

Jesus' Message and Mission

Core Activity

The Message of Jesus

1. Introduce this activity by asking the students to recall and name favorite stories from their childhood, particularly those that taught a lesson. You might offer a few examples, such as *The Little Engine That Could*, by Watty Piper, or *The Velveteen Rabbit*, by Margery Williams. As students name a story, have them also name the lesson it taught and key phrases they remember from the story.

2. Explain that the use of sayings and parables—stories that teach a lesson—was one of the most significant characteristics of Jesus' teaching about the Reign of God. Ask your students to name some of Jesus' stories or parables they have heard; then ask if they can remember any short sayings that are attributed to Jesus.

3. Distribute Bibles and divide your class into small groups of four to six students. Recruit someone in each small group to be the secretary. Assign each small group one of the parables and stories listed here:

- the house built on rock (Matt. 7:24–27)
- the weeds among the wheat (Matt. 13:24–30)
- the hidden treasure and the pearls (Matt. 13:44–46)
- the unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:23–25)
- the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1–16)
- the wedding banquet (Matt. 22:1–14)
- the ten bridesmaids (Matt. 25:1–13)
- the sower (Mark 4:1–20)
- the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)
- the mustard seed (Luke 13:18–19)
- the unjust servant (Luke 16:1–13)

4. Explain that as small groups, the students are to do two things:

- Discuss the meaning of the parable or story by answering the question, "What lesson was Jesus trying to teach about the Reign of God or about our relationship with the Reign?"
- Rewrite the parable or story using modern language and situations. In other words, they are to answer the question, "How would Jesus share the same lesson if he were to walk into this room today?"

Tell them to keep in mind that Jesus' parables and stories were constructed around common, everyday images and experiences. The secretary should record the revised parable or story.

5. After sufficient time for preparation, invite the groups to present their revised parables or stories to the whole class. Discuss the meaning of each parable or story, and its modern interpretation and application to our life.

6. Ask each group to summarize, in one sentence, the key teaching of its parable or story, and to write the summary under the revised parable or story.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

Core Activity Extension

“The Answer Is . . .”



As homework or class work, engage the young people in a search and review of chapter 9 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)*. Before class, block out the bracketed responses under the “Answer” heading on the handout “The Answer Is . . .” (Document #: TX003181) and make a copy of the handout for each student. Begin the activity by distributing the handout and having the students find the answers in the *CFH*. When everyone is finished, compare their answers with the bracketed ones on the original handout. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

Additional Activities

Called to Share the Mission of Jesus



1. For this activity you will need a copy of the handout “Called to Share the Mission of Jesus” (Document #: TX003182), cut apart as scored.

2. Begin the activity by discussing with the students Jesus’ statement of his mission, as found in Luke 4:16–22, and what that means for those who choose to follow Jesus.

3. Divide the class into small groups of four or five people. Give each group one segment from the handout. Tell the groups to discuss the questions posed on their segments. Mention that someone from each group should take notes.

4. Invite the groups to share their responses with everyone. Compare the answers of groups that had the same segments.

Announcing a Mission

Discuss how a person knows when she or he is ready to go into the world and begin a career and how that person tells others; also discuss other questions about starting out on one's own. Then have the students look up the four scriptural passages where Jesus announces his mission:

- Matt. 4:12–17
- Mark 1:14–15
- Luke 4:16–21
- John 1:35–51

Have the students, in pairs, discuss how Jesus began his public life, what his mission was, and how he announced it. Then direct the students to select and research a present-day mission or volunteer organization.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

Parish Mission Statements

Instruct the students to conduct an Internet search for Catholic parishes. You might also include the equivalents of parishes in other faith traditions. Ask them to collect several parish mission statements and to analyze them for language that is consistent with Jesus' vision of the Reign of God. Have them write a brief summary of their findings. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

(The material labeled *TC: Creed* is adapted from *Total Catechesis: Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*, by Maura Thompson Hagarty, Michael J. Hagarty, Marilyn Kielbasa, and Barbara Murray, in the Total Catechesis series [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004]. Copyright © 2004 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)