to live them in every choice I made.

Martha could not understand me. As far as she was concerned, it made no sense for me to listen to Jesus. She thought it was more important to prepare a meal for him and the apostles. On my part, I did consider this important, but I could not ignore the company of my greatest friend when he was at our house! But Martha found this so hard to understand that one day she badly lost her temper and she actually turned to Jesus and asked him to tell me to help her. I did not say a word because I was taken aback. However, I also chose to keep quiet because Jesus had taught me to try to accept other people. I kept calm and let Jesus do the talking. He turned to her and said: "Martha, Martha! You worry too much about so many things. However, only one

thing is necessary. It is Mary who has chosen best and it is not to be taken from her."

Jesus' words were full of love for me and my sister. He spoke very gently to my sister, but he could also appreciate that I needed to be near him. He shared my view! It makes no sense to worry about many things. The most important thing is to treasure Jesus' friendship, to find

the time to listen to him and to try and base your decisions on what he teaches. This is what being Jesus' disciple means: allowing Jesus to be your friend. Good friends are treasures because what they tell you is always for your own good and you will not be sorry you have listened to them. I have chosen Jesus as my greatest friend and no one can take away the happiness that comes from this friendship. Jesus is my treasure.

Is there a place for Jesus in your life?

Do you want to be a disciple of Jesus?

Do you want to spend time with him, listening as he speaks to you in your heart, guiding you in your decisions?

Do you want to find the same treasure in your life as Mary did?



Look it up!

Look up Bethany on the map of Palestine in Chapter 1. Use the internet to learn what the Arab people who live there call it nowadays. Why do you think it was given this name? The episode related in John 11, 1-44 may help you answer this question.

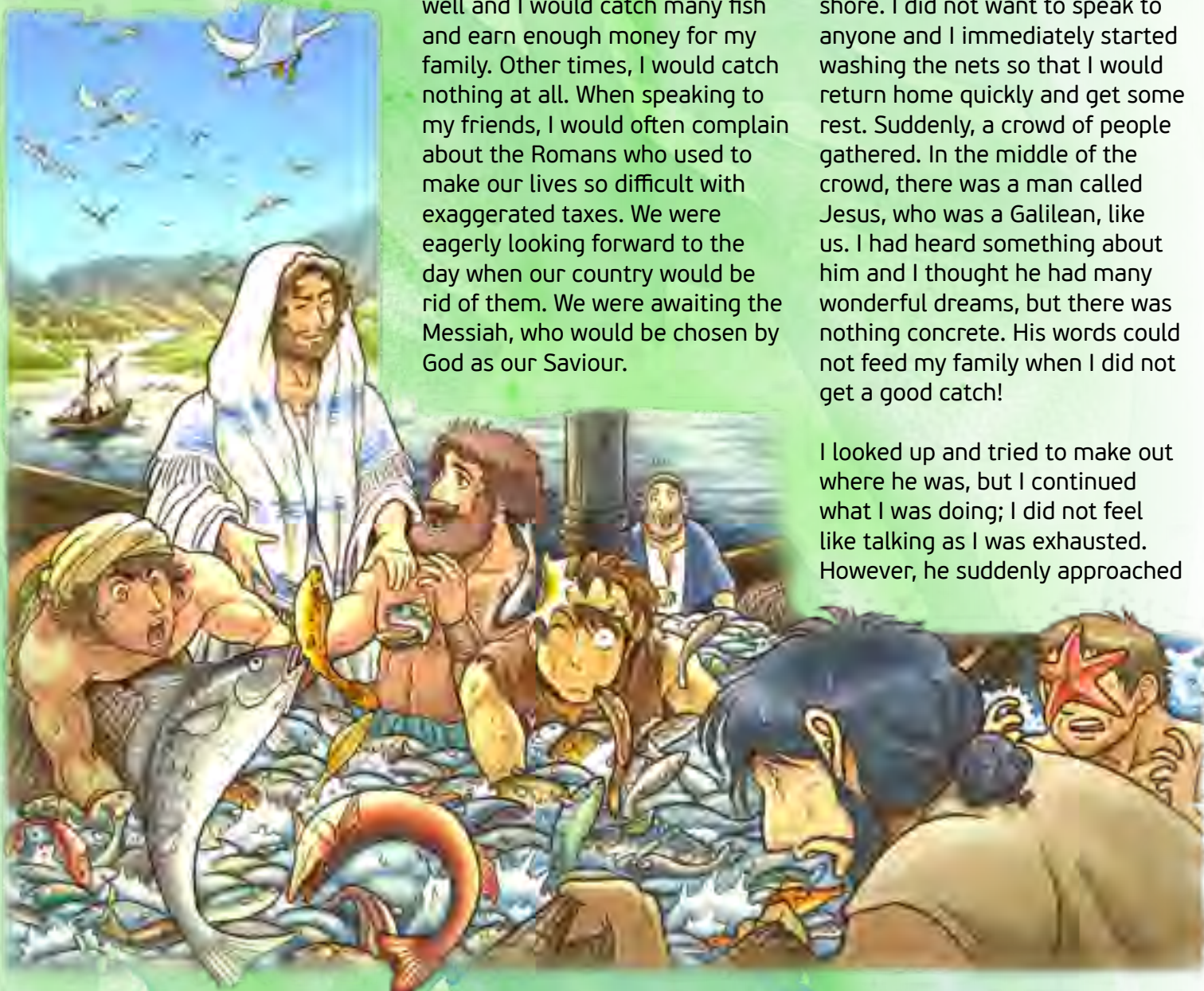
Disciples of Jesus

SIMON PETER
narrates his story:

Before I met Jesus, my life was similar to that of many fishermen living at Capernaum in Galilee. Sometimes, things would go well and I would catch many fish and earn enough money for my family. Other times, I would catch nothing at all. When speaking to my friends, I would often complain about the Romans who used to make our lives so difficult with exaggerated taxes. We were eagerly looking forward to the day when our country would be rid of them. We were awaiting the Messiah, who would be chosen by God as our Saviour.

Once, we spent a whole night fishing, with no success. You can just imagine what a bad mood I was in when we returned to the shore. I did not want to speak to anyone and I immediately started washing the nets so that I would return home quickly and get some rest. Suddenly, a crowd of people gathered. In the middle of the crowd, there was a man called Jesus, who was a Galilean, like us. I had heard something about him and I thought he had many wonderful dreams, but there was nothing concrete. His words could not feed my family when I did not get a good catch!

I looked up and tried to make out where he was, but I continued what I was doing; I did not feel like talking as I was exhausted. However, he suddenly approached



me and with a penetrating look, asked if he could use my boat in order to preach. He caught me unawares. I simply wanted to go home, but I felt I could not say 'no'. After he had finished preaching, he asked me to row out into the lake again and throw in the net. That was the moment when I was going to lose my temper. Who did he think he was to come and tell me, an experienced fisherman, what I should do? But to tell the truth, his look made me realize that he knew what he was saying and I did what he asked. I shall never forget that day! When we pulled in the net, it was going to break because of the weight of the fish! During my very first encounter with Jesus, I realized that I should follow what he said! His attitude and his words fascinated me. I wanted to get to know him, to become his friend. That day, I left everything and followed him because I realized that if Jesus was to be my friend, I had to learn to have faith in him. A good friend deserved all my trust.

This was only my first experience with Jesus. Jesus put his trust in me and I had faith in him. He used to ask me and two other friends, James and John, to go with him everywhere. He started calling me 'Peter', which

means 'rock', and he wanted me to continue looking after his friends and doing his work when he returned to the Father. On my part, I trusted him completely and I would tell him all I thought. In fact, I often spoke on behalf of my friends too. Sometimes I would be told off, because my ideas were not always in line with what Jesus wanted. On these occasions, Jesus would show me that I was still not seeing things the way he did; I was thinking too much of myself and I needed to mature. In spite of the fact that we do not usually enjoy being told we are in the wrong, I really appreciated the fact that Jesus told me the truth. I realized that a genuine friend, who truly wants the best for you, will tell you the truth so that you can grow up, rather than cover up for you and allow you to continue doing wrong.

The more I got to know him, the more I realized that Jesus, who had become my greatest friend, was the Messiah we had been expecting. I realized that he was the person who could save me, not by helping me to earn more money, but by giving me something which no money could buy: the ability to trust myself and others, have true love for everyone and experience peace and true joy.

On the other hand, I now realize that at that time, I had not really understood Jesus well. In fact,

Did you know?

At the time of Jesus, Palestine was ruled by the Romans. It was General Pompey who seized Palestine in the year 63 BC. Many Jews were eagerly waiting for God to send the Messiah to free them from these people who did not believe in the true God.

when the most difficult moment arrived, I abandoned him, even though I was one of his greatest friends. I had assumed that since I was a friend of Jesus, everything would turn out well and there would be no problem. I was still selfish and during the most critical moment, when Jesus was arrested, I made a great mistake: I said that I did not even know him.

When I came to my senses, I cried bitterly. Jesus was my dearest friend and I was heartbroken at the fact that I had betrayed him and left him alone. I thought I could now forget our friendship. However, he forgave me and I gradually regained the peace that came from his forgiveness. I realized that the true disciple is not the one who never makes a mistake, but the one who can turn back to Jesus and listen to him again.

When we saw Jesus after he rose from the dead, we understood who he really is. We understood that Jesus is not only the Messiah, but the Son of the living God. Our friendship grew. Now that Jesus has sent us his Spirit, I am closer to him than ever before and I do my best to let him guide me in every decision I make.

Look it up!

On the map of Palestine in Chapter 1, find the village of Capernaum. Use the internet to find photos of archaeological remains that have been found in the vicinity.

Delve deeper

What is it about Peter's experience that makes you realize that Jesus really had an influence over his life? How did Peter change through his friendship with Jesus?

The twelve



PETER

His real name was 'Simon', but Jesus called him 'Cephas' which means 'rock' (Petros in Greek). Jesus wanted to build the Church on this rock, and hence he appointed Peter as the first leader. Peter preached the Good News about Jesus in Palestine and other places, until he eventually went to the imperial city of Rome. He wrote two letters that form part of the New Testament.

ANDREW
He was Peter's elder brother. Andrew is known as the first apostle who answered Jesus' call and followed him. Like his brother Peter, he was a fisherman born in Bethsaida and living in Capernaum. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, he preached the Gospel in the North of Greece and other places around the Black Sea, until he was martyred. He was crucified on a cross in the form of an X.



JAMES THE GREATER

He was a fisherman from Capernaum. Together with his brother, John, he was one of the first disciples of Jesus. The two brothers and Peter experienced a number of important events, such as the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead and the Transfiguration. He was the first apostle who died as a martyr under the orders of Herod Agrippa in Jerusalem.

JOHN

John was the brother of James and the gospels say that they were the sons of Zebedee. They were also known as "the sons of thunder". John stands out among the apostles as the only one who remained with Jesus to the end and stood beneath the cross on Calvary. John's name is linked to the fourth gospel, three letters, and the book of the Revelation. He was the last apostle to die; he died a natural death.



PHILIP

Like Peter and Andrew, Philip was born in Bethsaida. When Jesus called him, he was not satisfied with keeping this to himself, but he brought along Bartholomew so that the latter would meet Jesus too. It is said that he preached the Good News in foreign lands such as Syria, together with his sister Mariamne and Bartholomew.

BARTHOLOMEW
Bartholomew was born in Cana, the place where Jesus did his first miracle. In John's gospel, he is called Nathaniel. When Philip told him he had found the Messiah, Bartholomew was surprised that the Messiah was from Nazareth, but he followed Philip nevertheless. When he met Jesus, Bartholomew soon recognized him as the Son of God.



apostles



MATTHEW

Matthew was also known as Levi. Before Jesus asked him to leave everything and follow him, Matthew was a publican, that is, he collected taxes for the Romans. He is the author of one of the gospels. There is a tradition that says that Matthew carried out his mission in many countries, including Egypt.

THOMAS

Thomas, 'the twin', is known as the one who did not want to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead and appeared to the apostles, before he had seen with his eyes and touched the wounds with his hands. He is also the one who made a declaration of faith when he did, in fact, see Jesus: "My Lord and my God." It is said that Thomas travelled as far as India, where there are still Christians who are known as 'Saint Thomas Christians'.



JAMES, SON OF ALPHEUS

We know very little about James, son of Alphaeus, or James the Lesser. Some scholars think that he was related to Jesus and that he is the one referred to in the Acts of the Apostles as the first leader of the Church in Jerusalem, the author of one of the letters of the New Testament. However, not everyone agrees with these details.

SIMON THE ZEALOT

Here, too, we know very little. Very probably, the nickname 'zealot' originated from his zeal for God's Law which was already present before Jesus called him to become one of the apostles.

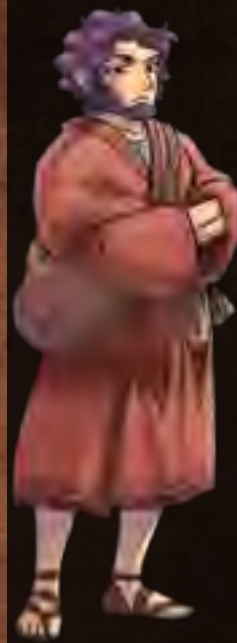


JUDAS, SON OF JAMES

He is probably the author of another letter, the brother of James and a relative of Jesus. He is also known as Thaddeus. Very often, he is depicted with a flame over his head to symbolize the fact that he was present when the apostles received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. As in the case of Saint Anthony of Padua, and Saint Rita of Cascia, he is known as the 'saint of the impossible'.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

He is the apostle who betrayed Jesus. He came to an agreement with the Jewish authorities to hand over Jesus. When Judas saw the result of his betrayal, instead of turning to God and asking forgiveness, he despaired and took his own life. The Gospel also tells us that he was in charge of the apostles' common fund. After Jesus' Resurrection, the apostles chose Matthias to replace him.



Zacchaeus

a sinner who changed

Jesus was not only friendly with the people who were ready to accept him.
He offered his friendship to everyone, even great sinners.



One day, Jesus was passing through Jericho, which was a town a short distance from Jerusalem. As usual, there was a large crowd of people who wanted to see him and listen to him. Among them, was a wealthy man called Zacchaeus, who was the leader of the publicans. Since he was very short, he could not see Jesus.



I can't see.
What can I do?



Yes, I know
what I'll do!



Zacchaeus decided to climb a tree that was close by.



If you were Zacchaeus and Jesus stopped under the tree and called you by name, how would you feel? Perhaps you would be afraid, or shy. Perhaps you would be surprised that he knew your name, or you might feel very special.

Zacchaeus' first meeting with Jesus was certainly extraordinary. Zacchaeus was considered a corrupt man. And he knew that people regarded Jesus as a saintly person. He definitely did not expect Jesus to speak to him, let alone go to his house! For Zacchaeus, this was certainly a great surprise, so much so that it changed his way of thinking and transformed his priorities. Up to that point in his

life, Zacchaeus had been willing to rob people in order to gain more money. Now he decided to return four times the amount he had stolen and give half his property to the poor. Jesus' friendship brought about a tremendous change in Zacchaeus' life.

Your life too, can be changed by Jesus. You do not have to be a great sinner to be in need of

change. We all have things that need to be changed. We all make mistakes and we all sin. It is Jesus' friendship that makes it possible for us to choose love instead of sin.

Work on this!

Look up Lk 5, 27-32.

Compare this incident with that involving Zacchaeus. Explain the similarities and the differences in the two stories.

Did you know?

The publicans collected taxes for the Romans. The Jews considered them traitors because they were working for the Romans. They also regarded the publicans as merciless thieves because they collected more than was their due, and they cheated the people out of a lot of money.

Jesus

the greatest teacher

think for a moment of all the teachers you have had so far. Who was the best teacher? Who influenced you most? Why? What did this teacher have that was different from the others?

A good teacher does not only know the subject well, but also knows her students. A good teacher knows how to adapt what she is teaching to the needs of the students.

According to Peter, Mary (Martha's sister) and many other people at the time, Jesus was the greatest

teacher they had ever met. For us Christians and also for many people who are not Christians, Jesus is the greatest teacher who has ever existed. Why?

Jesus knew what he was teaching. He could speak with authority about who God is and what God wants because Jesus was God made man. He knew who the human person is and what he needs to be truly happy.

A genuine teacher will teach everywhere. Jesus did not wait for

the Sabbath so that he could teach in the synagogue, where the Jews would gather to hear the Word of God being read and explained. Jesus taught everywhere and at every opportune moment. He did teach in the temple and in the synagogues, but also on the hills, in people's houses, on the sea-shore, in the country-side and even on a boat.

One of the things that shows Jesus' greatness as a teacher is the fact that he used parables. You must definitely have heard one of Jesus' parables. Can you relate





Work on this!

Copy out these verses from the gospel where Jesus gives very important teaching: Luke 6, 27-28; Matthew 6, 6; Luke 12, 33; Matthew 23, 11; John 15, 13.

For each quotation, mention something Jesus did during his life which confirms that he lived what he preached.

one of them? Jesus used parables because he knew that everyone likes listening to stories. He also knew that when one uses a story, it is much easier to touch people's hearts than when using other words which are often forgotten very easily.

Another thing that stood out in Jesus' teaching was the fact that he always lived what he taught. There is a proverb that says that "actions speak louder than words". When a teacher uses only words, she may not be very credible. It is only when the teacher practises what she preaches, that you can be truly convinced that what she says is

worth practising. In the case of Jesus, no one could ever accuse him of preaching one thing and doing something different. Jesus lived all he taught – even to the moment of his death. He taught us that "no one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends." And he lived this right up to the moment when he gave his life for us.



Did you know?

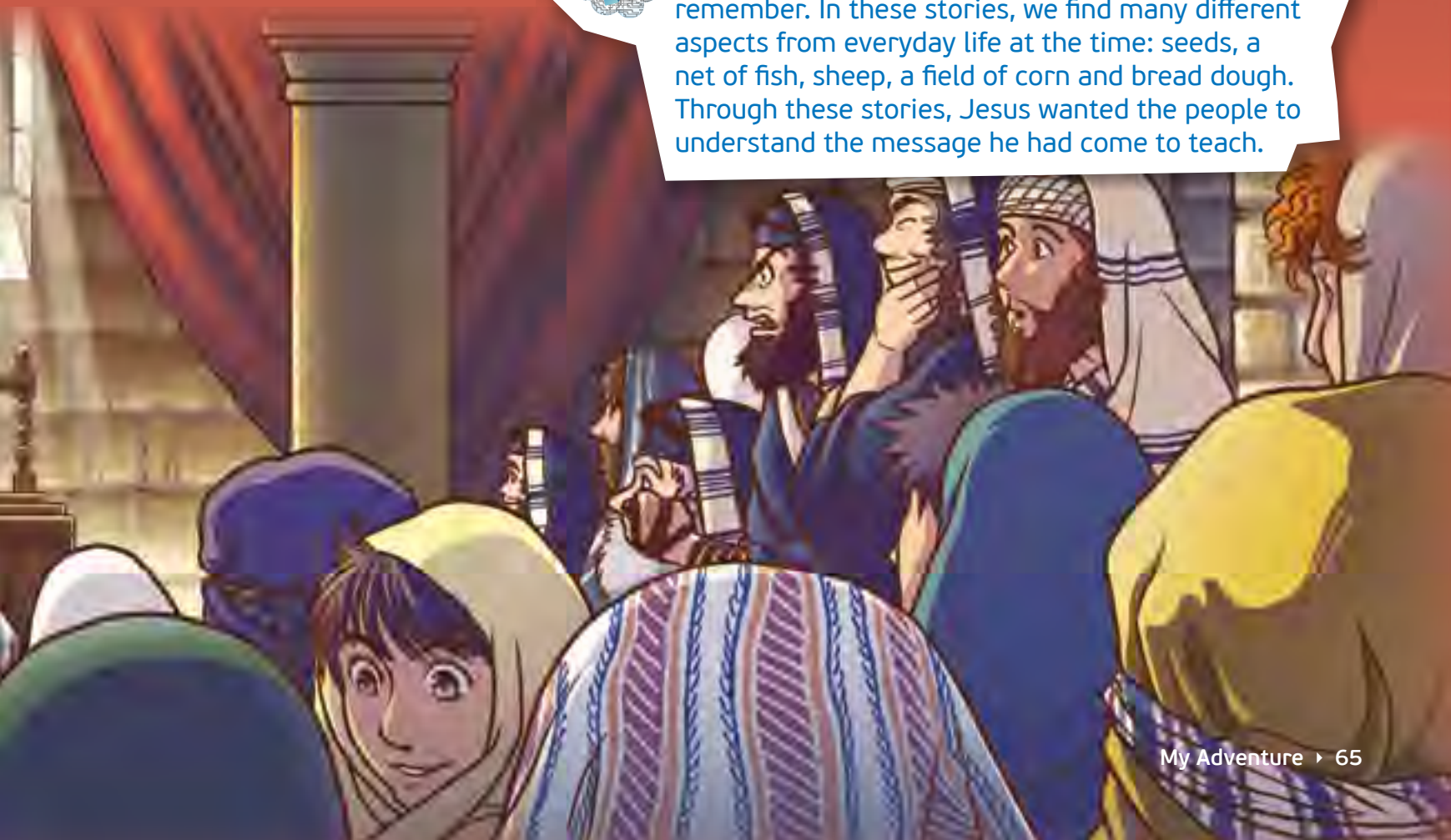
Jesus' parables were short stories which are easy to remember. In these stories, we find many different aspects from everyday life at the time: seeds, a net of fish, sheep, a field of corn and bread dough. Through these stories, Jesus wanted the people to understand the message he had come to teach.

From the Gospel according to Luke

Jesus took with him Peter, John and James and went up the mountain to pray. And it happened that, as he was praying, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became sparkling white. And suddenly there were two men talking to him; they were Moses and Elijah ... Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is wonderful for us to be here." ... As he was saying this, a cloud came and covered them with shadow ... And a voice came from the cloud saying, "This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him."

(Lk 9, 28-30.33-35)

Here God the Father is showing clearly that Jesus is his Son and that we should listen to Jesus. Do you want Jesus to be your most important teacher? Do you want to follow his teachings?



Young followers of Jesus

Every two or three years, hundreds of thousands, and sometimes millions of young people from different cultures and countries meet together for World Youth Day. Since 1985, this international celebration has been held in different places such as Buenos Aires in Argentina, Toronto in Canada and Sydney in Australia. The young people who attend, spend a whole week learning more about Jesus, praying and discussing their faith with other young people. They attend Mass and celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. They even meet

the Pope. What makes all these young people travel so far in order to attend World Youth Day? Without doubt, many of them take part in this activity because Jesus is important to them. They admire Jesus and want to learn more about him so as to follow him and imitate him.

Who is the person you admire most? Why? In what way would you like to be like him or her?

In our everyday life, when we stop to think about ourselves, we realize that we need role models,



special people whom we would like to imitate. Some of us like to imitate film stars, well-known singers or musicians or fashion models. Others have famous scientists or sportsmen or women as their role models.

Have you ever thought of Jesus as someone to admire and imitate? Why? Do you want to be like him?

During the last two thousand years, many people have chosen

to dedicate their lives to God by following Jesus. Many were still children when they took this decision and they persevered until they died. Some took part in sports, some entered politics, others got married or became priests or members of religious orders. Some people have even given up their lives for Jesus. We do not hear much about them because we do not usually get much news about good things.

Did you know?

Child labour still exists today. Millions of slave-children are forced to work in terrible conditions, especially in Pakistan and India.

Iqbal Masih's life-story

(1983 – 1995)

On Easter Day in 1995, Iqbal Masih, a Pakistani twelve-year-old boy, was shot dead. Masih was a Christian boy in a country where Christians are a small minority. He spent half his life working in a carpet factory. When he was four years old, his family borrowed the equivalent of €10 and gave Masih to the factory owner. This custom was known as 'peshgi' and Masih had to work until the debt was paid. However, six years later, Masih was still working and the money that was owed had increased instead of decreased!

The conditions of the factory were terrible. The slave-children would work at least 14 hours every day in stifling heat. They could not talk to each other and if they disobeyed or felt ill, they would be punished harshly. Because of these conditions, Iqbal could not develop properly and when he was ten years old, he was the size of a six-year-old boy.

When he was ten, he attended a meeting where he got to know that the 'peshgi' system had become illegal in Pakistan and the debts had been cancelled. He realized he had the right to freedom. He found people who helped him get the necessary papers and he was finally free. However, Jesus taught us to "Love one another as I have loved you." Iqbal was not content with his own freedom, but he worked to release other child slave workers.

He started attending school where it soon became evident that he was highly intelligent and had strong leadership skills. He campaigned against the 'peshgi' system and managed to release more than 3,000 children. He also spoke to foreigners about what was happening in Pakistan. Iqbal even went to the United States to receive a prize for his work in favour of human rights. He decided to become a lawyer so that he would defend these rights.

However, not everything went smoothly. Many people wanted to instil fear in Iqbal so that he would stop his work. He received many death threats, but he did not bother about them. No one knows exactly how and why Iqbal was killed in April 1995. The official version was that the killing was an accident. However, many people think that he was killed by someone who had been engaged by the owners of the carpet factories as they wanted to get rid of him once and for all.



The way, the truth and the life

have you ever been out on a walk and arrived at a crossroads? There were a number of paths you could take and you did not know which one to choose. In a situation like this, it is natural to feel confused. You would consider yourself lucky if someone passed by at that moment and he could easily show you the way. You would feel so much better if you heard the person say: "You have to go that way." You could continue walking with your mind at rest that you would get to your destination.

Jesus said: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." But what did Jesus mean when he said he is the Way? Where does he lead you? Do you truly believe that if you are Jesus' friend and you allow him to be your Way, he will lead you to genuine happiness? That he will lead you to the Father?

Jesus is the Truth because all he says is true. Jesus will never lie to us. He is not going to take the attitude of the media and of some people we think are friends. These may tell us to do something that is



Pray

Saint Augustine said that when people sang, they would be praying twice. Try and use this song to pray.

One Way Jesus

Hillsong United

I lay my life down at your feet
'Cause you're the only one I need
I turn to you and you are always there
In troubled times it's you I seek
I put you first that's all I need
I humble all I am, all to you

One way, Jesus

You're the only one that I could live for

One Way, Jesus

You're the only one that I could live for

You are always, always there
Every now and everywhere
Your grace abounds so deeply within me
You wil never ever change
Yesterday today the same
Forever till forever meets no end

One way, Jesus

You're the only one that I could live for

One Way, Jesus

You're the only one that I could live for

You are the way the truth and the life
We live by faith and not by sight... for you
We're living all for you

supposed to bring happiness but in reality it is something harmful. As we have already seen, if we want, we can allow Jesus to be the teacher who shows us what is really good for us and he teaches this through his whole life.

Jesus is the Life. Can a person be truly alive if he or she is living as if they are dead? Have you ever met people who are always unhappy and angry at everyone? These people are supposed to be alive,

but they do not know the meaning of life and beauty! If you have a good relationship with Jesus, you cannot be like this. Even if you have problems which may seem overpowering, Jesus' friendship

gives you a happiness which no one can take away. His friendship helps you see how beautiful life is. It helps you appreciate every beautiful thing within you and around you and also the lovely things people do to you. You can enjoy yourself, laugh, love and feel loved because you know you have a faithful friend. You have found the greatest treasure you could possibly have. And you cannot be sad if you have such a treasure.



Live it!

If you really want Jesus to be the Way to the Father for you, try to get used to thinking before every decision and asking yourself: "What would Jesus do in this situation?" Do your best to choose what Jesus would have chosen in your situation.

The choice is yours

(Continues from page 117)

You decreased the amount of training. Another school year passed and you are doing well. Do you think you could now increase your training again?

Yes Go to page 134

No Go to page 76





Choosing the way

Review

A Keywords

Briefly explain the following terms:

- ▶ Disciple
- ▶ Parable
- ▶ Witness of Christ

B Main ideas

Write a paragraph about the following:

- ▶ Explain why we should be very careful with whom we hang out.
- ▶ Explain how Jesus changed the life of the people he met. In your answer, give at least two examples from the Gospel.
- ▶ Which qualities made Jesus the best teacher ever?
- ▶ How is Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life?

C Stop and think

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

- ▶ How would you notice whether a person is a genuine friend?
- ▶ What is Jesus expecting from you today if you really want to be his disciple?
- ▶ How do you think Jesus can help you make the right decisions in life? Mention some specific situations you may come across.

D Family discussion

Discuss these questions as a family:

- ▶ How do we influence each other through the way we speak and act as a family? Are we really helping each other to become better and more beautiful persons?
- ▶ What place does Jesus have in our lives? Have we ever read a passage from the Gospel together?



PREPARE YOURSELF:

You must be aware of the importance of having a well-prepared backpack when you go on a hike with your friends.

Have you ever realized how much more important it is to have a well-prepared 'backpack' for your life-journey?

Tick ✓ the words you are familiar with:

- ☐ responsibility
- ☐ guidebook
- ☐ inspiration
- ☐ the Old Testament
- ☐ the New Testament
- ☐ gospel
- ☐ message
- ☐ commandments
- ☐ Eucharist

The backpack



In this chapter, we shall decide what to put into the 'backpack' we need for our life-journey. We shall consider the importance of the Bible as God's message to us. And we shall also come to understand that Jesus is the fulfilment of this message. These are the most important things we can put in the 'backpack' of our journey through life.

The backpack





What should I pack?

In the first lesson, we reflect on our responsibility to make a very careful choice regarding what we need for our journey through life.

I have a guidebook!

Here we consider the Bible as a guidebook for our lives. Hence we examine the Catholic Church's understanding of the Bible as the Word of God.

A library of books

In this lesson, we see that the Bible may be compared to a library of books. We see how these books are divided and what the divisions are called.

Looking up a passage

Here we learn how to look up references in the Bible. This can be done manually or by using a computer.

A message of love

Then we have a look at important events in the Bible and understand how the fundamental message is one of love, salvation and fulfilment.

The Word made man

In this lesson, we focus on Jesus as the person in whom we find the fullness of God's message of love, salvation and fulfilment.

The Great Commandment

Here we examine the Great Commandment of Jesus as the summing up of the Ten Commandments. We know that this Commandment should be the fundamental principle guiding us to make the right choices in our life-journey.

The bread that gives life

At the end of the chapter, we reflect on the importance of the Eucharist in our lives as Christians. The real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is our spiritual food in the adventure of our lives.



What should I pack?



It is so important to be prepared for anything that may happen in our life-journey. What are the things we should place in the 'backpack' we carry during this journey?

Imagine you are going to take part in a reality TV show. You have to live on a desert island for a whole week and you are asked to take a backpack with all the things you will need. What will you take? Which are the things you will definitely need?

Although you may hate preparations, in this case they will affect your experience. Therefore you need to be fully prepared. Many days before the event, you have to start making a detailed list of all you will need. You also have to eliminate all that is unnecessary. This is a task which involves a great responsibility. If you forget items that are essential, you will experience many problems. On the other hand, if you take things you do not need, they will take up extra space

in your backpack and also add to the weight.

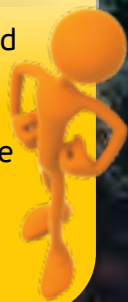
Before you decide what to take with you, it would be a good idea to have some information about the place where you will be living. It would be so helpful if you manage to find a guidebook which gives you information about the place! And a map in your backpack would be very useful as well! It would also be to your advantage if you manage to speak to someone who has

The choice is yours

(Continues from page 105)

You decided you would not go. Initially, you made fun of the friends who went and you told them they were wasting time. However, when you attended Midnight Mass with your parents and you heard the children singing so beautifully, you were sorry you were not among them.

THE END





Did you know?

The motto of the Scouts is “Be prepared”. They believe they should always be prepared for anything that may crop up by considering what may happen and what they should do in these circumstances. They also believe that they should be prepared by being healthy and active so that they may do whatever is necessary if anything happens.



already been there, and can give you information about different aspects such as the weather on the island and what you really need in order to live there.

Our lives may be compared to this experience. Just as we must be very well prepared in order to live on the desert island, we also need to prepare a ‘backpack’ for our life-journey. We have to build up our resources so that we

can deal positively with our life adventure. We have to be very well prepared so that we can live our lives in the best way possible! In this chapter, we shall reflect on what we need to place in our ‘backpacks’ so that our lives will be truly meaningful.

However, only you can prepare your own ‘backpack’ well. Just as your mother will no longer prepare your school-bag for you

as you grow up, so you cannot expect someone else to prepare your ‘backpack’. Although there will be many people who will be ready to help, the responsibility is ultimately yours.



Work on this!

Make a list of five things you would definitely take on a desert island. Arrange them in order by numbering them from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most important and 5 the least important.

Why did you choose these things? What makes one thing more important than another? Do you think you have made a responsible choice?

I have a guidebook!

In spite of the fact that Malta and Gozo are small islands, we still cannot say that we know every part of our country. In order to appreciate certain places, we would need a guide who could explain any details we did not know.

A guide may be a person who knows the place well and can show us around and explain. However, a guide may also be a book that has been purposely written to help us get to know the place by reading, looking at the photos, using maps, and so on. In the same way, we need a guide for our life-journey so that we can live in the best way possible. Who do you think

would be the best guide so that we could have a very good journey? Do you think we could also find a guidebook we could use?

Have you ever considered the Bible as a guidebook for your life? The Bible narrates the story of many people. It tells us about brave people, such as David, strong people like Samson and very wise people like Solomon. It also tells us about the mistakes these people made. But above all, the Bible shows us how these people gradually discovered the presence of God in their lives and very often this was precisely in their moments of weakness. The Bible relates the



The choice is yours

(Continues from page 69)

You are catching up well with your schoolwork and you are also finding time to play computer games and watch television. You are pleased that you have a variety of activities: schoolwork, games at home, watching television, catechism lessons, and sports training.

THE END





From the Psalms

“Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path.”
(Ps 119,105)

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the Bible. Look up this psalm. Note that it is divided into 22 stanzas, one for every letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Find three verses that mention the Word of God and copy them out and illustrate them.

story of a number of people as they journeyed with God. It shows us that our life is a journey – a journey with God at our side.

Besides this, the Bible is above all, God’s message to us. In the Bible, God speaks to us in a way we can understand. It was God who inspired a number of people to write what they or someone else, had been through and thus the authors communicated God’s

message to the human person. God did not dictate his message word for word but he used people like us in order to communicate his deep love for the human person. This process is called ‘inspiration’ and it means that the Holy Spirit helped the authors recognize which message to convey.

Do you want to be familiar with this book that will guide you in your journey towards God? Do you

think you should get to know God’s message for you?

People who read the Word of God discover who God is and how they can be close to him. When you read the Bible, you must remember that it is God’s Word to you today, in spite of the fact that it was written so long ago!



Did you know?

The Bible is the best selling book of all time. One of the first books published by the first European printer, Johannes Gutenberg, was precisely the Bible. Since that time, that is, since 1454, billions of copies of the Bible have been printed, a lot more than any other book.



A library of books

did you know that the Bible is the book that has been translated into the greatest number of languages? According to the United Bible Societies, the Bible or parts of it, has now been translated into over 2,500 different languages or dialects. What is the reason for this?

One may think of a number of different reasons but one of them is definitely the fact that many people consider the Bible as a guidebook for their lives. Since the Bible was written many years ago in Hebrew and in Greek, very few people can read it in the original languages. Hence, it has been translated into many different languages or dialects and this process is

still going on. The first translation of the whole Bible into Maltese from the original languages was done by Mgr Pietru Pawl Saydon between 1929 and 1959.

When you use the Bible as the guide book for your life, besides having a good translation (such as Saydon's or that done by the Għaqda Biblika Maltija in Maltese and the NRSV or the Jerusalem Bible in English), it is also important to have an idea how the Bible is divided. The Bible may be considered a library of books. In fact, it contains 73 books which were written by different authors at different times. However, as we have already discussed, they were all written because it was what God wanted. In fact, we can say that God is the principal author of the Bible. He is the one who inspired the authors to communicate his message to us.

Did you know?

Not all people in Malta appreciated the importance of the work done by Professor Saydon when he started translating the Bible into Maltese. However he did find strong support from Saint George Preca who always encouraged him to carry on with his work.



The Old Testament

46 BOOKS

... The Pentateuch

the first five books of the Bible, which the Jews call the Torah, that is, the Law.
5 BOOKS

... The Historical Books

the history of the people of God from when they entered the Promised Land to the time of the Maccabees. 16 BOOKS

... The Wisdom Books

books containing prayers and teaching. 7 BOOKS

... The Prophetical Books

books containing the teaching of the prophets. 18 BOOKS

The New Testament

27 BOOKS

... The Gospels

books that convey the Good News that the Son of God became man, gave up his life for us and was victorious over death for our salvation. 4 BOOKS

... The Acts of the Apostles

a book that shows us that Jesus continued his work through his Church. 1 BOOK

... The Letters of the Apostles

letters which Church leaders such as St Paul wrote to the first Christians to guide them in their lives as true disciples of Jesus. 21 LETTERS

... Revelations

the last book of the Bible. 1 BOOK



Looking up a passage

Were you ever given a school project and you felt you knew nothing about the subject? Did you ever hear your friends chatting about something you were not familiar with, and thus you did not join in?

When we are aware that we know nothing about a subject, we realize that we need to look up some information. Nowadays, we have the technology to be able to find a lot of information in very little time, especially through the use of the web. Sometimes, we also have to visit a library if we need a specific book.

Work on this!



Write down the names of the people who are mentioned in the Bible by looking up the following references. Use a hard copy of the Bible for the first five, and look up the others online.

The Roman governor in **Acts 23, 24**

The prophetess in **Jdg 4, 4**

The president of the synagogue in **Mk 5, 22**

The king in **2 Chron 19, 1**

The girl whom Jacob loved in **Gen 29, 18**

The man who was the champion of the Philistines in **1 Sam 17, 4**

Chuza's wife in **Lk 8, 3**

The king in **Dan 2, 46**

The couple who were fellow workers of Paul in **Rom 16, 3**

Moses' wife in **Ex 2, 21**



However, in order to find what you want and be able to appreciate it, you have to know how to look up information. If you have an internet connection, but you do not have a browser which you can use well, you will not get anywhere. And it is futile to go to the library if you do not know how to look for the book you want. In the same way, if you genuinely want to use the Bible as the guidebook for your life, you must know how to use it well.

When we need to look up a passage in the Bible, we often have a reference such as the following: 2Th 3, 6-12. What exactly does this mean? How are you going to find this passage in the Bible? What do you have to do?

The Letters and Revelation

Romans - 1636	Titus - 151
1 Corinthians - 1661	Milestones - 1724
2 Corinthians - 1886	Hebrews - 1757
Galatians - 1668	James - 1718
Ephesians - 1708	1 Peter - 1732
Philippians - 1711	2 Peter - 1790
Colossians - 1722	1 John - 1795
1 Thessalonians - 1728	2 John - 1802
2 Thessalonians - 1737	3 John - 1805
1 Timothy - 1717	Jude - 1808
2 Timothy - 1748	Revelation - 1809

As we saw in the previous lesson, the Bible is a library of books and the first thing you need to do is to learn how it is divided. You have to learn to distinguish one book from the other and know where you can find it in the Bible. The Contents pages are very helpful in this regard. A look at the Contents will help you realize that sometimes there is more than one book with the same title.

In that case, the number at the beginning of the reference will indicate if you should look up the first or the second book, for example.

Delve deeper

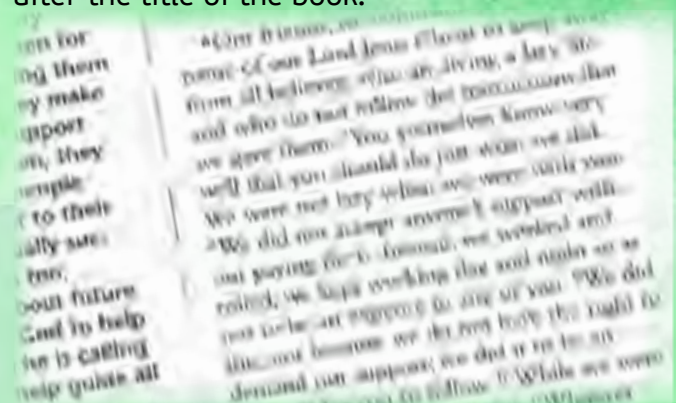
Think of the advantages and the disadvantages of the different ways of looking up passages in the Bible. Which do you think is better: using a hard copy of the Bible or using the web?

Did you know?

In Islam, the sacred book is called the Koran. This too, is divided into chapters and verses. In all, the Koran has 114 suras (chapters).



Most books you read are divided into a number of chapters. This system is used in the Bible too, so that it is easier for you to find a passage. The number of the chapter is always the first number after the title of the book.



The verse numbers within each chapter will help you find the exact sentence or sentences you need.

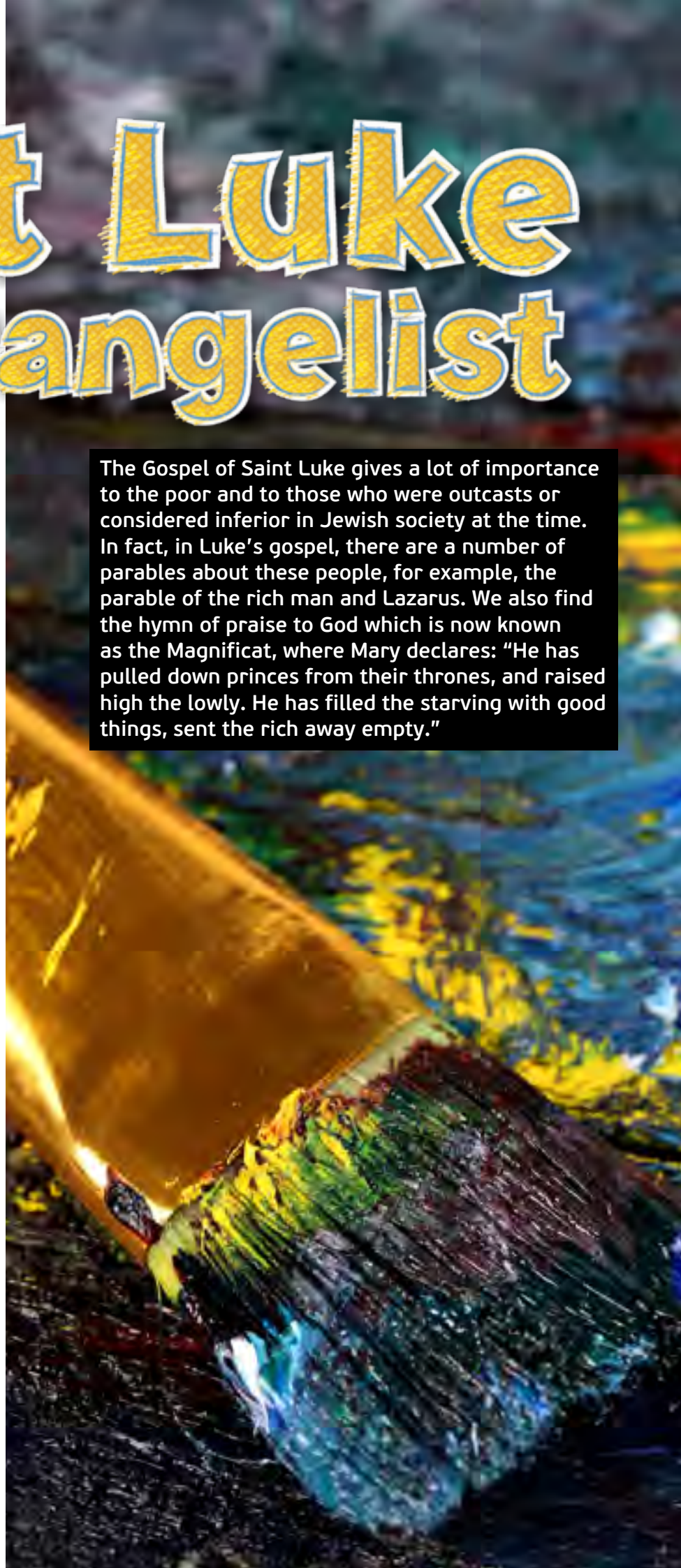
You can find the Bible on the web too. There are sites where you can look up specific passages, or you can check to see what the Bible says about a particular topic.

Saint Luke the evangelist

Saint Luke is one of the four evangelists. Besides the gospel, he also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. Scholars think that Luke was Greek and that he was a pagan before he became a Christian.

According to the Acts of the Apostles, Saint Luke accompanied Saint Paul on a number of his missionary journeys, including the journey to Malta. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul refers to Luke as "the dear doctor". Luke was an excellent author and his style of writing still fascinates many people today.

The Gospel of Saint Luke gives a lot of importance to the poor and to those who were outcasts or considered inferior in Jewish society at the time. In fact, in Luke's gospel, there are a number of parables about these people, for example, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. We also find the hymn of praise to God which is now known as the Magnificat, where Mary declares: "He has pulled down princes from their thrones, and raised high the lowly. He has filled the starving with good things, sent the rich away empty."



In this gospel, Jesus shows special consideration for those who were not Jews. The parable of the Good Samaritan is related only in this gospel. We also find Jesus' words of praise for the widow of Zarephath and for Naaman of Syria, who were both pagans.

St Luke shows us that Jesus came in a special way for sinners, such as Zacchaeus, in order to draw them back to God. He relates Jesus' parables about the lost sheep, the lost drachma and the prodigal son in order to show the immensity of God's love and forgiveness.

St Luke gives special importance to women, who were not respected at the time. He tells us that Jesus had a number of women among his closest disciples, for example, Mary of Magdala.

We can also say that Luke uses words to portray Mary in a way that is unique to his gospel. It is only in this gospel that we find the annunciation of the birth of Jesus to Mary, the visit to Elizabeth, the presentation of Jesus in the Temple and the story when Mary and Joseph realize they have lost Jesus when he was twelve years old. These portraits of Mary may well be the reason for the tradition that says that Luke was also a painter. There are many icons and pictures of Our Lady which have traditionally been linked to Saint Luke. One example is the image of Our Lady of Mellieha. Because of this tradition, many works of art depicting Saint Luke show him painting Our Lady. In reality, although he may have not painted Mary in colours, he has certainly given us a wonderful picture of her in words.



The ancient icon of Our Lady with the Child Jesus which is found in the Sanctuary of Our Lady in Mellieha.

The symbol linked to Saint Luke's gospel is the bull. Like the lion in the case of Saint Mark, the man in Saint Matthew and the eagle in Saint John, these symbols are mentioned in the Bible and they have been associated with the different gospels. The bull is used to symbolize Saint Luke because his gospel opens with a scene in the Temple where the priests, such as Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, used to offer animals as sacrifices to God.



Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) painted this fresco which is now found in the Basilica of the Annunciation in Florence, Italy. He depicts Saint Luke painting Our Lady. Close to Saint Luke, one can observe the bull, which is the symbol of his gospel.

A message of love

there are many people who are not sure which book to choose when they go to a library. This happens because there is such a wide variety of books: detective stories, biographies, books providing information about various subjects, novels and so on. In order to avoid feeling at a loss, the best thing to do when you go to a library is to decide beforehand what type of book you want. It is also a good idea to have some information about the authors. When you are familiar with the style of writing of a specific author, you know what to expect if you choose any of his books.

The Bible is a library of books. However, although the books were written by different authors, the principal author of every book is God himself. Hence, even in this case, it is a good idea to know what to expect from this author. God's intention is not simply that of communicating a story or a number of stories, but a message – a message of love, salvation and fullness of life which we find in every single story in the Bible. Some may choose to read the Bible to learn about the history of the Jewish people or just to enjoy the many stories it contains. However, if you stop at this, you would be missing the treasure which the author wants to give you through the writing. When you read the Bible, look for the message that

can change your life; this is the message which God wants to communicate to every person.

The first book of the Bible is the book of Genesis. Here we see clearly the deep love between God and Abraham. God shows Abraham his love by helping him and protecting him; he even chooses him as the father of his chosen people. Abraham reciprocates God's love by being ready to offer even his own son. In God's love for Abraham, we can see the love which God has for every single person. And in Abraham's response, we can see how we should trust and accept God's love.

If we turn a few pages of the Bible, we come to the book of



Work on this!

Look up Psalm 63.
Find a creative way to present the message of this psalm. You may prepare a computer presentation, a chart, a poem, a song....



Exodus. Here, God is portrayed not only as the one who loves his people deeply, but also as the one who offers them freedom and salvation. When God sees the suffering of his people, he shows his deep love for them by helping them escape from Egypt, under the leadership of Moses. Besides this, he also gives them the commandments, which would guide them as to how they should live together. Here too, there is a message for us. In moments of suffering, God shows us his love through people who help us and guide us. He never leaves us alone.

In the Bible, there are stories of other people who found their fulfilment in God. The two books of Samuel relate the story of David, a simple shepherd boy who became the greatest king of Israel. However, when the books of the Bible relate the success stories of simple people, they show us that it

was God who helped them achieve their success. This is the reason why David himself says in a psalm that it is only God who can quench a person's spiritual thirst! Thus, in the Bible, we can learn what true success means and what can really

fill up the emptiness we sometimes feel. The media does give us advice about how this emptiness can be filled up, but the principal author of the Bible has a different secret. Are you ready to set about trying to discover this secret?



Did you know?

In the Bible, there are 150 psalms. Some of them were written by King David, who would sing the psalms as his prayers to God, while he played the harp.



A message of love

NEHEMIAH
narrates his story:

My name is Nehemiah. For me, the Word of God is a treasure; it is a living Word that is relevant to every person at any moment in time. I have learnt this through experience. In the Sacred Writings I did not only read what previous authors wrote about our ancestors but I discovered a true treasure, the message God wanted to communicate to me and to every single person through these events. This is a message of love and salvation, a message about a life that is full of happiness and peace. I believed this message and as you will see, it gave me and my people strength and hope when it seemed that there was nothing to live for.

For a very long time, our ancestors did not live a good life.

They forgot about God and lived just as they liked. Even our kings took decisions that went against the will of God. Then the king of Babylon attacked Jerusalem. The Temple and its beautiful walls were reduced to rubble and the Jewish people were exiled to Babylon. Some thought that God had forgotten his people and did not care about them any longer. However, this could not be true. God had promised that he would be with us always!

At these moments, I am sure they remembered stories from the Word of God, stories such as that of Job, who suffered so much but remained firm in his belief that God loved him. God is the one who has given us all we have and who keeps us alive. Whatever happens to us, he wants us to continue



Did you know?

When someone is exiled, it means that he is sent away from his country and he cannot return.





Delve deeper

This clay cylinder is a very important document, dating back to the time of Cyrus the Great. This document confirms what we read in the Bible regarding his decision to send the Jews back to their land.

loving him, just as he will always keep on loving us.

The people's hope was not in vain. After about 70 years in exile, King Cyrus conquered the Babylonians and he gave us Jews permission to return to our beloved land. Some did so, but others preferred to remain in Babylon for some reason or other. My family was one of the latter and thus I was born in a foreign country.

Time passed. When I became a young man, I started working in the palace of King Artaxerxes. I had never seen the country of my ancestors and I really wished to do so. When I heard about the pitiful state of Jerusalem, I was heartbroken. But the Word of God filled me with courage. I remembered David, our King, whose story is found in the books of Samuel. He was only a young man when he was chosen as king.

Perhaps, God would choose me too, to do something to strengthen my people and help them live in peace.

Through my work in Artaxerxes' palace, I became the king's friend. One day, he noticed that I was deep in thought and also very sad and he asked me what had happened. I was afraid to tell him, but I felt I should be sincere. He listened to me and agreed to send me to Jerusalem to be in charge of rebuilding the city. I am sure it was God who helped the King decide to send me. It was God who chose me, as he had chosen David when he was still so young. In my case, my task was to rebuild the fortifications of Jerusalem. Without God's help, I would not have had the courage to ask. And not only did Artaxerxes send me to Jerusalem, he also provided me with soldiers to protect me and he gave me the building materials I needed! Once again, I thought of

the Word of God. I remembered the episode in the Book of Kings, where God kept on providing food to the widow of Zarephath because she helped his prophet! God will never forget those who keep on trusting him!

A lot of the work is now ready, but one very important thing is missing. If we want to continue enjoying our city, we have to keep God in our midst. Hence, we have planned to teach the people the laws God gave us through Moses. Whenever the people assemble to hear us read out and explain the laws, they listen attentively and accept God's message joyfully. Now we have understood that God is truly with us. We have understood that he will do what he promised, because God is always true. God is everything for us and we treasure his message and place our trust in his Word.

The Word made man

imagine that during your experience on the desert island, you had the choice between a guidebook that showed you the details of the place and a true guide (a person) who could take you from one place to the other. Which would you choose? What are the advantages of having a person who can guide you?

It is certain that, even if the guidebook is very accurate, it cannot provide all the help and support which a person can give. You can share your fears and your happiness with a person. You can have a chat and ask questions in order to understand better. And the fact that you know you are not alone on your journey makes a

great difference. There is a much greater possibility that you will consider your experience as a wonderful adventure, because there will be much less fear and uncertainty.

We can say that when the Son of God became man, he gave us the opportunity to have this sort of guide in our lives. He wanted to become like us and share all our experiences. Above all, he wanted to communicate directly with us. He wanted us to see him face to face and talk to him in the same way we talk to one another. He did not want anyone to feel that God did not understand him and this is

why he experienced everything, even the greatest poverty.

The people of his time were the first to go through this experience. As Saint John says in his first letter: "Something which has existed since the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have watched and touched with our own hands, the Word of life – this is our theme." Thus, the New Testament does not relate what God said through other people such as Samuel and Nehemiah, but what God himself said and did among us.





Live it!

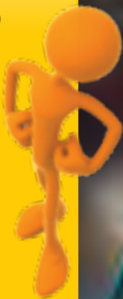
Before going to sleep this evening, find yourself a few minutes of quiet and read any passage from the Gospel of Saint Luke. As you read, note if there is any sentence or word that seems to be very relevant to your life, where you can sense that Jesus wants to pass on a message to you. Spend some time talking to Jesus about what you are feeling.

The choice is yours

(Continues from page 31)

You were doing very well in your singing lessons and your teacher wanted you to go more often. But in order to do this, you would have to abandon your training in your favourite sports. You were undecided as you had to choose between singing and sports.

Would you stop your sports training? **Go to page 16**
Would you stop your singing lessons? **Go to page 111**



Jesus was not simply a prophet who came to earth to pass on a message from God. Jesus himself is God's message to his people. Jesus did not explain the meaning of love by means of long homilies, but by showing us how to love. We see Jesus' love in the forgiveness he gave, in his friendship with others, in the compassion he showed when he healed the sick and, above all, in his death on the cross. Out of his great love, he saved us through his death and resurrection. This was not the freedom from slavery in Egypt, but freedom

from what really harms us: sin. Jesus came to show us how we had to act when confronted with evil; thus, we can really have abundant life, as he promised.

You can live the same experience as Jesus' disciples two thousand years ago. You can choose Jesus as your guide in life. He knows all you go through at school, at home, in the various groups to which you belong. If you want him to lead you, you must get to know him well. It is important to know what he said and what he taught. Hence, you must be familiar with the Gospel.



Did you know?

The word 'gospel' comes from the Old English word 'gōd-spell' meaning 'good news'. We have four gospels in all: the gospel of Saint Matthew, the gospel of Saint Mark, the gospel of Saint Luke and the gospel of Saint John. These four gospels may be considered four photos of the same person – Jesus – taken from different angles.

The great commandment



Live it!

Think of someone with whom you have not been getting on very well recently. During this week make an effort to love the person as Jesus asks. At the end of the week, write down your experience and your feelings about it in your journal.

Stop for a minute and think about the desert island we mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. Imagine you have been told that instead of being alone, you will be part of a group. Do you think it would be better than being alone? Or would you be afraid of what may happen until you get used to one another? What do you think is necessary so that you will not end up quarrelling?

When you form part of a group and especially when you live in a group, there must be a certain understanding and order among you. Work should be evenly shared so that it will all be done well and, at the same time, there will be no rivalry. If the group is to

function well, there must be basic rules which are to be obeyed by everyone.

This is exactly what the Jewish people experienced when they fled from Egypt and started living in the desert. They needed a set of rules to help them live together and hence God gave them the Ten Commandments. True harmony among people must be built on our union with God. Therefore, God gave his people the first three commandments which would help them keep God present in their lives. The other seven commandments were intended not just to stop people from hurting each other but above all to help them live together like brothers and sisters.



Jesus, the Son of God made man, did not abolish the commandments, but he summed them up in what he called the Great Commandment: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind...You must love your neighbour as yourself."

What type of love was Jesus referring to when he asked us to love our neighbour? Jesus answered this question when he gave us what he called the New Commandment:

"Love one another as I have loved you."

Jesus wanted to show us that we should be ready to do for others what he has done for us. Loving others as Jesus loved us is the best way we can live together. If we really make this our rule in life, our decisions will certainly be good ones.

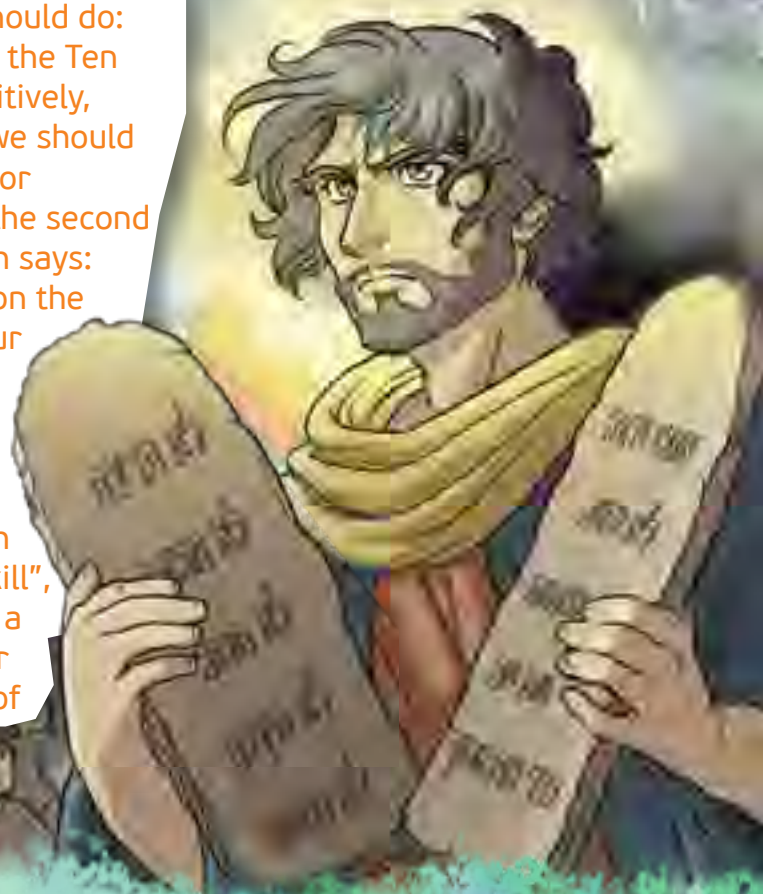
In chapter thirteen of his first letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul explains what decisions we will take if we are truly living this type of love. If our friends succeed in something and we fail, we should love without any jealousy. If one of our friends is going through a tough time and he cannot reciprocate our friendship, we should keep in mind that love is patient and compassionate. Above all, when confronted with problems and shortcomings in our friendships, we must remember that true love is forgiving. And just as Jesus' love was so deep that he was ready to give up his life for us, so we too, must be ready for sacrifice if we want to show true love to others.



Work on this!

Many of the Ten Commandments tell us what we should not do. Jesus taught us what we should do: love. Try to write out the Ten Commandments positively, that is, saying what we should do in order to love. For example, instead of the second commandment which says: "You shall not mention the name of the Lord your God in vain", you can write: "Praise the name of God." Instead of the fifth commandment which says: "You shall not kill", you can write: "Have a deep respect for your own life and the life of others."

Jesus as portrayed in the film *Jesus of Nazareth*, directed by Franco Zeffirelli



The bread that gives life

do you remember the five things you chose to take with you on the desert island, when we discussed this in the first lesson of this chapter? Did you plan to take any food? Or did you assume you would be able to eat the fruit and vegetables which grew on the island? Everyone would agree that food and drink are among the most essential things which will help you survive the experience.

Just as we need to eat in order to remain alive and continue to grow, in our spiritual journey we need other food that will keep us alive and help us grow and become strong spiritually. This was very clear to a young boy called Tarcisius, who lived in Rome at the time when the emperor wanted to wipe out Christianity.

Tarcisius knew that being a Christian meant putting your life at risk. However, he still continued living as a Christian and he had a very deep love for the Eucharist. One day, when a priest asked if someone was ready to take communion to the Christians in prison, Tarcisius offered to go. The people assumed that no one would realize that such a young boy was going to give people communion and this was why the priest accepted. When he gave the boy the Eucharist, he reminded him to be careful that the Eucharist would not fall into the hands of unbelievers.

On his way to the prison, some children asked him to play with them, but Tarcisius could not stop. He wanted to take Jesus to those people who longed for him and

who really needed him because they were going through difficult times. The other children became curious about what Tarcisius was carrying and they ran after him and tried to take what he had in his hands. However Tarcisius refused to give in and he clasped the Blessed Sacrament tightly to his chest. At this point, the other children became aggressive.

At a certain moment, a Roman soldier appeared. He was secretly a Christian and he realized what was happening and he stopped the children's violent behaviour. However, it was too late for Tarcisius, who was very seriously wounded because of the stones they had thrown at him and the blows they had given him. He died in order to protect Jesus in the Eucharist.



From the Gospel according to John

"I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world."

Then the Jews started arguing among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Jesus replied to them: "In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that person up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person." (Jn 6, 51-56)

Look up John 6, 1-15 in order to see what miracle Jesus had done the previous day. What do you think he wants to teach us through this miracle? What does he want to teach us through the words in the passage above?



Did you know?

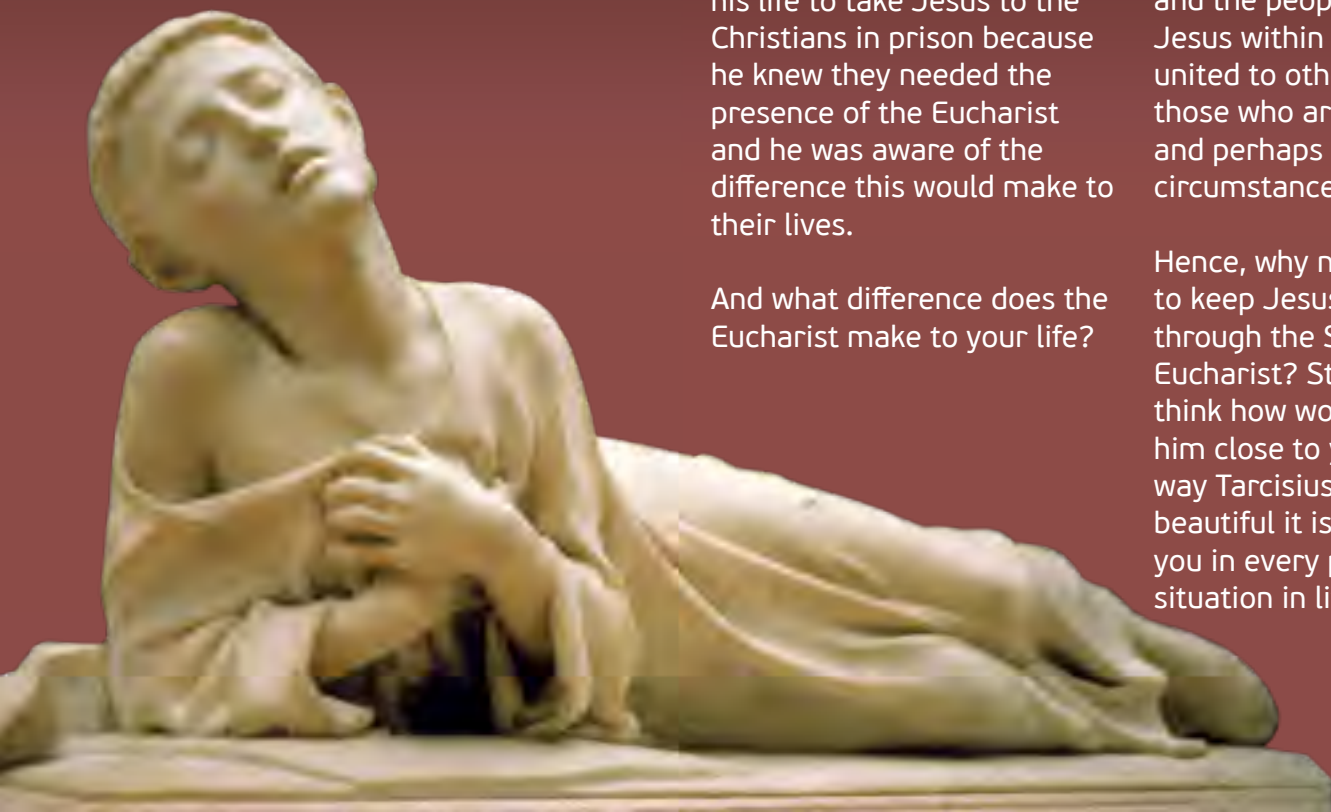
Bread has been considered a staple food by many people for thousands of years. In the Egyptian tombs, excavators found bread that had been baked more than 5000 years ago!

Tarcisius' love for Jesus in the Eucharist should be a model for us. He did not give up the Eucharist and he defended it with his own life, because he truly believed that it was not a simple piece of bread but the Body of Christ. He risked his life to take Jesus to the Christians in prison because he knew they needed the presence of the Eucharist and he was aware of the difference this would make to their lives.

And what difference does the Eucharist make to your life?

Do you know that through this holy meal you move closer to Jesus and that with him so close you will be helped to keep away from sin? With Jesus within you, you will find the strength to make the right choices in life – choices that will benefit you and the people around you. With Jesus within you, you are also united to other Christians, even those who are living far away and perhaps in very different circumstances.

Hence, why not make it a point to keep Jesus close to you through the Sacrament of the Eucharist? Stop for a minute and think how wonderful it is to hold him close to you in the same way Tarcisius did. Think how beautiful it is to take him with you in every place and in every situation in life.





The backpack

Review

A Keywords

Briefly explain the following terms:

- ▶ Inspiration
- ▶ Gospel
- ▶ The Great Commandment
- ▶ The New Commandment

B Main ideas

Write a paragraph about the following:

- ▶ What do we mean when we say that the Catholic Church considers the Bible the Word of God?
- ▶ Mention two episodes from the Old Testament and explain how, through them, we see that God loves man and wants to give him what is truly for his own good.
- ▶ Explain why Jesus did not simply come to deliver a message from God, but is himself God's message.
- ▶ Show how all the commandments are summed up in Jesus' Great Commandment.

C Stop and think

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

- ▶ Why is it your own responsibility to decide what you want in the 'backpack' of your life?
- ▶ If you truly believe that the Bible is the Word of God, what difference does this make to your life?
- ▶ Explain what Jesus' New Commandment asks regarding the way you act towards others. Give two examples from daily life.

D Family discussion

Discuss these questions as a family:

- ▶ What importance are we giving to the Bible in our home? Is the Bible simply decorating a shelf or is it truly the guidebook in our lives?
- ▶ Do we all really make an effort to celebrate and receive the Eucharist together, at least on Sundays?



Challenges

PREPARE YOURSELF:

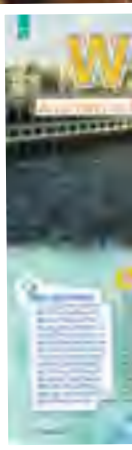
You must definitely have noticed that not everything around you is good and beautiful.

Have you ever stopped to think why there is so much evil and suffering in the world?

What does Jesus tell us about how we should meet this challenge?

Tick ✓ the words you are familiar with:

- ☐ good
- ☐ evil
- ☐ suffering
- ☐ selfishness
- ☐ sin
- ☐ Holocaust
- ☐ genocide
- ☐ the Suffering Servant
- ☐ the Risen Christ
- ☐ hope



In this chapter, we shall reflect on the problem of evil and suffering in the world and in our own lives. We shall also consider what Christianity teaches about this subject.

Challenges



Good vs Evil

We start by discussing the fact that our life journey does not only consist of good and beautiful things, but we also come across evil and suffering. Sometimes there seems to be a battle between good and evil.

Human suffering

In the second lesson, we consider what causes suffering and we reflect on the fact that, very often, suffering is the result of the wrong choices people make.

The horrors of evil

Then we see how far people can go when they allow evil to take over. We reflect on the horror of the Holocaust and other occurrences of genocide that are even more recent. We realize that we have a duty to remember them so that they will not happen again.

Why?

In this lesson, we appraise what Judaism and Islam teach about evil and suffering.

What about the Old Testament?

Then we examine what the Old Testament teaches us about the problem of evil and suffering.

Jesus is our answer

Here we recognize that Jesus, the Son of God made man, gives us the answer to the problem of evil and suffering. He does not do this with words, but by becoming the Suffering Servant of the Lord, who suffers with us and for us.

The source of our hope

This lesson deals with the experience of Saint John, and many others who saw the Risen Christ. Their lives were changed forever. They were now certain that it would not be evil and suffering that would have the last word, but God.

A hope that brings about change

In the last lesson, we see how the experience of the Risen Christ changed the lives of the apostles and the other disciples and gave them the strength to preach Christ all over the world. Similarly, our faith in the Risen Christ will give us the strength to spread the Good News, not only through our words but above all, through our deeds.



Good vs Evil

If you decide to go for a walk, you will not necessarily see only beautiful things. In fact, every road has potholes and bumpy parts and you may come across stones here and there. And the same thing applies to the road along which we travel on our life journey.

When you were younger, your parents and those who love you tried to protect you from everything that was bad and ugly. If it was cold, they would wrap you up in jackets and shawls so that you would not become ill. And who knows how often they told you that you should never go off with someone you did not know. However, no protection in the world could shield you forever from all suffering and pain.

It is a fact that beauty and goodness, ugliness and evil exist; we can see them around us and we also experience them within us. This reality has been expressed in music, stories, films and the different arts. Spiderman and the Green Goblin, Harry Potter and Voldemort, the fairy godmother and the wicked witch are just a few examples of the battle between good and evil. The human person has always been aware of this contrast and has realized that evil goes against human nature.

In the Bible, we read that God created the human person in a beautiful garden full of good things. It was sin that brought about suffering and evil. All the stories in the Bible show the battle between good and evil. God and those who follow his word are engaged in a constant struggle against the powers of evil which are often led by pride, selfishness and avarice. The devil is jealous of the human person and he wants man and woman to experience ugliness, suffering and evil. However, in this struggle, we have a very important weapon: our free will. We know that the choice is ours.

From the Book of Revelation

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride dressed for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice call from the throne, "Look, here God lives among human beings. He will make his home among them; they will be his people, and he will be their God, God-with-them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness or pain. The world of the past has gone." (Rev 21, 1-4)

Here God is assuring us that there will be a time when good will triumph completely and there will be no more evil and suffering. How do you feel when you read God's promise?

When you choose to do good in your life, you will become a better person and build a more beautiful world around you. On the other hand, when you choose to do what is wrong, you will become weaker as a person, and bring suffering to others. Because you are a free person, you can already share the holiness and beauty of God. However, you may also choose to do what is wrong and feel the misery of those who are far away from God.

Every person was created to experience goodness. God placed man and woman in the Garden of Eden and although we may sin and turn away from God, he is always offering us the strength to be able to rise again and reject what is bad and ugly. We can start sharing God's love now and enjoy it forever in Heaven.



Work on this!

Take a good look at these photos and choose one. What message about good and evil is expressed in the photo?



Human suffering

Think about different situations of suffering you have seen or heard about.

Which ones are the fault of the human person?

Which are not?

Sometimes suffering is the result of things that go wrong in nature, as in the case of an earthquake or the death of someone we love. Here, we do not have any control over the situation. However, suffering may also be the result of the selfishness and evil of the human person. Do you remember the stories and fairy tales you

were told when you were young? Even in these stories, life was not a bed of roses. Many of them had good and bad characters; examples are the story of *Snow White* and that of the *Little Match Girl*. In both of these, suffering is the result of evil. In the case of *Snow White*, suffering comes from the evil queen who is also

a wicked witch, while in the story of the *Little Match Girl* suffering is the result of the indifference of the people around her.

In the real world, there are no witches, ogres or vampires. However, evil does exist and we often get to know about situations where suffering is the result of the evil of the human person. For



Work on this!

Look up the story of the *Little Match Girl* on the web. Read the story or watch the video. Write down what you felt as you read or saw the story.



Did you know?

Very often, when we hear about an earthquake, we immediately think how harsh nature can be. Have you ever realized that, even in these cases, some deaths are a result of the sin of the human person? Did you know that some people die because of the way the buildings are constructed? Were you aware that there have been cases where a building collapsed and people died because the builder used inferior material in order to earn more money?

example, we often hear about bullying. We also hear about fighting between people who could never stand each other and sometimes even between people who had once loved each other.

If you hear or watch the news, you will soon realize that our world is full of beauty and ugliness, which are often the result of the choices people make. A traffic accident may be the result of the sin of people who drive carelessly, just as a philanthropic action is the result of the goodness of the person who does it. Everything is related to the decisions we make and the way we act.

No one wants to suffer. Everyone wants to be happy. The media is aware of this and tries to sell what it considers beautiful. The media tells you to avoid everything that can hurt or annoy you. The world we live in teaches us, that in order to be successful,

we must think only of our needs and be our own god. But this is precisely what leads to more suffering. When we only think of ourselves, someone else is going to suffer. The poverty in the world is the result of the selfishness of wealthy people. When you choose

Delve deeper

Our Lady Help of Christians
(Cathedral Museum, Mdina)

Look at this picture carefully and make a list of the characters you observe. Who or what do you think they represent? What does Our Lady have in her right hand? What is she doing with her other hand? Remember that in your struggle against evil, you are not alone. Apart from the fact that there are many people who love you and who can help you, God will never abandon you. And on the cross, Jesus gave us his mother as our mother. Our Lady will definitely intercede for us and help us overcome the problems of life.

to do only what you want, people around you are going to suffer because of your arrogance. Keep in mind that you are responsible for the choices you make. Remember to use what you have in the 'backpack' in order to make good decisions.

The horrors of evil

Sin does not only separate us from God, but it also damages us and brings about a separation from other people and from God's creation. People's sins cause so much needless suffering to other people. When two countries are at war, it is often because of a lack of understanding or because of avarice or selfishness. The First and Second World Wars and so many other wars brought about hunger, sickness and death. Many people suffered because of the selfishness and jealousy of the few.

When the First World War came to an end in 1918, no one imagined

that a war that was even harsher and crueller would break out just over twenty years later. At the end of the First World War, Germany was conquered and humiliated. When Adolf Hitler became the leader of Germany in 1933, he soon gained control over every form of leadership in the country. For a very long time, Hitler and his fellow Nazis had been spreading the lie that the Jews were the source of all Germany's problems. Now that they were in power, they initiated a programme to get rid of them completely. Some months before the beginning of the Second World War, Hitler had declared that if this war broke out, it would be

the fault of the rich Jews. And at the same time, he announced, that as a result of the war, the Jewish race would be wiped out completely in Europe.

The war started when Hitler's army invaded Poland in order to continue his plan to dominate the whole of Europe. By the end of the war, over 60 million people had died and many more were injured or homeless. However, the most terrible thing that took place and that still shocks anyone who learns about it, was the Holocaust, or Shoah (a word that means a calamity), as the Jews call it.

A scene from the film *Life is beautiful* which relates the story of a father who does his utmost to try to shield his little son from the horrors of the Holocaust.

The hatred towards the Jews was not new. But the extreme hatred that led to the Holocaust was terrifying. The Nazis started by passing racist laws against the Jews. For example, Jews were not allowed to work as civil servants. They were deprived of German citizenship and could only marry other Jews. They could not practise professions such as that of the doctor or lawyer... After all these injustices – and many others besides – the climax came in 1942, when the Nazis decided to gather all the Jews in concentration camps and kill them.

In the camps, they humiliated the Jews, carried out experiments on them, forced them to work until they dropped down dead and robbed them of everything, even their hair and any gold teeth they had. By the end of the war, about 6 million Jews had been killed, many of them in a very brutal way.

During and after the Holocaust, the Jewish people reflected on their relationship with God and why there was so much evil in the world. The Nazis did not only want to wipe out all the Jews, but they also wanted to eradicate the very idea of God from the hearts of people. However, as we read in the Bible, God is found in the cry of pain of people who suffer.



Work on this!



Have you ever heard of Anne Frank? Look up the official site of the Anne Frank museum in Amsterdam, Holland, on the web. Find out who she was, how old she was, why she had gone into hiding, where she hid and with whom. Find out also what she wrote while they were in hiding, how they were caught, and how she died.

Arnošt Lustig



Arnošt Lustig, a Jewish Czech who died in 2011, spent about three years of his youth in concentration camps. He used to talk about the horrors he saw around him, especially when he was in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Among his many experiences, he relates an incident which shows that the cruel acts taking place could break down not only the Jews, but also the people who carried them out. A German SS soldier spoke to him about the atrocities which were going on in the camp. Lustig wrote: "His face expressed many kinds of exhaustion. The fatigue of a man who worked a lot, which in Auschwitz-Birkenau meant killed a lot; the fatigue of a man who had not slept for many nights and even lying in a bed could not fall asleep; and finally, the fatigue of a man for whom life was a burden, a disgust, because it had lost sense and beauty, value and balance."

The horrors of evil

by making good use of the wisdom and intelligence which God has given them, people can achieve true greatness. However, this intelligence can also be used badly. Think of the beauty of a fireworks display. The same ingredients can be used to make bombs that bring so much destruction. Everything depends on the choices we make.

After the horrors of the First and Second World Wars, and in a special way after the Holocaust, many good people did not want

any more wars. Many countries formed alliances in order to create what is now known as the United Nations. De Gasperi, Schuman and Adenauer, three European politicians who were Catholic, worked relentlessly in order to form what is now known as the European Union.

Although many people worked so hard in order to spread peace and abolish hunger and poverty, there were others whose only aims were wealth and power. In recent years, there have been many wars in different parts of the world including Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq and Somalia. In these wars, terrible atrocities took place. In Rwanda





The film *Hotel Rwanda* shows how Paul Rusesabagina managed to save 1,268 people from the genocide that was taking place in Rwanda. This happened in 1994 when, after the killing of Juvenal Habyarimana, Hutu extremists launched a campaign of genocide against the Tutsi ethnic group.

About 800,000 were killed during in this genocide. The film relates the story of Paul, a Hutu who was the manager of an important hotel. Paul decided to risk everything and use his contacts and his hotel as a base to save as many people as possible.

In the film, we see how Paul pretended that his hotel was running normally with paying guests, although the people were in fact refugees. This facade could not last forever, and he eventually managed to convince a NATO colonel to help the refugees escape from the country.

Today Paul Rusesabagina lives in Belgium with his family and the people who planned the genocide were arrested by the United Nations in 2002. Stories like this show us that no darkness can ever quench the light that is found in the heart of the human person.

in Africa and Bosnia in Europe, many thousands of people died.

In 1994, in Rwanda, one out of every ten people was killed because of the hatred between two ethnic groups. A total of 800,000 people were killed over one hundred days. Many were buried in common graves, which means that, up to the present day, many families have no idea where their dear ones are buried. Because of the fighting and the killing that was taking place, over 2,000,000 people fled the country and thus lost their homes, their livelihood and every form of security.

The human person is capable of harbouring a deep hatred for others. Sin and evil tend to breed and multiply. Recall the first sin of Adam and Eve. This was followed by another sin, when Cain killed Abel, his brother. In the same way, the hatred of one person – or many people – may lead quite easily to great injustices and even fighting and killing. This is why it is so important for you to learn from now to accept everyone. Otherwise, if you choose to fear and despise a person or a group of people, you may turn a blind eye when other people are unjust to them or you may even be unjust yourself.



Did you know?

According to the United Nations, the word 'genocide' means an act carried out with the intention of destroying – partially or totally – a nation, an ethnic group, a race or a religious group.

(Continues from page 31)

The parish priest has announced that he is starting a choir of young people in order to prepare for the Christmas Midnight Mass. Do you want to join?

Yes Go to page 53

No Go to page 74

The choice is yours





The power

Had you met Raymond Kolbe when he was 10 years old, you would never have imagined that he would join the religious life and become truly holy. As a boy, he was naughty and also very cunning. Unfortunately, he only used his many talents to worry his mother. One day, she was so frustrated that she turned on him and told him that she did not know what would happen to him when he grew up. These words, together with the disappointment in his mother's voice, set him thinking. He realized that if he continued his way of life, he would end up badly, and thus he decided to change. He became more obedient and started taking his studies more seriously. His mother would even find him praying in front of a painting of Our Lady in a nearby church.

The family was poor and could not afford to pay for his education. However, because of the change that had taken place in him, the pharmacist of the village gave him a hand with his studies, and he even helped him enter the secondary school at Leopoli. After a short time, Raymond and his two brothers entered the minor seminary at Galicia. Here, Raymond was a brilliant student in

the sciences and he would spend his free time sketching models of crafts which could fly outside the earth's atmosphere. In his discussions with his friends, Raymond would often maintain that within a short time, man would manage to land on the moon. This was about fifty years before Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins actually did so.

However, Raymond's vocation in life was different. He had been hearing a call for some time, and he decided to answer. In 1910, he started his novitiate with the Conventual Franciscans and as a sign of a new beginning, he changed his name to Maximilian. Max studied with the intention of helping people realize how much they needed God in their lives. He had a special devotion to Our Lady, as a perfect model of how one should love God. Hence, when he started an association, he chose Mary as the model. With the help of many people who joined this association, Kolbe bought a printing press and started using it to spread the Good News. Although it was an old printing press and some parts needed repairs, this was the start of a new mission. Within a short time, his magazine had a circulation of 70,000 and the association had 126,000 members.

However, trouble was looming. In 1939, Germany, led by the Nazi Party, invaded Poland. One of the first orders was to stop all publications. This was followed by Kolbe's arrest because he was looking after those who had been wounded during the war. He was freed after a short time, but he was then re-arrested and sent to the concentration camp at Auschwitz. Once again, Kolbe changed his name; now he was simply known as 16670.

Under the leadership of Commandant Fritz, the soldiers treated everyone very cruelly, especially the Polish priest. However, Kolbe never lost his inner peace. He knew that even if the soldiers were brutal, God was with him all along. His peace and his strength became

of love



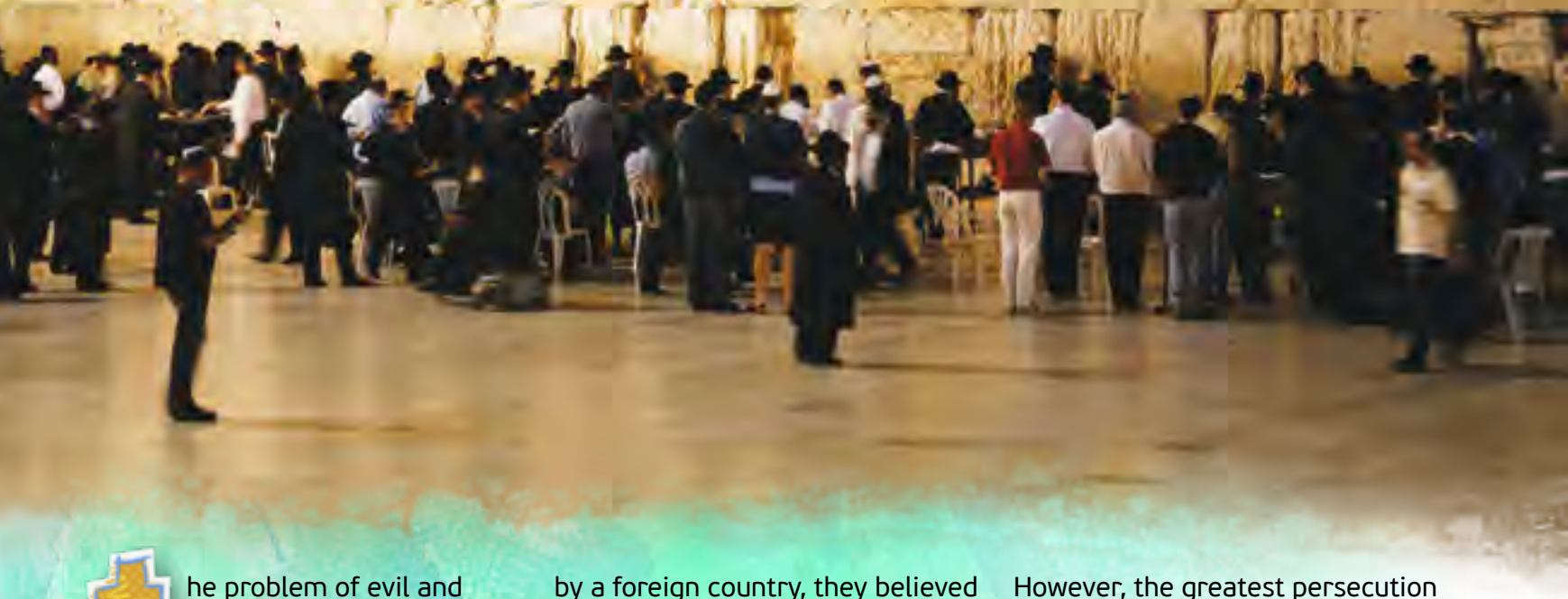
beacons of hope for the other prisoners who admired him greatly. Kolbe tried to help everyone – by giving others his own food and saying many words of comfort. Sometimes, he would hear confessions at night. His mission was still the same: that of spreading the Good News. Only the circumstances had changed.

One day a prisoner escaped and he could not be traced even after a full day's search. The punishment was ruthless: ten prisoners were chosen to be locked up in a bunker and starved to death. One of those who was chosen, Francis Gajowniczek, started sobbing as he realized he would never see his wife and children again. At this point, Kolbe approached the Commandant and offered to take his place. Fritz was speechless, but he agreed to take Kolbe instead of Francis.

The time in the bunker seemed endless but Kolbe spent his time encouraging his companions during their last hours on earth. Together they prayed and praised God. The last person to die was Kolbe and his death impressed not only the other prisoners, but also the soldiers. Pope John Paul II chose Kolbe as a Saint of the Church, a model for all Christians who want to spread the Good News, not only by words, but also by deeds.

Why?

According to Judaism



he problem of evil and suffering troubles every person. How can you believe in a good God when you see so much evil and suffering? If God really has the power to do anything he wants to, why does he permit evil? Every religion has tried to answer these questions.

In the olden times, the Jews believed that suffering was a consequence of evil and a punishment for it. God had made a Covenant with the Jews. He would be their God and he would look after them and they would be his people and follow his laws. Whenever they faced a tragedy, such as a drought or an invasion

by a foreign country, they believed they were being punished for the wrong they had done.

And they thought that this applied even on an individual level. Once, Jesus' disciples asked him why a man had been born blind. They wanted to know whether this was a result of his sins or the sins of his parents. Although this idea remained an integral part of the Jewish faith for a long time afterwards, that day Jesus declared that it was mistaken.

Over these past two thousand years, the Jews have faced a lot of persecution. Many were robbed, evicted from their homes, exiled, or forced to change their religion.

However, the greatest persecution was the Shoah (the Holocaust) during the Second World War.

Many wise Rabbis have tried to understand why this took place. After all they had been through during the Shoah, many Jews felt that they could not continue looking upon suffering as a punishment from God. Some Rabbis explained that the suffering of the Jews could be a reparation for the evil of humankind. However, others denied the existence of a God who knows everything, is all powerful and loving, and yet allowed the Holocaust to take place. On the other hand, some Jews said that during events like this, it is as

Martin Gray

(1922 –)

Martin Gray (Mietek Grayewski), who survived the Holocaust, wrote a book entitled *For those I loved*. Here, he explains how he managed to rebuild his life after the war, became a successful business man, got married and had a family. In 1970, his wife and children were all burnt to death in a fire that destroyed their home. Martin was shattered. Many people encouraged him to sue for compensation, but he decided to dedicate his resources and his energy to save nature from fires similar to the one that had wiped out his family. Martin managed to use his suffering as an inspiration to do something good and beautiful.



Did you know?

The Jews in Malta have a long history. Some people think that a Jewish community was already present on our island during Punic times. It is certain that some Jews lived in Malta during the Roman rule, and we know this because of a number of tombs. Their status varied from time to time. At certain periods, especially at the time of the Arabs and the Normans, many Jews had an important role in the country. However, at other times, they were persecuted. In 1492, as was the case in all countries under Spanish rule, the Jews who refused to convert to Catholicism were banished from Malta.

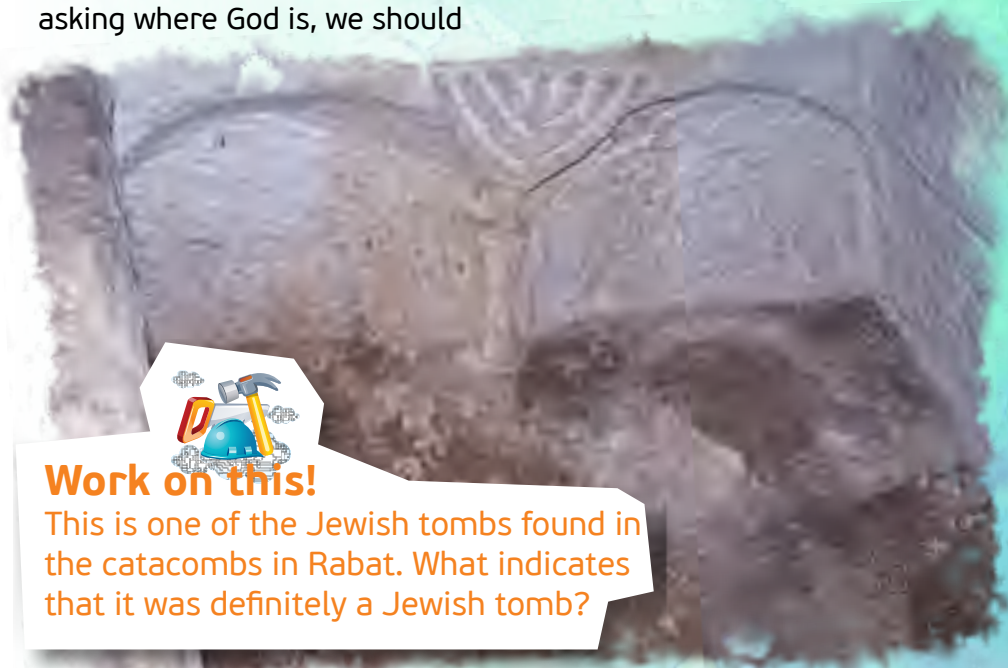
if God is covering his face and refusing to interfere so as not to obstruct the free will of the human person.

Other Jews assert, that when faced with suffering, instead of asking where God is, we should

ask where man is and what he is doing about what is happening. Rather than asking "Why did this happen to me?" or "Do I deserve this suffering?" it would be much better to ask "Since this has taken place, what can I do about it?"

Work on this!

This is one of the Jewish tombs found in the catacombs in Rabat. What indicates that it was definitely a Jewish tomb?



Why?

According to Islam



Did you know?

The Hadith are stories about the sayings and deeds of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. In one of these stories, we are told that Muhammad said the following words: "He who alleviates the suffering of a brother out of the sufferings of the world, Allah would alleviate his suffering from the sufferings of the Day of Resurrection."



Every religion tries to understand why evil and suffering exist. What do Muslims believe? According to Islam, suffering may be the result of the sin of the human person. Muslims believe that sin is the consequence of forgetting God. All people are drawn towards what is good and they also have inclinations which are not bad in themselves. However, when people forget God, these inclinations make them slaves. In order to understand this, we may visualise a situation where someone enjoys computer games so much that he forgets to eat, to wash, to work... At this point, the

person has become a slave (or addict) of the pleasure he gets out of computer games. This brings suffering to himself and perhaps to other people too. Similarly, when people move away from God, they forget what God wants from them and become lost in pleasure and material goods. Because of this, people do what is wrong and cause suffering to themselves and others.

According to Islam, suffering may also help people to learn, because they may realize their mistakes and turn back to God. If people repent, God is willing to forgive them.

The choice is yours

(Continues from page 89)

You decided to stop your singing lessons. Nowadays, when you look back on your decision, there are times when you feel sorry, especially when you realize you could have developed your talent further. On the other hand, you are happy that you still practise your favourite sport. When you see what a lot of time and energy your friends have to dedicate in order to move ahead, you feel your decision was the correct one.

THE END



However, Muslims also consider suffering as a part of life. For example, a person may become ill through no fault of his own. In this case, God uses the suffering to see what lies within the person's heart. The suffering tests the person and one's faith may become stronger when one remains faithful to God's will.

Muslims believe that God never asks people for more than they can give. Hence, they hold that people should not resist suffering and neither should they ask the reason why. A genuine Muslim will accept the suffering as God's will for him.

On the other hand, everyone should try to lessen the suffering of other people by helping them as much as possible. Just as suffering is the result of man's sin, similarly the good deeds of a good person may ease someone's suffering.

Work on this!



Use the web to look up the word 'zakat'. What does it mean? How is it related to the theme of the lesson?

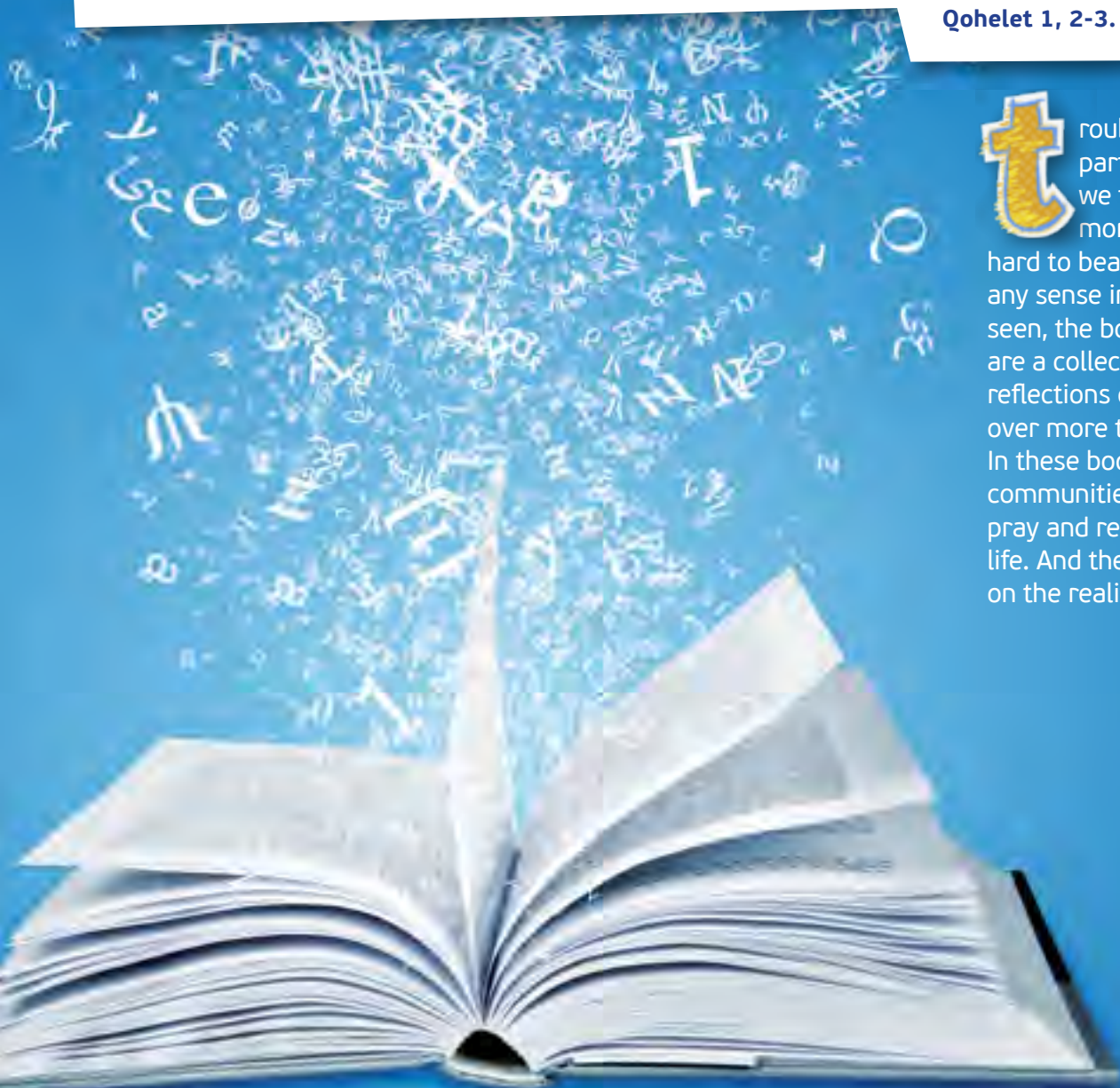


What about the Old Testament?

"Sheer futility: everything is futile! What profit can we show for all our toil, toiling under the sun?...All things are wearisome. No one can say that eyes have not had enough of seeing, ears their fill of hearing. What was, will be again, what has been done, will be done again, and there is nothing new under the sun!"

Qohelet 1, 2-3. 8-9

trouble, evil and death are a part of life. However, at times we feel we cannot take any more pain. Suffering is very hard to bear when we cannot see any sense in it. As we have already seen, the books of the Old Testament are a collection of experiences and reflections of different generations over more than a thousand years. In these books, individuals or whole communities journey with God and pray and reflect on their everyday life. And they obviously reflect also on the reality of suffering in life.



From the Psalms

God whom I praise,
do not be silent!
Wicked and deceiving words
are being said about me,
false accusations
are cast in my teeth.
Words of hate fly all around me,
though I give no cause
for hostility.

In return for my friendship
they denounce me,
and all I can do is pray!
They repay my kindness
with evil,
and friendship with hatred.

(Psalm 109, 1-5)

Have you ever been through an experience similar to that of the psalmist? Did a 'good friend' ever lie about you? Offer your hurt to God in your prayer and ask him to heal your wounds.

Have you ever felt that, while you pray and live a good life, others seem not to bother at all, and yet they seem to be luckier? Even in the Bible, we find people who complain to God that life does not seem to be fair. For example, the psalmist writes: "Envyng the arrogant as I did, and seeing the prosperity of the wicked... exempt from the cares which are the human lot, they have no part in Adam's afflictions" (Ps 73, 3. 5). We are not the only ones who find it difficult to understand suffering.

The experiences of the people of God taught them that God is good and merciful. Thus, suffering and evil could not come from God. According to the Old Testament, suffering and evil are a result of sin. Through the story of Adam and Eve, we know that the human person was not born to suffer. But when man and woman chose not to obey God, they moved away from the source of life and genuine happiness and automatically introduced suffering into their lives. In the Bible, we see that as sin increased, suffering increased too. An example is when the Jews turned away from the true God and started adoring idols. Since they had chosen to move away from God, they did not remain a united people and thus they were easily overcome by other nations and taken into exile.

However, although the people of God learnt that suffering is the result of sin, they also realized that God will always remain present in their lives and ready to save them. When the Jews were suffering because they were slaves in Egypt, they realized that God hears the cry of the people and recognizes their pain. On this occasion, as on many others in their history, God intervened to save them.

Delve deeper

The book of Job, one of the books of the Old Testament, deals with the theme of evil and suffering. It relates the story of Job, a good man who is very wealthy, who loses all he has: his material goods, his children and even his health. In spite of all the suffering he endures, Job refuses to turn against God. Although he feels he does not deserve his suffering and he asks God why he is going through so much, his faith remains intact and he declares: "The Lord gave, The Lord has taken back; blessed be the name of the Lord!"



Jesus is our answer

Over the years, God showed his people that he was with them and wanted to live among them. Even when we human beings deny God, God will continue loving us and calling us back to him.

God loves us so much that he chose to become one of us. Sometimes we do not realize the greatness of this truth. The almighty God chose to become like you and me. He chose to share the humanity of people who feel tired and need to rest, who need to eat and drink, who



Pray

Jesus said: "Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest." (Mt 11, 28)

Use a quiet moment to think about some suffering you are going through, or which you have already gone through, but where the memory is still fresh. Use your journal to write a letter to Jesus where you share your thoughts and feelings with him.



sometimes feel afraid, who get ill from time to time, who cannot do all they want... But, above all, he chose to become, like us, liable to suffering and even death.

At the moment when humanity turned against God because of the first sin, God took the decision to become like us in all things except sin. Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah had already spoken about the suffering which the Son of God would experience. He wrote about the Suffering Servant of the Lord who would suffer to save the people from sin. Jesus, the Son of God made man, who is God himself, never sinned, but he took upon him the effects of all the sins we do.

Jesus passed through many experiences involving suffering during his life. He was born in poverty. When he was a small child, he had to live far away from his country in Egypt. He felt

hungry, felt the heat and the cold, especially during the forty days in the desert. At times, he was abandoned by the people and the authorities turned against him. He felt the pain when his dear ones died, like when he cried at the death of Lazarus. But the greatest suffering he experienced was during the last hours of his life. Have you ever thought of what Jesus went through during his passion? Have you ever thought what he felt when he was dying on the cross?

Thus, when you are going through a difficult time, when you think that no one understands you and that no one has ever faced the same pain, turn to Jesus on the cross and remember that he gave up everything out of love for us. You will realise that God is there for you, and is suffering with you.

Look, my servant will prosper, **will grow great, will rise to great heights**. As many people were aghast at him – **he was so inhumanly disfigured that he no longer looked like a man** – so many nations will be astonished. (Is 52, 13-15)

Yet ours were the sufferings he was bearing, ours the sorrows he was carrying, while we thought of him as someone being punished and **struck with affliction by God**; whereas he was being wounded for our rebellions, crushed because of our guilt; the punishment reconciling us fell on him, and **we have been healed by his bruises**. We had all gone astray like sheep, each taking his own way, and the Lord brought the acts of rebellion of all of us to bear on him. Ill-treated and afflicted, **he never opened his mouth**, like a lamb led to the slaughter-house, like a sheep dumb before its shearers, he never opened his mouth. Forcibly, after sentence, he was taken. Which of his contemporaries was concerned at his having been cut off from the land of the living, at his having been struck dead for his people's rebellion? He was given a grave with the wicked, and **his tomb is with the rich**, although he had done no violence, had spoken no deceit. (Is 53, 4-9)

Which sufferings of Jesus do you recall when you read the words in bold print?

The source of our hope

I imagine you are Saint John; you have left everything for Jesus and have been following him for the past couple of years. Jesus has become your greatest friend. You followed him from place to place. You heard him preach and saw him healing people. You know what a good man he is and how much he loves you. During his last meal, you were sitting near him and you ate and drank with him. You could see how anxious he was. You rested your head on his chest because you wanted to hear his beating heart and to show your support. After the meal, you went

with him to pray in the garden. You realized he was terrified. However, you were overcome by a great tiredness and although you wanted to remain awake, you just could not do so.

Suddenly, there was a great noise that woke you up. You saw that you were surrounded by people who were carrying swords and spears. They seized Jesus and took him with them. You had friends in the palace of the high priest and you managed to go in, so that you could see what was happening to Jesus. You were furious when you

heard the lies they said about him, and you were amazed when you saw that he simply kept his head down and said nothing.

Then they took him to Pilate. You cried when you saw the Roman soldiers beating Jesus. You were horrified when you saw all that blood. You continued to follow him even when they crucified him. You stood there, dumbfounded, as you could not take in what was happening. Was it just a





Delve deeper

"If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is without substance, and so is your faith" (1Cor 15, 14). What do these words mean?

nightmare? But when Mary, his mother, came up to you, you realized that you were certainly not dreaming! Jesus was in great pain, but he still asked you to take care of his mother. All your strength seemed to leave you. You were angry at everybody. You wanted to get Jesus down from the cross in order to look after him and hide him from those people who were being so cruel. But you could not do this, and you realized that he wanted to stay there till the end. And with his last breath, he forgave his killers!

When he died, you could not bring yourself to look at his body covered in blood and pierced with the nails! You helped Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus put him into the tomb and seal it with a large stone. Now it was all over.

You went home with Mary. The place was so silent and it felt so empty. You felt that your life too, was now totally EMPTY.

On Sunday morning, Mary of Magdala came over to say that the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty. You could feel your heart thumping. How could the tomb be EMPTY? Who had stolen the body? And how had this happened? How could people be so heartless? Now you could not even go to the tomb to mourn his death!



You called Peter and the two of you ran to the tomb. You were the first to arrive, but you waited for Peter outside the tomb. When you entered with Peter, you saw the linen cloths neatly folded. And it was at that moment that you understood all that Jesus had said – that he would die and rise again after three days. You were suddenly filled with joy and you ran back to where the disciples were gathered. However, they did not want to believe you. They

thought you were out of your mind and started arguing. At that moment, you realized that Jesus was standing near the door. You wanted to give him a huge hug, but you realized that there was something different about him. Now it was truly evident that he was the Lord of all. Jesus was not only man, but also God.

When the disciples met the Risen Christ after his death, they were transformed. They were no longer frightened and worried. You too, can be changed completely if you experience the Risen Christ in your life. Your attitude to the difficulties of life will change. When you share your pain with Jesus, not only will you realize that you are not alone, but like the disciples, you will be filled with hope, because you will realize that your moments of pain will not last forever.

The choice is yours

(Continues from page 7)

As you practised your favourite sport, you continued improving. However, there was a problem concerning your progress at school, because it was soon obvious that the training sessions were taking up too much of your time and you could not catch up with your homework. What would you do?

Decrease your training sessions Go to page 69

Keep the same amount of sessions Go to page 126



A hope that brings about change

have you ever been through an experience which was so wonderful that you wanted to tell everyone about it? Perhaps you went abroad and really enjoyed yourself and you wanted others to know ... Perhaps you received a beautiful gift and you wanted to tell your friends.

This is what happened to the disciples when they saw Jesus alive again after his death. They

were filled with a great happiness which they could not keep to themselves. They wanted to share it with the whole world. In fact, they started telling everyone about Jesus' resurrection. Not even the threat of martyrdom could stop them.

When you experience Jesus victorious over death, you will see things differently. You will understand that suffering will not last forever. You will realize that suffering has a purpose. You will not give up when you see the





Live it!

Try to join or give your support to an association that does voluntary work to make life more beautiful for others. One such association is aimed specifically for young people, and is called 'Children Helping Children'. Look up some information about its Malta branch, and consider whether you would like to join.

suffering in the world around you, but you will be encouraged to do your utmost to make things better.

Like the disciples, anyone who experiences the Risen Christ in their life will want to share this joy with others. It is such a wonderful experience, that many Christians have been ready to suffer and even face death in order to preach this Good News and this still happens nowadays.

You too, can play your part in spreading the Good News, not necessarily by preaching, but by the way you handle the different situations in life and the way you talk to others. For example, are you optimistic in your thoughts and words, or do you give up very quickly?

Jesus' resurrection is a triumph over evil and suffering. People

who accept the Risen Christ in their lives join him in the struggle against evil and suffering. Over the centuries, millions of Christians have worked for peace and justice in the world. Some have been involved in politics and they became great leaders and brought about important changes in the

world. Others have been involved in voluntary work and they transformed the lives of people who felt totally lost.

You too, are called to take part in this work. Even at a young age, you can do things that may appear trivial, but which will mean a lot to the people you help. For example, if you visit a friend who is ill, your support will make such a difference to her. A smile or a word of encouragement may mean so much to someone who is unhappy.



Work on this!

Look up some information about Robert Schuman. What change did this Catholic politician bring about in the world through his vision and his work?

Challenges

Review

A Keywords

Briefly explain the following terms:

- ▶ Sin
- ▶ The Holocaust
- ▶ The Suffering Servant
- ▶ The Risen Christ

B Main ideas

Write a paragraph about the following:

- ▶ Give an example from the twentieth century which shows how sin can cause immense horror and suffering.
- ▶ How does the Old Testament show that when we sin and move away from God, we bring unhappiness and suffering upon ourselves?
- ▶ How did Jesus, the Son of God made man, take our suffering upon himself?
- ▶ Why is Jesus' Resurrection the source of our faith and our hope?

C Stop and think

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

- ▶ Give examples from your everyday life in order to show that people sometimes bring suffering upon themselves and people around them.
- ▶ Think about the Holocaust or other examples of genocide that took place in the twentieth century. What can you learn from these events on the way you should think about and treat people of other races.
- ▶ Consider what Judaism or Islam teach about evil and suffering and discuss, what in these teachings, is close to what we believe as Christians.
- ▶ How does your faith in the Risen Christ encourage you to play your part in the building of a more beautiful world?

D Family discussion

Discuss these questions as a family:

- ▶ Are any members of the family suffering at the moment? How can we support each other in such moments?
- ▶ What can we do to make sure that we do not cause other members of our family to suffer?





PREPARE YOURSELF:

How do you feel when you are alone?

Have you ever felt alone even though surrounded by many people?

Have you ever felt that you were not alone even though there was no one near you?

Tick ✓ the words you are familiar with:

- ☐ beauty
- ☐ presence
- ☐ prayer
- ☐ adoration
- ☐ reconciliation
- ☐ accompaniment
- ☐ Heaven
- ☐ sainthood
- ☐ virtue

Never alone



In this chapter we shall see how we can respond to a very important truth in Catholic faith: that God actively and lovingly takes care of all persons. We shall discover how God is offering to be our faithful friend along our life adventure-journey.

Never alone



Mystery and wonder

In the first lesson we reflect on experiences of mystery and wonder especially when faced with the beauty of God's creation.

The experience of God

In one of two choices, we see how different persons experienced the presence of God in their life.

The importance of prayer

We then consider the importance of prayer in Jesus' life on this earth and we think about the importance of prayer in our daily life.

The beauty of reconciliation

In this lesson we evaluate the sacrament of reconciliation as a healing and strengthening experience.

A spiritual friend

Here we learn about the ancient tradition of spiritual direction and think about its benefits in our life.

Walking with and towards God

We arrive at the conclusion that our life's journey is a journey with God, the aim of which is our eternal union with him in heaven.

What shall I wear?

In the last lesson of this book we will make a list of the virtues which will be of help during the adventure of our life-journey towards God.

Mystery and Wonder

Have you ever been quietly watching the sun going down and felt a great peace within you?

Or have you ever seen a butterfly or heard a small bird singing and you kept following it because its beauty amazed you?

Have you ever wished that a game you were playing with your friends never ended?

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ave you ever heard a piece of music and you wanted to keep on listening to it over and over again? Or have you ever, on waking up, opened the window and on seeing the beautiful day it was, felt great joy at smelling the fresh air? If you have experienced these feelings, then without knowing,

you have already met God! The beauty which attracted you and filled your heart with these experiences is the beauty of God himself and even if you have not noticed, he was there.

Many a time, we are so preoccupied with doing different things, that in this world of ours

we do not notice God in the simple things around us. God is present in the beauty of nature, in music, in art. We can see God clearly in the love within us and of those around us. Each person is an image of God and in the beauty of each person we can meet the beauty of God. Unfortunately few see God in all this. Many a time



Work on this!

Find a place on your own in a garden or by the seaside. Observe the beauty of nature. How do you feel faced with this beauty? Now speak with God about this and thank him for so much beauty within you and around you. Write down these thoughts in your journal. If you like drawing you may draw to express the beauty which you are seeing.



we end up grumbling, we look upon the negative side of things, we miss out on the beauty of life and we do not encounter God. In this way our hearts remain empty and we will not find happiness. God is everywhere, in everything and in everyone. There is nowhere that God is not found. All we need is to notice, in the same way the shepherd David noticed during those times while he was tending his sheep, when through the psalms he would lose himself in praising God's beauty in the nature around him and in himself.

It was through a burning bush which did not turn to ashes that God spoke to Moses. But, this was only possible because Moses was attentive and he saw that bush. What about you, if God spoke to you, will you notice?



Did you know?

St Francis of Assisi is known for his love for nature. He met God in the simplicity of nature around him. He asked the birds to praise God through their singing and he called all nature "sister" or "brother", for example "brother sun" and "sister moon".

The experience of God

In the journey of our life we pass through various experiences. There are times when everything is going well and we feel good, other times all seems difficult. God is with us in all moments of our lives, he never leaves us alone and because he loves us, he seeks to help us according to our needs at that particular moment. Different persons experience God differently, in different moments of their lives.

In the Book of Kings, in the Old Testament, we read about the prophet Elijah, who was passing through a difficult moment in his life journey. He was feeling very sad and defeated because they wanted to kill him since he was witness of the true God. In this moment in time he was escaping.

He went up Mount Horeb and God spoke to him there. First there was a strong wind, but God was not there, then the ground shook but God was not there either, afterwards there was a fire, but God was not in the fire. Then Elijah felt a gentle breeze and in this breeze he felt the presence of God and God spoke to him.

Sometimes, God speaks to us through a great shaking in our lives, through a difficult episode which shows us what God wants of us and challenges us to grow up and become more responsible. At other times we need to experience the gentleness of God the

The choice is yours

(Continues from page 117)

The problem continues to grow. Your parents become very worried and they decide to stop you from continuing your training. You are very disappointed.

You decide to obey and do your utmost to catch up in school.

Go to page 19

You act stubborn and do not care less about school. **Go to page 37**





Did you know?

L-Arloġġ tat-Talb (The Prayer Watch) is a booklet of short prayers for different times of the day. St George Preca came up with this idea to help others experience God by remembering him and speaking with him frequently.



Delve deeper

Read what these people had to say about God. What do you think?

same way Elijah needed, and so experience God through an event which encourages and comforts us. To recognize God in the different episodes in our life it is important that like Elijah we seek God and we stop and listen to him.

Where shall we seek God? Saint Augustine recounts that he looked for God outside himself, for example in his friends and in different adventures. He then found God in himself. Nature, music, art, friends, books or films, and all things in our life, may help us to discover God within us. But to meet God and to grow in our relationship with him, it is very important to keep close to him through prayer.

Saint George Preca had a very deep relationship with God. He felt God so near that he prayed: "Lord God, you are here and I exist in you like a fish in clean water." Since he believed that God is all the time with us, he felt the need to communicate with him at frequent

intervals during the day. He believed that through prayer, not only will we be more conscious of the presence of God but we will also be more ready to do his will.

Saint George experienced God's presence more profoundly during Mass. He took Mass so seriously that his celebration of Mass used to take very long. Whenever anyone drew his attention not to take so long, he used to answer, "When you are with a friend, are you in a hurry?"

Saint George Preca saw in each person a reflection of God. He used to say "If you want to send a letter to God, send it through a person." When you are often in contact with God who is present within you, you will realize that God is not only within you but also within all the others around you. It is when you have come to know him within you, that you will start recognizing him in others, the same as you recognize a best friend coming down the road.

"I would rather walk with God in the dark than go alone in the light."

MARY GARDINER BRAINARD
AMERICAN POETESS (1837-1905)

"God, as Truth, has been for me a treasure beyond price. May he be so to every one of us."

MAHATMA GANDHI INDIAN
POLITICAL AND SPIRITUAL
LEADER (1869-1948)

"Maybe the atheist cannot find God for the same reason a thief cannot find a policeman."

FRANCIS THOMSON
ENGLISH POET (1859-1907)

"People see God everyday, they just do not recognise him."

PEARL BAILEY
AMERICAN SINGER AND ACTRESS
(1918-1990)

The experience of God

no one is closer to us than God. He is continually present in our life journey, but to experience him, it is important that we seek him.

In Saint Luke's gospel we read about a prophetess called Anna. She was married for seven years and after becoming a widow she

decided to give her life to God. Anna used to experience God in prayer and in the silence of the Temple. In fact the gospel recounts how she never left the Temple. Her love for God enabled her to meet Jesus, because that day when Mary and Joseph went to present the little boy Jesus in the Temple, she was there. Anna started to praise and thank God for this joyful encounter with Jesus, with all those present.

Even our meeting with God can bring with it great joy and a sense of gratitude. To be able to meet God, however, like Anna we need silence and open communication with him. Anna continually lived in the presence of God, she did not think about God once a week or once a day, but she frequently and repeatedly lifted her thoughts and heart to him and he filled her with joy.

Pray



In the book of the prophet Isaiah (49, 15-16) we read:

Can a woman forget her baby at the breast, feel no pity for the child she has borne? Even if these were to forget, I shall not forget you. Look, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

Speak with God about how you feel when you hear him saying these words to you.





Like Therese of Lisieux, some may feel that God is calling them to dedicate their lives to him by living in a monastery. But God has a calling for everyone, even for you, to live in his presence. He wishes that like Saint Therese, you too experience him as God the loving Father who always takes care of you. Some of us may not have a good experience of parental love. This could be because our parents are passing through problems and they do not show as much love as we need. God is different. God neither forgets us nor will he abandon us. God is God not man, this is why he is always there for us, he loves us and cares for us.



Look it up!

Jennifer Strickland was a famous model who changed her life after experiencing Jesus. Do some research and see what was the experience which brought her face to face with Jesus.

The importance of prayer

Whilst living on earth Jesus used to pray continually. Since Jesus is God, to whom did he pray? Although it is true that Jesus is God, to live like us on earth he also became human and he had the same needs as us. Jesus used to pray to God the Father. Whilst in prayer, Jesus listened and he himself said that he did what he did because this was the will of God the Father.

Jesus' faith whilst in prayer to God the Father was so strong that it even rose people from death! Jesus reveals that even if our faith is like a mustard seed we can command the mountain to move and it will obey! By this he meant that if we pray in faith to God nothing is impossible.

The gospels tell us that Jesus prayed for various reasons. Amongst these we find Jesus praying to God not to lead him into temptation and not to sin, he prayed before taking important decisions, he prayed for courage in difficult moments such as before his death on the cross. The presence of God in Jesus' life made all the difference. It was during prayer that Jesus had the time to reflect and remember God's love for him and that even if everyone else deserted him, God

the Father would never abandon him. Jesus also prayed for others. Do you know that he also prayed for you? During the Last Supper with his disciples, Jesus prayed for all those who would believe in him, therefore in his prayer he also included all those who believe in him today!

If Jesus felt the need to pray, then should not we too feel this need? The disciples used to look at Jesus praying and they realized that they did not know how to pray. Even we meet with this difficulty at times. Sometimes we ask about what we should pray for or else how we can hear

God speaking to us. The disciples wished to be like Jesus, close to God and feel him so close to them that nothing would be able to separate them from him. So one day they asked him to teach them how to pray. Jesus told them that when they prayed, like him they should call God "Father" and through the prayer we know as Our Father, Jesus showed them how they should pray. If there is someone from whom we can learn how we can keep contact with God this is surely Jesus.





Work on this!

We find that Jesus used to pray early in the morning and also late at night in isolated places. Find the best time for you to pray at home. When is it most quiet? Where can no one disturb you? For the coming week try to keep your appointment with God at the same place and at the same time.

Jesus is inviting you to discover with him true prayer.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church there are various forms of prayer:

Blessing and adoration –

for example: “Blessed are you Lord, almighty God, in front of you I shall say no more, I adore you.”

Prayer of petition, for material and/or spiritual needs –

for example: “Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation.”

Prayer of intercession –

for example: “Lord God, I pray for all those who are responsible for taking care of children and youths, so that they do this to their best abilities.”

Prayer of thanksgiving –

for example: “Thank you Lord for all the blessings that you have bestowed upon me. I thank you for my life, for my talents and for all those who wish me good.”

Prayer of praise –

for example: “I thank you, o Lord, with my whole heart, I recount all your wonders, I rejoice and delight in you, I sing to your name, Most High.”



Delve deeper

In the gospel we find exact details of what Jesus prayed in particular circumstances. At other times we find that Jesus prayed but we do not know what he prayed for. We are therefore now going to play detective and discover what Jesus might have prayed for at different moments. We can do this by reading the Gospels and seeing what preceded the moment, what happened at that moment that Jesus prayed and what came after. Read one of the following texts: Luke 5: 12-17 or Luke 6: 12-16. Reflect on it. What do you think Jesus prayed? Write down the prayer that he could have possibly said.

Dante's journey

Dante is looking sadly at Florence. He cannot return to his home town since he has been banished because of his political ideas. He cannot see his family and friends.

Whilst walking in the forest he is attacked by a leopard, a lion and a she-wolf. The more he runs away from them the deeper he ventures into the dark forest until he meets the soul of Virgil who proposes a long journey which will lead him to God.



Dante accepts and together they start walking towards Hell. There he not only sees many demons but also the suffering of the souls in Hell. He learnt that pride, sloth, lack of self-control and greed lead man to lose all he has. He is afraid of the demons, but mostly he pities those desperate souls.

Once they manage to escape from Lucifer, they arrive near Mount Purgatory.



Dante and Virgil start to climb slowly Mount Purgatory. Over here although the souls are suffering to be cleansed from sin they are happier because they will see God.



After Dante is also purified from his sins, he arrives in Heaven, where together with Beatrice, the one he loves, he meets the saints and moves closer to God.



In the end Beatrice takes him near Saint Bernard. At Saint Bernard's request the Virgin Mary shows him the Holy Trinity. Dante is overwhelmed with joy and he sees that which he could not explain. No human imagination can ever explain what Dante saw or felt. Dante could only show that he understood that God is infinite Love.

Dante's journey took place in his imagination. Although he knew that he would remain exiled from Florence he was now happy. He found peace and he understood that in the end of life's journey one has to arrive to God, the Love which takes care of everything.



The End

The beauty of

for certain, at one time or another you have had a disagreement with your friends or family. Who knows how much you longed that things were back to normal as soon as possible, because no one enjoys to be separated from those who love him.

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, he showed them that when we pray we also need to ask God the Father for forgiveness. When on earth, Jesus emphasized the importance of forgiveness. At times he used to heal the person of his sin before he healed the sickness. This was because Jesus knew that the lack of peace in one's heart and the worst sadness, are not a result of sickness or the problems we at times encounter, but of our separation from God. We all need to experience God's closeness, his love and care. When through sin we hurt ourselves and others,

we need God the Father to accept us back and to heal us with his love.

Jesus related three parables to show us how much God wants us to be always close to him: the lost sheep, the lost coin and the

prodigal son. In these stories the message is one: God the Father forgets our sin and makes a feast of love every time we seek his



The choice is yours

(Continues from page 69)

You have increased your training sessions. Now that you have grown up enough you are not wasting time like when you were younger. You are doing well in school. You are promising in sport and the coach is thinking of sending you to train with Malta's best team so that you better your future opportunities. **THE END**



reconciliation

pardon. These parables show that God himself finds ways to encourage us to return to him, at times by means of a good word from our friends or our parents, or teacher, the same way the shepherd does with his lost sheep.

Jesus spent his days on earth going from one place to another healing the sick and forgiving sins. He wanted that after his death and ascension into heaven, man would still have the possibility to experience his forgiveness which heals the heart. This is why he gave us the Sacrament of Reconciliation. 'Reconciliation' means to make friends again. In

fact this sacrament reunites us with God and with others. The love shown to us by God through this sacrament fills us with joy and it gives us strength to love and at the same time to avoid instances which go against love. With God's forgiveness and sure of his love for us, we can start afresh without having a sense of guilt. This change does not happen magically. To be able to appreciate this gift of forgiveness, you need to have a ready heart. The same way that you cannot accept a gift with tied hands, you cannot accept forgiveness if your heart is unwilling. If you want to receive

well this sacrament you need to prepare yourself for it and afterwards you have to do your best so that you treasure the love you have received from God and share it with others.



Work on this!

Find a quiet place. Think about a sin which you have committed this week and because of which you felt sad and sorry.

Now choose one of the texts in the yellow box and follow the instructions.

READ LUKE 15, 3-7 The lost sheep

Imagine that you are that lost sheep. You are feeling alone, afraid and you do not know what you are going to do. You wish you had not done the mistake of leaving your shepherd who loves you and cares for you. You are afraid that you have lost him forever and even if you were to find him, his attitude towards you will be different since you have run away, he will not trust you again. You feel colder with sadness rather than with the cold outside.

But in the distance you now see someone searching. It is him, your shepherd. What shall you do? Shall you keep quiet because if he finds you he will shout at you? Or will you trust him and

believe in him? Do you want to call out so that he finds you? Look at him earnestly searching ... no he is surely not angry. He has now started running towards you ... he has heard you! Look at how happy he is! You feel him taking you in his arms; he hugs you and lifts you on his shoulder. Now that he has found you, he is so happy that he decides to throw a feast to celebrate with his friends.

Write in your journal this experience as you imagined it. Find a priest with whom you are comfortable to receive your confession. Before going for the Sacrament of Reconciliation read again what you have written. Remember that God loves you a lot and it is not worth missing out this chance to go to Confession!

READ LUKE 15, 11-32 The prodigal son

Imagine that you are taking part in this story; you are the prodigal son and the father in the story is your father who loves you and wants the best for you. You had decided to leave your home. Now because of all that has happened, you decided that you want to return home. How are you feeling walking back home? Happy? Worried? Why?

You have arrived. Who is running towards you? What will you do? You start running or you remain where you are? Would you like to feel your father hugging you? Now look at him and see the joy in his eyes. He is going to take you back and he is so happy he will throw a feast for you.

A spiritual friend



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any a time God speaks to us through others. In the Old Testament we find the story of the young boy Samuel who did not manage to notice on his own that God was calling him. Samuel asked Eli, the priest who took care of him, and Eli realized that it was God calling Samuel and so he helped him to answer God's call.

Even we need someone to help us understand what God is telling us and what he is asking from us. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation the priest represents Jesus and in God's name he forgives us our sins. Moreover, during confession the priest tries to help us understand how we can move closer to God and how to overcome the difficulties which separate us from him.

Did you know?

Saint George Preca wanted the members of the Society which he founded (MUSEUM) to have a godparent, that is another member of the Society who accompanies them in the spiritual journey. Ideally even the godparent whom we choose for our Confirmation is a person of mature faith and who is able to help us on our way towards God.





Live it!

Speak with the Religious Counsellor at school. Ask him to help you find an adult to be at your side along your life journey. Keep this person in mind and when you have a difficulty or questions about life, do not hesitate to seek help from him or her. Who knows, maybe this person becomes your spiritual companion!

But besides the help of a priest through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, since the early days of the Church, those Christians who wished to be true disciples of Jesus also sought to have someone in their lives who could be their spiritual companion.

In the New Testament we find a beautiful example of spiritual companionship. Timothy was one of Saint Paul's friends who accompanied him on some of his many journeys to spread the Good News. Since Paul himself had baptised Timothy, Paul looked upon this young man as his son in faith and he continued to accompany him in his spiritual journey. Even when apart, Paul kept him in his thoughts. Although


Timothy was still young, Paul had entrusted him with the running of the Church in Ephesus. In one of the letters which he wrote to him, Paul tells him: "Let no one disregard you because you are young, but be an example to all the believers in the way you speak and behave, and in your love, your faith and your purity" (1 Tim 4, 12).

We can also call our spiritual friend, our spiritual director. It could be a priest, but it could also be someone else, a man or a woman, like a catechist or school teacher, who has at heart the journey with Christ. From his experience and with the help of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual companion helps you to build a

relationship with God. He helps you to learn how to pray and to hear God in prayer and how your behaviour could become more like that of Jesus. He guides you so that you recognize the mistakes which you are doing and which are separating you from God. With his help you will be able to recognize what God is asking of you at different stages of your life.

To be able to walk with you, your spiritual friend needs to get to know you, therefore it is important that you choose someone with whom you feel comfortable to talk with about your innermost feelings. In this way your spiritual companion is like a friend who walks with you along the journey of life.

Walking with and towards God



Have you ever thought that there is a reason why you are living in this world?

What do you wish from life?

It is not an easy question, but if you stay in some quiet place and listen to your heart, you may come up with the answer. What is that which really makes you happy and brings you peace? If you manage to find an answer to this question you have then discovered the aim of your life. An old Irish saying, which is also found in Maltese, goes: "Where the heart is the feet will follow" ... and where does your heart want to go?

The greatest wish of whoever discovers God's presence in his life is to live in communion with this God. This is Heaven – the union with God for ever. In this way the Christian sees life as a journey towards Heaven – the union with God that brings joy which cannot be expressed in words.

Chiara Luce Badano (1971-1990)

Chiara was a young Italian girl who died at the age of eighteen after she struggled with bone cancer. Since her childhood Chiara sought to love Jesus by loving others. When she was still nine years old she got to know about the Focolare Movement, a Christian group, which helped her to continue to grow in this love. Chiara was like many others, full of life; she loved sports, dancing and the companionship of her friends. She was seventeen and playing tennis when she felt a great pain in her shoulders. She discovered that she was seriously ill. She passed through enormous pain, but she felt so close to Jesus that nothing was impossible for her to endure.

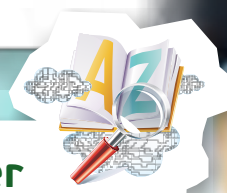
Although she loved life, her union with God gave her so much happiness and peace that she was not afraid of death and when she could no longer walk, she said: "If I had to choose between walking again and going to Heaven, I will definitely choose Heaven. This is all I care about now." Chiara Lubich – the founder of the Focolare movement was of great help to her. For Chiara Badano she was a guide and light along her journey towards God. It was Chiara Lubich who added Luce to Chiara's name. Luce means light – Chiara Luce was to be led by Jesus' light and she herself was to be the light for many youths and children.

Chiara Lubich was not the only one actively present in Chiara Luce's journey. Many friends remained with her until the end of her journey. They were friends from the same group, who like her believed in Jesus and wished to love him more. Although they were of big help to her, they observe that when they went to accompany her in her sickness, since she was so close to God, it was she who gave them light and courage for their own journey. Chiara Luce is a holy girl who has arrived where all Christians are called to go – Heaven, to live with God in unity forever. Chiara was declared "Blessed" in 2010.



Work on this!

Another youth who may encourage you in your spiritual journey is Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901-1925). Look up more information about Chiara Luce Badano or Pier Giorgio Frassati and in your journal write down what you can learn from them.



Delve deeper

Is the group of friends with whom you hang out seeking God in their life? Do you think it will be of help in your life journey if you form part of an adolescent group in your parish or some other Christian group?

Like Chiara you are invited to make this life journey, accompanied by persons who believe in Jesus, and with the help of others who can guide you, and in the presence of God who really loves you. Remember that to be a saint it means that you will see this journey to the end, until you achieve true happiness which your heart surely already seeks.



What shall I wear?

You surely do not go through your life journey alone. There are people around you who God sends to help you on your journey. However, in the end, it is also true that this is YOUR journey! As we have seen earlier YOU have to be prepared. You also have to be careful about what 'to wear' as YOU walk along!

When you go to the beach you need your swimsuit. When you go to a wedding you wear smart clothes. It is important that for each occasion you have appropriate clothes. Similarly,

the mature Christian needs to have different 'clothes' for his life journey, to be used in the different circumstances he meets. So you need to furnish a 'wardrobe' with suitable 'clothes' for the different situations you find yourself in.

The English word 'habit' is derived from the Latin '*habitus*', which not only means clothes but also a regular tendency or practice. Now a habit can be good or bad. When it is good we call it a virtue. When it is bad we call it a vice.

A virtue is a quality which you learn in time and with practice.

There are various virtues which are essential to your 'wardrobe'; some of them are: responsibility, fortitude, generosity, humility, sincerity, friendship, perseverance, diligence, self-control and the capability to reflect. For these virtues to become part of you, you need first of all to have the will for this to happen. Then you need to practice them without giving up. At the same time you have to trust the Spirit of the Lord which is in you. The more you practice these virtues the more they become a part of you. In time you do not have to stop



and think before, for example, being sincere. This is because sincerity will become part of you, one of your qualities which you use all the time. This is the same for all other virtues.

On the other hand, if you do not practice the virtues, you will end up having vices. There are two ways, either that of virtues or that of vices; the choice is in YOUR hands! The way of virtues looks difficult and you need training the same way a good athlete does. That of vices is easier; there is no training required for pride, or jealousy, or selfishness. However, it is the way of virtues which will

lead to the final destination of life. On the other hand, you will end up getting lost if you follow the way of vices; at the end you will suffer greatly, both in this life and in the next.

So what do you think? Is it not better to start furnishing your 'wardrobe'?

Amongst the important virtues which you need to have in your 'wardrobe' there are:

Fortitude

This does not mean to have muscles, or to be able to fight and act as a bully, or to be stubborn and disobey. To have the virtue of fortitude means to be strong enough to go against negative

peer pressure, to stick to your commitments, to be strong enough, when you fail, to get up and continue with your journey.

Diligence

To be diligent means that you are able to organize yourself and not waste time, that you are creative and full of ideas, that you do not need others to push you to do what is right, but to be able decide for yourself.

Humility

To be humble does not mean that you put yourself down, or that you do not appreciate a compliment. Humility means to really know yourself, both your weaknesses and your strengths. It means to love and accept yourself because you know that God loves you the way you are and he wishes you to be better. If you are humble you do not boast or bluff because you do not need the admiration of others to feel good about yourself. God's loving glance at you is enough.



Work on this!

Ask somebody or look up in a dictionary what the other virtues mean. Try to start practicing one of them. Write the virtue down in your journal and every day stop and think in which situations you needed to practice this virtue. Give yourself a score from 1 to 5 according to how much you managed to practice it. Pray to God so that tomorrow you will do better. When you think that you have acquired this virtue, choose another one and start practising it.



Never alone

Review

A Key words

Briefly explain the following terms:

- ▶ The Sacrament of Reconciliation
- ▶ Spiritual Companion
- ▶ Heaven
- ▶ Virtue

B Main ideas

Write a paragraph about the following:

- ▶ Which are the main forms of Christian prayer?
- ▶ Relate one of the parables which Jesus narrated to show how much God wants to forgive us and wants us to be reunited with him.
- ▶ Give examples from the Bible to show that it is important to have a spiritual friend.
- ▶ List four virtues. What do you need to do to obtain the virtues?

C Stop and think

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

- ▶ What can you do to acknowledge God's presence in you and around you?
- ▶ Think about the importance of prayer in Jesus' life on earth. What can you learn about why and how you need to pray?
- ▶ How can you too be a saint even today?

D Family discussion

Discuss these questions as a family:

- ▶ At home do we have a place where we can pray in tranquillity?
- ▶ In our family do we take care to give good advice to each other?
- ▶ Are we helping each other to live the virtues?

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My Adventure