

Parish Religious Education Adaptations

Chapter 1

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 1, “Preparing for the Journey: Basic Information,” page 14–31.
- Students were also asked to complete the “Review and Reflection” questions on page 17.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Begin with a ten-minute ice-breaker to help students get better acquainted during this first session. Toss a set of luggage tags to a student. (*Have them seated in a circle or semi-circle.*) That student must immediately name an item needed for a long overseas journey to a cold destination. The tags are then tossed from person to person. Each successive person must recall and name the items already mentioned and then add another item.
- Present the metaphor of Old Testament study as a sort of journey. As we study the Old Testament, we travel back in time—almost 3,000 years. We “visit” people of faith, living in a completely different culture than our own. We “see” their difficulties, dangers, strengths—and failings. If we prayerfully invest time and study, we can connect with these heroes and heroines of the Old Testament and their journey of faith. This journey can help us as we follow Jesus, the New Testament redeemer promised all throughout the Old Testament.
- Invite students to keep a “travel journal” during this course.
- If the students have already completed the Review and Reflection questions on page 17, call on them to read their answers aloud. If they haven’t done these, have them do the first three questions now.

Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Introduction, What Books Make up the Old Testament?, Who Is God?, Knowing the Basic Story Line(14–17)

- Show fifteen to twenty minutes of the twenty-two-minute video “A Firm Foundation: Introduction to the Old Testament.” This video presents an overview of the Old Testament and the context in which parts of the OT were written. It also addresses the question: “Why is the Old Testament important to Christians?” Discuss this question briefly with the students.
- Write the terms: **canon**, **deuterocanonical**, **apocrypha**, and **Tradition** on the board or overhead. Ask students to define these terms that relate to the forty-six books of the Catholic Bible. Make sure that students recognize that the denominational differences are relatively minor. By and large, Christians and Jews share the same books of the Old Testament. We have common ancestors in faith.
- Briefly describe the skills (actually professional studies and sciences) used to help us travel to a fuller understanding of the Old Testament. (Knowledge of languages, especially Aramaic and Hebrew; archaeology; pseudepigrapha, the study of documents from the same era as Bible books; history, theology.)
- Move to the issue of God’s name. Sample student opinion about some Jewish traditions that see God’s name as too sacred to even pronounce. Why is this hard to understand? On the other hand, is there a lesson for modern Catholics in this Jewish reverence for God’s name? How does our culture use or abuse God’s name? What about the second commandment? Is it the “forgotten” commandment?
- Pass out Handout 1A, “Old Testament Themes” (page 262 of the TWE) and ask students to keep it throughout their study of the Old Testament. They will also use it now for a small group poster project. Provide poster board, art supplies, magazines, newspapers, etc to cut up and use. Each group should create a poster: “Journey into the Old Testament” The poster should list the forty-six Old Testament books (see page 22 in text) and themes and should be attractively and colorfully illustrated.

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Allow students to choose their journal topic, using either the page 17 or 21 Journal Assignment.

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: How the Church Interprets the Inspired Writings, Classifying and Arranging the Old Testament Books,

How Important Is the Old Testament in the Life of the Church?, Studying the Old Testament: Some Final Thoughts, Further Reflections (pages 17–31).

- Display Overhead 1A “Organization of the Hebrew Bible” and have students compare that to the division of Old Testament books illustrated on page 22. What’s the same? What’s different?
- Open the topic of Scripture as “inspired writing.” Find out what students think of that concept. Then reinforce the understanding that the Bible is also a handbook for life. Yes, it is inspired by God and therefore precious and unique. But, the inspired word of God shouldn’t be treated like a precious antique that needs to be kept—unused—in a display case.
- Remind students that the Bible’s books are not arranged in chronological order in the Bible. The first books in the Bible were not necessarily written first. Explain that attention to the chronology—the sequential history—of events will be given as they encounter and study content along the way.
- Display a variety of Bibles for the students. Encourage them to look through several different Bibles, examining type style, illustrations, family entries in family Bibles, accompanying tables and appendices, the title, index, etc. Show students several Bible concordances and how they are used.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Light several candles on a small table or bench at the center of the room. Display an open Bible on a decorative cloth or on a lectern.
- Provide classroom Bibles and the different Bibles presented earlier in class. Invite the students to begin this prayer individually with the Journal Assignment on page 29. While they read and write, quietly play some meditative instrumental music.
- Ask students to volunteer their prayers written in response to one of the Old Testament readings.
- Conclude the group prayer with intercessory prayers. Begin the prayers with a prayer such as: “Adonai. This is the name that our Jewish mothers and fathers called you, O Lord. We know that your name and your words were precious to them. Light our journey this year. Guide us all to great love and knowledge of who you are and who you are leading us to be. Thank you for your word, Adonai! Thank you for your name, Adonai!”

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Assign the Review and Reflection Questions on pages 21, 26, and 29.
- Have students read Chapter 2, “Maps for the Journey: Geographical, Historical and Literary Context” (pages 34–57) for the next session.

Chapter 2

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were asked to complete the Chapter 1 Review and Reflection Questions on pages 21, 26, and 29.
- Students were assigned to read Chapter 2, “Maps for the Journey: Geographical, Historical and Literary Context,” pages 34–57

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Open discussion of the term **context** with several sets of photos. Two or three pairs of photos should illustrate the same subject but in different—even contrasting—settings or contexts. (*Perhaps an Eskimo in a seal-skin parka ice-fishing in Anchorage, and the same Eskimo on a sunny Florida beach. Another set might show a child with a tiny American flag, and the now famous photo of a Marine tossing an American flag over the head of Saddam Hussein’s statue in conquered Baghdad in April, 2003.*) How does the Eskimo or the flag have a different meaning or message in each photo? Compare the contexts.
- Bring comments about context back to Old Testament study. Understanding the cultural, political, and historical realities surrounding the time the Old Testament was written helps us to understand the books of the Old Testament. Elaborate on this point, offering examples.
- Ask students to react to the text’s archaeological challenge on page 40. What if their houses were buried and rediscovered by teenagers hundreds of years from now. What items in their rooms would help describe the context of their lives? (*Remind students that many things would deteriorate or decay.*)
- Collect the Review and Reflection questions from Chapter 1 and ask students how they might answer Christians who say: “The Old Testament isn’t important; reading about Jesus in the New Testament is all we need.”

Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Introduction, Archaeology and Biblical Studies, The Land of Canaan: At the Center of Civilization (pages 34–45)

- Display a large regional map of the Middle East that shows the locations of the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel. Distribute Handout 2B, “Archaeological Time Periods and the Old Testament.” (*Students should keep this handout for the semester.*) Point out the Fertile Crescent or the “corridor of conflict” and discuss the big picture—historical movements and cultural developments.
- Divide the class into small groups of four or five. Give the groups fifteen minutes to write eight Quiz Bowl style multiple choice questions based on the text, pages 34–45. Questions should be a mix: identification of terms, dating of events, etc. but also with some asking the significance of events like the discovery of the Rosetta Stone. When the groups are done, collect the Quiz Bowl questions and give them to three students to screen out duplicates or confusing ones. The screening group could hand back questions that need to be rewritten.
- Ask students to describe how and what scholars have learned about the early Israelites. What was the weather like? How did people make a living? What about their houses? pottery? weapons? the Canaanite influence? Israel’s geographical position on the “land bridge” from Egypt to Mesopotamia?
- Challenge students to use the regional map and the facts they’ve learned to show how vulnerable the Israelites were to foreign influences and conquest. (*Revisit the issue of geography as a major **context** factor.*)
- Summarize discussion on the Canaanites, a major influence shaping Israelite development. On the board or overhead projector, write and annotate the following bullet points:
 - There was a civilization in Canaan long before the Israelites.
 - From 2000 to 1300 B.C. Egypt claimed Canaan, using seaports and overland routes in the region.
 - Hostilities or war between the Canaanites and Egyptians were common. The Canaanites invaded and ruled Egypt for 100 years from 1650–1550 B.C.
 - When the Israelites inhabited Canaan (ca 1300 B.C.) they “inherited” the conflict with Egypt
 - Canaanite civilization and cities compared favorably with Egypt’s.
 - Canaanites worshipped many gods, including the main god El, Asherah, El’s consort and the favorite, Baal, the god of rain.
 - Canaanite culture and religion influenced Israel. The Israelites often lapsed into worship of Baal. Even the Jewish temple was a Canaanite design.

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Ask students to use the “One, True, Living God” exercise on page 45 as a journal project. They are to record the similarities and differences in the Canaanite writing and Psalm 29 about God in their journals and comment on them. Provide watercolor paints, paper, and basic instruction about techniques. Encourage students to try a water color impression of God as described in Psalm 29. Artwork can be added to the journal when its dry.

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Tracing the History of the Israelites from the Old Testament, Background on Literature Styles of the Bible, Further Reflections (46–57).

- Write the words **primeval history**, **syncretism** and **Diaspora** on the board. Ask students to spend approximately five minutes re-reading the text about any one of these three terms and its meaning in Israelite history. Call on students to explain: 1) what the term means and 2) its historical and cultural context.
- Flesh out the Israelite history presented in this section of the chapter around these three terms. Clarify the religious differences between the Israelites and their pagan neighbors—from the Exodus period through the monarchy, exiles, and post-exilic society. For the Jews, Yahweh was the one and only God. Yahweh was also the God who championed the powerless and the separated.
- Assign the Review and Reflection questions on page 56 to be done now to review literature styles in the Bible. (*Allow 10 minutes.*)
- Conclude the session with “Bible Quiz Bowl” using the multiple choice questions developed earlier. Divide the class into two teams. Alternate questions for the teams.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Place a potted tree or a large picture of a tree in the midst of the prayer circle. Light vigil candles on the floor around it.
- As a group, listen quietly to appropriate instrumental music, establishing a space for meditation.
- Begin spoken prayer by noting that all Christians are like tiny branches on a very ancient tree of faith planted hundreds and thousands of years ago. It would be wonderful if we could trace our family tree of faith. We would see that it is rooted in Jewish history and faith in the one true God.
- Invite students to offer petitions or prayers of thanks for those in their families. Add prayers for those in the Church family—parish, diocese, and global Church. Pray for those who have recently died, especially those known to the students. Pray for the strength and growth of this “tree of faith.”
- Conclude prayer by listening to and then singing “On Holy Ground” by Donna Penna in *Gather* (GIA).

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Pass out Handout 2E, “Chapter 2 Review Puzzle,” and have students complete the puzzle as a chapter review.
- Have students read Chapter 3, “Stories for the Journey: Creation and the Founding of A People” (pages 60–85).

Chapter 3

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 3, “Stories for the Journey: Creation and the Founding of A People” pages 60–85.
- Students were also asked to complete the Chapter 2 Review Puzzle as a follow up to the last lesson.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Break down into small groups of three or four with one student assigned as group “scribe” or reporter. Give each group the same homemade set of eight to ten “Story Starter” cards featuring characters, phrases, and sentences that spark curiosity. (*e.g.*, “Obviously, the man in the blue shirt had no idea where to go . . .”; *Tricia’s driver’s license was only four days old . . .*” etc.) Using all the cards, the groups should write a short “Who done it?” story. Have the stories read aloud and encourage students to compare and critique them. (*This activity will take most of the Warm-up period.*)
- Collect and check the Chapter 2 Review Puzzle.

Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: God’s Creation, Original Justice and the Fall of Man, Renewal of Life (60–70)

- Point out that the group stories were written and read for fun and entertainment. Storytelling, however, is also a powerful way to teach about faith, virtue, and God. Jesus, for instance, was a master storyteller. (*Students should recall some favorite Gospel stories.*)
- Have everyone close their eyes and listen carefully as a student reads the two creation stories in Genesis. (Genesis 1:1–2:4a and Genesis 2:4b–25). On the board or overhead, list the ways that the two stories are the same and the ways that they are different. List also religious truths presented in the stories, including the **covenant** or agreement God makes with his people. Define the terms **ancestor**, **evolution** and **story cycles**.
- Move on to the stories about “the fall” of Adam and Eve and the story of Cain and Abel. “What religious truths do we learn from these stories?” (*Make sure that students see that the disobedience of Adam and Eve was more than a foolish mistake. That act ended a life in paradise for them and for all of humanity. Expand upon the concept of **original sin** and the phenomenon of evil with teachings from the CCC (390). Explain too that the promise of salvation made to Adam and Eve would reverse the consequences of Adam’s and Eve’s sin when Jesus was born.*) Ask students to briefly discuss the Cain and Abel story. Soon after **original sin** entered the world, violence and murder, examples of **personal sin**, quickly followed. (*If there’s time, draw out the important distinctions between original and personal sin.*)
- Switch gears and distribute a quick pop quiz on the Noah story. (*Ask ten to twelve multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank questions based on Genesis 7. For example, “How many animals did Noah take on the ark? How long did the flood last?”*)
- Have students correct one another’s quiz by locating answers in Genesis 7. Discuss the covenant that God makes with Noah and Noah’s descendants. What are the larger implications of God’s promise not to send another flood? (*Be prepared for students who ask why God still permits floods and other natural disasters to afflict many people.*)
- Summarize some of the important literary and cultural links between these primeval stories in Genesis and other cultures. For example:
 - Many ancient peoples had flood stories similar to the Hebrew story about Noah.
 - Glacial melt about 7,000 years ago deepened the oceans and seas, including the Black Sea which rose 6 inches. It flooded coastal farmlands and settlements in the entire Mediterranean area.
 - The “Epic of Gilgamesh,” a popular Mesopotamian poem, was written as early as 2,0000 B.C. In the poem, a man, his family and the world’s animals escape a flood sent by a divine being when the man builds and stocks an ark.
 - There is a crucial difference between the Gilgamesh plot and the spin that Hebrews give the flood story, however. In Genesis, God wants people to be good and offers salvation again and again. The god in the Gilgamesh story is cruel and unforgiving.
- The Babel story is a fable explaining the origin of languages. It is also a condemnation of Babylon, a sinful civilization in the Jewish mind. Babel, in fact, is a play on the word “Babylon.”

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- In their journals, assign students to consider and respond to the second Journal Assignment entry on page 81. In particular, they should focus in on practical strategies for reconciliation in their own lives.

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Ancestors of Faith, Abraham: Father of Faith, The Blessing of Jacob, Joseph in Egypt: Foreshadowing the Exodus, Further Reflections (70–85).

- Recruit students to tell about their ancestors. “How were they heroes to their families?”
- Remind the group that today, we can easily link family histories to famous historical events. “Her grandfather was born a week before the Titanic sank in 1912”; “She was just ten when President Kennedy was shot in 1963.” etc. Fitting events into a historical framework is important. It adds to our understanding of those events. As much as possible, Scripture scholars have done the same thing in their study of Old Testament stories.
- Ask students to describe some of the ways that scholars can “date” Genesis passages. (*Refer them to “Ancestors of Faith” and “Formation and Arrangement of Ancestor Stories.” on pages 71-74*) What were the big challenges, disappointments, successes in these stories?”
- Some of the stories in Genesis, however, can be assigned only approximate dates. These stories are reportedly “set in history.” The stories about Abraham and Sarah, for instance, are set in history within the 2,000 to 1700 B.C. era.
- Divide the class into small groups for two activities. Students can work together first to complete the Handout #3, “The Faith of Abraham.” Have the groups then re-read and discuss the Genesis stories about Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph in Egypt. (*They should use the textbook and Bible.*) Have the groups prepare three-minute skits or mimes based on the story cycle they were assigned. Remind the groups to make their presentations detailed and faithful to Scripture. Videotape and play back the presentations, if possible. (*Allow fifteen to eighteen minutes for these presentations.*)
- Collect any Handout worksheets and the Review and Reflection Questions from Chapter 2.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Dim the room lights but wait to light the prayer candle(s).
- Play a song or two from “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat,” a box office Broadway musical hit from the early 1990s. The music is fun, catchy and tells Joseph’s story quite well. (*Tapes or CDs of the musical should be available at libraries.*)
- Ask a volunteer to light the prayer candle(s).
- Say: “Thank you, God, for the story of Joseph and other people of faith in the Old Testament. Help us to learn from their stories and their struggles.” Invite students to verbally thank God for the stories of faith among their friends and families. (*e.g., “Thank you God, for the story of my grandfather who had to walk five miles on Sundays to go to church, etc;” “Thank you, God, for the story of my neighbor who is ill with cancer but is still full of faith and cheerfulness.”*)
- Pray together the Traditional Jewish Prayer on page 85.
- Conclude with the musical Prologue or Finale from “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.”

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Assign Chapter 3 Review and Reflection Questions on pages 61, 65, 67, 70, 74, 79, 81 and 83.
- Have students read Chapter 4 “The Journey to the Promised Land Begins: The Exodus and the Sinai Covenant” (pages 88–109) for the next session.

Chapter 4

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 4, “The Journey to the Promised Land Begins: The Exodus and the Sinai Covenant,” pages 88–109.
- Students were also asked to complete the Chapter 3 Review and Reflection Questions on pages 61, 65, 67, 70, 74, 79, 81 and 83.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Play ten to fifteen minutes of the 1956 Cecil B. DeMille classic movie: “The Ten Commandments.” (*The segment of Moses and the Hebrews crossing the Red Sea is a very dramatic one.*) Because the movie is old, students will probably laugh at its melodramatic character portrayals and old fashioned “technical effects.”
- Encourage students to overlook the movie’s dated style. What about the content? Have the class stop and read Exodus 14. Ask: “Does the movie’s account of Moses leading the Israelites across the Red Sea match that of Scripture?” Have students give examples or cite passages from Exodus to prove their points.
- In a sense, the Hebrews’ “journey” of faith began after the annihilation of Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea. There was no turning back. The Hebrews then had to follow Moses to the Promised Land.
- Collect the Review and Reflection Questions from Chapter 3 that students completed.

Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Introduction, The Call of Moses, The Exodus: Confrontation Followed by Escape, The Wandering of the People in the Wilderness, (88–89)

- Make it clear to students that understanding Moses and his mission is crucial in studying the Old Testament. Moses, as they will see, is *the* central model of trust, faith, and liberation in the Old Testament. Moses led the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt towards freedom and the “Promised Land” of Canaan. The Gospel of Matthew portrays Jesus as the “New Moses” because Jesus also led his people out of slavery—the slavery of sin—to freedom.
- Have students briefly read Exodus 2:1–10, the story of Moses’ birth and rescue as a baby. Compare this Moses story with the Sargon birth story as it is summarized in the text. Ask students to explain the significance of the rare birth stories in the Bible.
- Summarize and review the material on the call of Moses from the burning bush. Revisit issues raised by the sidebar, “Does God Have a Name?” on page 91. The ancient Hebrews perceived God as mysterious and unapproachable. God should be known, they said, by what he does, not by a word or words. It’s true that words can’t tell us who God is. And our names often tell what someone does. Even the name “Jesus” means “Yahweh Saves.”
- Ask: “How is Moses an ‘anti-hero’? What are the four objections Moses gives to God when he’s asked to lead the Chosen People out of slavery to the Promised Land?”
- Pass out 8 1/2” x 11” maps of ancient Egypt, Canaan and the Mediterranean Area. The maps should have detailed physical features, Old Testament locations, and a mileage scale.
- With markers, have students trace a “fast track” route for the Hebrews to Canaan from northern Egypt. They can consult the book of Exodus to locate any place names. They should also estimate the distance in miles.
- Then display a larger map illustrating the Exodus route believed to be the one that the Jews really did use. Have students mark the true route with a different colored marker. They should estimate the distance in miles. (*Recommend an interactive website for extra research on the Exodus route: <http://tlc.discovery.com/convergence/Moses/map/map.html>*)
- Make sure that students are familiar with the terms “**murmuring**” and “**elders**” and know how they fit in the story of Hebrews’ wandering in the wilderness.

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments. If possible, provide some simple Passover foods — unleavened bread or matzah, grape juice as a substitute for wine and Haroseth, a mixture of apples, walnuts, juice and cinnamon.

- Direct students to do the Journal Assignment on page 193. Ask students to extend the assignment a bit further. In addition to the issue of being trusted by others, they should briefly consider the need to trust God and others. God trusted Moses to lead his people to freedom. But, Moses also had to trust God at every twist and turn of the Exodus journey.

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: The Reception of the Law at Mount Sinai, Three Collections of the Law, The Approach to the Promised Land, Further Reflections (99–109).

- Divide students into groups of four or five. They are to imagine that they are tourists from different countries who've been shipwrecked on a desert island. The island provides plenty of food and shelter but the tourists will need to form a community to survive. They won't be rescued for at least six months. Each group must create six rules or commandments to help assure order, security, and survival for all. (*Allow fifteen minutes for this small group activity.*)
- Have the groups share and compare their rules. How did these rules help to protect relationships in the community?
- Now read aloud and consider the Ten Commandments as they are given in Exodus 20:1–17. Provide an abbreviated version on a flip chart or overhead projector overlay. Ask: How do these commandments protect rights and relationships? (*Make sure that students recognize that the first three commandments focus on our relationship with God.*) Ancient Israel saw these Ten Commandments as simply part of Mosaic law. Today, these commandments are a universal code of conduct for all Christians and Jews. They can also be related to the two Great Commandments that Jesus endorses (Mt 22:37–40 and Mk 12:30–31). Give students a printed copy of the Ten Commandments to keep.
- Summarize the text presentation of the three collections of laws in the “books of Moses”—the Covenant Code, Deuteronomic Code and the Levitical Code.
- The Covenant Code was probably older than the Deuteronomic Code which reflected the social justice concerns of the prophets. The Levitical Code dealt with priestly laws and traditions, the laws of sacrifice, the purity laws and the jubilee laws. In addition: a) All three codes included civil laws (laws pertaining to everyday issues) and religious laws. b) Biblical laws focused on restoring community—not on punishment of the offender—**restorative justice** rather than **punitive justice**. (*Define terms and give examples of a restorative justice approach and a punitive justice approach to the same crimes or violations.*)
- Followers of Jesus can see and imitate the spirit of justice and community of Mosaic Law in the Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount which the Lord preached and promoted.
- Jubilee year laws dictated that every seven years, during a sabbatical year, all indentured servants were to be freed and all lands were allowed to rest. Every forty-nine years, tribal lands were returned to the original owner families, and the land was redistributed.
- Conclude the lesson by finishing the Moses story. Read Deuteronomy 32:48–54 that describes the last days of Moses and the continuation of the Israelites into the Promised Land—without him.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Light the prayer candles.
- When the group is settled and attentive, listen to several recorded African American Spirituals based on Exodus themes—slavery, freedom, God's guidance, wandering through the wilderness, Moses, etc.
- Invite students to offer prayers of petition for those who are enslaved and dreaming of freedom. The prayers can be specific for particular individuals whom students know or can be more general in nature.
- Read together “Called to Prayer” on page 109.
- Conclude by singing a spiritual together.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Assign Chapter 4 Review and Reflection Questions. But, in a Jubilee spirit, allow students to choose and answer just one question (not the usual three questions) on pages 89, 93, 97, 99, 102.
- Have students read Chapter 5, “The Journey Takes New Shape: A People at Home” (pages 112–129) for the next session.

Chapter 5

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 5, “The Journey Takes New Shape: A People at Home” (pages 112–129).
- Students were asked to locate a Bible at home to thumb through the six books of Deuteronomic History which are the focus of this chapter.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Collect the assigned Review and Reflection questions from Chapter 4 that students have been completing. Orally review student answers to the “Review and Reflection” questions on page 89 which address key themes in Exodus.
- Referring to Chapter 4, point out that the word “exodus” means “road out.” Ask students to reflect on what the Hebrews may have felt and feared as they took the “road out” of slavery in Egypt to follow Moses towards the Promised Land and freedom. (*As an aside, point out that it’s hard for anyone to leave something familiar—even if it is enslaving—to move to something new and liberating. Invite students to elaborate on that point from their own life experience or observation.*)
- Ask students to leaf through Chapter 5 to name and identify principal actors in the “cast of characters” in the six books which comprise the Deuteronomic History. (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 3 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings.) These are the characters who take the Exodus story to the next step—the conquest and settlement in the Promised Land. (*Joshua, King Josiah, Gideon, Samuel, Deborah, Samson.*)

Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Introduction, Understanding the Events of Settlement (pages 112–120)

- Share carefully selected current event articles (world, national or local news, sports, entertainment) from both old and recent newspapers or magazines with small groups of two to three students. (The publishing dates of each article should be cut-off or masked.) Issue a five-minute challenge to the groups to find and underline “textual evidence” that dates or helps to chronologically bracket the articles. Have the small groups briefly defend their views.
- Refocus the groups on Scriptural exegesis. Explain that some of the methods they used to date articles are employed—in a more scholarly fashion—by Scripture scholars. The six books of Deuteronomic History share common literary phrases which link them to the Book of Deuteronomy. Scholars have also discovered that these books share trademark themes such as the importance of the city of Jerusalem. The books that comprise Deuteronomic History were all written after 587 B.C., scholars have deduced.
- In their small groups, ask students to quietly reread “Israelite Warfare Traditions” (pages 118–119) up to the sub-heading “Read 1 Samuel 7–8” on page 119. Each group should briefly discuss what “Miracle Warfare” meant to the Jews struggling from c. 1200 to c.1030 B.C. to settle Palestine, their new homeland.
- Ask the small groups to re-configure as groups of 5 or 6. Provide each group with a handout listing and briefly describing the main points of the Just War Doctrine. (see “Peace over War,” page 120). Each group should quickly create a hypothetical but believable modern case for war. Be available to advise groups in creating a scenario that would fulfill just war provisions. One person in each group should act as recorder and should keep the group’s “case” for the next session.

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for refreshments or simply for a fifteen-minute break.
- Assign students to do the Journal Assignment on page 124 which will require reading the full story of one of these three judges—Deborah, Gideon, Samson—in the book of Judges.

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Exploits of the Judges, Israel at Home in Palestine, Further Reflections (pages 121–129)

- Read or summarize, for the students, the introductory paragraphs of “Exploits of the Judges” on page 121. Explain the unique role of judges as both spiritual and military tribal leaders, and situate their roles in historical context. “The judges filled the gap in leadership between the time of Joshua (c. 1200 B.C.) and the beginning of the monarchy (c.1030 B.C.)”

- Solicit student input on the capsule accounts of Deborah, Gideon, and Samson in this section. How are these stories believable? Who is the true hero? What is the repeating theme about God's role? How can that theme be meaningful for us today?
- If possible, show ten to twelve slides or display large format photos of archaeological finds in Palestine's hill country while giving a brief overview of "Israel at Home in Palestine." Focus on these central points:
 - The central hill country of Palestine grew in population between 1200 and 1000 B.C. Pottery shards that seemed to be Canaanite and evidence of political unrest throughout the region suggest that Canaanites—along with Hebrew slaves from Egypt—settled in villages in these coastal plains.
 - Dramatic climactic changes seem to have occurred in this period. This may have prompted major population migrations to the cooler, less populated hills of Palestine.
 - Resettlement of the Hebrews, initiated by Joshua, likely took from 200 to 300 years. A gradual process such as this would have facilitated a more peaceful settlement with the Canaanites.
 - The *Bet Av* ("House of the Father") was the basic social unit of an Israeli village in this era. Bet Avs, led by village elders, were allied in a loose association with other Bet Avs to help with agriculture and military defense. A group or cluster of allied Bet Avs was called a *Mishpachah*.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Reduce the room light and ask a student to light candles or if available an oil lamp to establish a prayerful environment. Play softly some Jewish instrumental or vocal music. (Borrow from public libraries or a synagogue. The messianic evangelization group, *Jews for Jesus*, has excellent music resources.)
- Briefly discuss the story and significance of the tiny book of Ruth found between the book of Judges and 1 Samuel. Explain that Ruth, a Moabite woman, married a Hebrew and was now a childless widow in a foreign land. Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law who was also a widow, told Ruth to return to her native land to find a new husband and a new life.
- Read Ruth 1:7–18.
- Pause and ask students to consider the gift of faithfulness in their own lives.
- Invite students to voice prayers of thanksgiving for those who have not abandoned them, and for those who have traveled with them on difficult journeys.
- Conclude with meditative Jewish music.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Assign the Review and Reflection questions from pages 114, 120 and 124—but not 128.
- Have the students read Chapter 6, "The Monarchy: The Journey Takes a New Direction" (pages 132–153).

Chapter 6

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 6, “The Monarchy: The Journey Takes A New Direction” (pages 132–153).
- Students were also asked to complete the Review and Reflection” questions from pages 114, 120, and 124, but not 128.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Invite students to briefly share their case for war scenarios done in the previous class. List adapted just war doctrine principles from page 120 on the board. Have students orally critique the cases with respect to: (1) credibility of scenario and (2) compliance with the just war theory. Let the students assign awards for: “Best Case for War,” “Most Creative Case,” “Honorable Mention,” etc.
- Collect the review questions from Chapter 5 and ask students to recall the benefits and challenges of village life in Palestine (pages 126–127). Was tribal leadership in the Bet Avs working? Have students verify their answers by referencing the text. If it was working, why did the Israelites continue to ask the prophet Samuel for a king? “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” (Make sure that this exchange reminds students that the Israelites were surrounded by pagan cultures led by military leaders or kings.)

Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Introduction, Religious Development During the Monarchy, The “United” Monarchy: Saul, David, and Solomon (pages 132–143)

- Redirect the group’s attention to page 132. Samuel warns the people about a king’s demands. “Their sons would be assigned to run before his chariot, etc.” Ask students which of these demands would probably be most objectionable to the Israelites. Fast forward to the twenty-first century. What expectations are most objectionable today in a democratic government?
- Divide the class into three focus groups. Assign each group to a different king—Saul, David, Solomon. The groups should review information in the text and dig a bit deeper into Scripture (1 Samuel and 1 Kings). Students should research and record information about: 1) How the king was selected, 2) accomplishments, 3) defeats or problems, 4) how he used power (for good or evil), 5) relationship to God.
- Acting as a “Meet the Press” style panel, have each group give a 5-minute profile of their king to the other groups. Suggest that they also address the added question: “Did your king serve God and his people well?”

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Assign students to do the Journal Assignment on page 144 on the Temple. As background information, have them re-read “The Temple of Solomon” (page 143) and give them Handout 6C: “Solomon’s Temple” (page 279 of the TWE).

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: The Divided Monarchy, The Last Days of the Independent Monarchy, Further Reflections (pages 144–153)

- Read Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address” to jumpstart discussion about the agonies of a “divided kingdom.” Sample student familiarity with the Civil War. How did it start? Why were civil wars (including the American Civil War) particularly painful?
- Summarize the text’s description of the division of Israel (pages 144–147). Jeroboam, was a soldier in charge of Israelites forced to labor on Solomon’s projects. When Jeroboam defended the slaves, Solomon was angry. Jeroboam had to flee. Later, with help from Egypt, Jeroboam led a rebellion against Solomon’s successor, King Rehoboam. Egypt attacked Jerusalem and took the Temple treasures. In 922 B.C., Jeroboam established the northern kingdom of Israel.
- Ask: “How did Jeroboam, king of the northern kingdom, try to prevent the kingdom’s reunification?” (He built alternate temples in Dan and Bethel, set up golden calves as idols and appointed priests who were not from the tribe of Levi—the traditional tribe of priests.) .
- Provide a roll of newsprint paper and markers, and divide the class into two groups. Have each group create a horizontal timeline titled “The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Israel.” Provide dates for the reigns of

King Saul (ca 1030–1010 B.C.), King David (ca 1009–969 B.C.), and King Solomon (969–922 B.C.). Students should choose at least ten other dates from Chapter 6 to describe the division of Israel and the eventual collapse of both kingdoms. Have the groups colorfully illustrate the timelines as though for an elementary school class studying the Bible. Display and compare the two timelines.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Have a student light a candle and turn off the room light. Play 2–3 minutes of a CD or tape with appropriately meditative instrumental or liturgical music. (Music featuring a harp, David’s instrument, would work well.)
- Ask three students to slowly read the three sections of Psalm 138.
- Invite students to add their praise of God to David’s praise by listing things, people and circumstances for which they have a grateful heart.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Assign the Review and Reflection Questions on pages 134, 138, 144, 148 and 151.
- Have students read Chapter 7, “God’s Prophets: At the Heart of the Journey” (pages 156–173) for the next session.

Chapter 7

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 7, “God’s Prophets: At the Heart of the Journey” (pages 156–173).
- Students were also asked to complete the Chapter 6 Review and Reflection questions from pages 134, 138, 144, 148, and 151.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Have several students describe the hardest jobs they’ve ever done. Was the job physically difficult? dirty? complicated? stressful? Then ask: “Did you try to get out of it or get help?” Relate these real-life short-term jobs to the lifelong job of a prophet or “nabi” as the Hebrews called these messengers.
- Ask students to recall and explain the two “marks” or characteristics of a prophet. (1. *A prophet is called by God to a new role and life.* 2. *A prophet’s message is typically unpopular with the establishment.*)
- Pose the questions: “Does God still call prophets?” “What messages would God want today’s prophets to share?” (*Welcome all reasonable answers.*)
- Collect the Review and Reflection Questions from Chapter 6.
- Have students use their texts to answer question 3 on page 162 as a longer essay (100–200 words) summarizing what they learned about the prophets of Deuteronomical History. These prophets prepared the way for the “latter prophets.” Collect essays.

Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Introduction, Marks of the Prophets (156–161)

- Ask students to list the steps in the “call narrative”—the 5-part process in which God recruited prophets.
- Give student 5 minutes to read Jeremiah 1:4–10 or Isaiah 6:1–9. Ask for volunteers to “walk through” the texts, illustrating how the call narrative unfolded for Jeremiah and Isaiah.
- Revisit the meaning of the terms “major prophets” and “minor prophets,” and list the prophets under either label on the board. Ask: “Which prophet was the first to have his sayings gathered in a book?” (*Amos*) “Who was the model for all Old Testament prophets?” (*Moses*) “Why?”
- Divide the class into small groups. Have half the groups write a job description for a prophet. (*Direct them to pages 158–161 for further information on the roles prophets assumed.*) Have the other groups write modern sayings of a prophet using the Old Testament literary messenger formula “Thus says the Lord . . .” (*Direct them to pages 159–160 for further information on the sayings of prophets.*)

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Assign students to do the journal assignment on page 162 on “prophets” in the world today.

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: The Servants, the Prophets, The Contrasting Styles of the Prophets, Further Reflection (pages 161–173)

- Ask groups who wrote modern sayings of a prophet to share a few with the whole group. Have students isolate “timeless” social and moral issues as well as concerns that would not have existed 800–900 years before Christ.
- Summarize the themes of these four prophets — Elijah, Elisha, Amos and Hosea. (1. *There is only one true God – Yahweh.* 2. *People must renounce sin and recommit themselves to truth and justice.*)
- Ask some students to quickly scan the material on Elijah, others to focus in on Elisha, others to review Amos, etc. Challenge students to be the first one to find evidence in the text that the Hebrews were *not* worshipping only Yahweh and were *not* committed to truth and justice. Have them read portions of the text that prove that the prophet—and his message from God—was needed.
- Point out the differences in style (and message) in the prophecies of Amos and Hosea. Amos constantly preached about the coming doom and destruction because of the people’s sinfulness. Amos emphasized the compassionate and forgiving nature of God.

- Query the groups who wrote a job description for a prophet: “If we think of the role of the prophet as just another ‘job’, what are personality traits, job experience or attitudes that *could* make him or her more effective in communicating God’s word? Would this always be true? Could God choose a crabby person, an introvert as a prophet?” Discuss.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Provide a dozen or more newspaper articles on social justice issues – unemployment, homelessness, abortion, war, urban violence, etc. Ask students to read them quietly to each other in clusters of two or three. Play instrumental music very softly to provide a meditative background.
- After ten minutes, collect the articles and ask students to sit quietly in a circle around lit candles. Invite the students to consider the issues they’ve read about and the need for compassion and justice in our world today.
- Initiate prayers of petition for the injustices and destructive situations that are hurting and killing people. Pray too for prophets, those who speak God’s word.
- Play or sing together “I Have Loved You” by Michael Joncas from *On Eagle’s Wings* or *Glory & Praise 2* (OCP [NALR]).

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Assign the Review and Reflection questions on pages 156, 162, 169, and 171.
- Have students read Chapter 8, “Turning Point in the Journey: The Destruction of Judah, Exile and Return,” pages 176–199 for the next session.

Chapter 8

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 8, “Turning Point in the Journey: The Destruction of Judah, Exile and Return,” p. 176–199.
- Students were also asked to complete the Chapter 7 “Review and Reflection” questions from pages 156, 162, 169, and 171.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Play a CD or cassette tape of the song “Here I Am, Lord.” Students will likely be familiar with this liturgical standard. Repeat the song lyrics and ask: “Which prophet should be getting credit for this song’s lyrics?” (*The song is based on Isaiah 6:8*) Note that “Here I Am, Lord” could be a theme song for all the Old Testament prophets. Have students do a quick chapter survey. How and where does Yahweh send the prophets presented in this chapter (Isaiah, Micah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Jonah)?
- Refocus attention on the political and psychological climate during this era. Write on the board or ask: “What was it like for Jews living in Judah or Israel during the sixth, seventh, and eighth century B.C.?”
- Ask: “What events led to this awful state of affairs?” (*The end of the independent states of Judah and Israel, the exile and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.*) Have students generate a quick list of descriptive adjectives to paint the picture. (*i.e. terrifying, unsettling, tragic, confusing, disruptive, dangerous, etc.*) Challenge students to put this ancient tragedy into modern terms: “If a crisis like this happened in our country today, it would mean . . .?”
- Before collecting the Review and Reflection questions from Chapter 7, ask several students to read their answers for question three on page 171 which sums up much of the chapter: “What new ideas did each of the four prophets introduce to the religion of Yahweh?”

Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Introduction, Judah Before the Exile, The Exile of Judah (176–182)

- Using a regional map of the ancient kingdoms of Judah and Israel, summarize the first few paragraphs of “Judah before the Exile.” Make sure that students see how these tiny kingdoms were surrounded by “super-powers”—Egypt, Babylon, Assyria. (*Solomon’s son Rehoboam caused the split into two kingdoms and was succeeded by his son Abijah. The next two kings of Judah—Asa and Jehoshaphat—battled with the northern kingdom, Israel, while attempting some reforms. After Jehoshaphat, however, idolatry and injustice infected Judah, as well*)
- Ask: “What strange mystery in the book of Isaiah have Scripture scholars resolved?” (*Historical events referred to span more than 200 years. One prophet could not have lived that long. Scholars say that Isaiah probably has three different authors.*)
- Supply Bibles and divide into small groups. Have students use Isaiah or Micah and their natural “marketing” savvy to write a sixty-second public service style radio ad. The ads should summarize the basic messages in Isaiah or Micah. This project should take fifteen to twenty minutes. (*Have stopwatches and several sample radio ad scripts available for student use.*)
- Have students deliver their ads and tape them. (*Allow students to briefly critique and react to the ads – content and delivery.*)
- Refocus attention on the text, suggesting that if radio news correspondents could return to Judah in the sixth century B.C., they would report a massive tragedy—the conquest of Judea, the total destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., and the exile of the people into bondage in Babylon.
- Summarize the chain of events (including events and dates on pages 179–182) in an NPR-style news summary. Assume the viewpoint of a reporter who travels back in time to cover the most tragic event in the history of Israel. Add drama to oral summary with verses from the Book of Lamentations.

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Assign students to do the journal assignment on page 182 in which students imagine themselves as exiled Jews in Babylon. The assignment is to write a prayer describing their sufferings and feelings.

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Prophets of the Exile, The Exiles Return to Judah, Major Themes of Writing Before, During and After the Exile, Further Reflection (pages 182–199)

- Refer again to the regional map of ancient Judah and Babylon. Say: “You wrote prayers about the Exile and agonies of the Jews. The prophets Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Second Isaiah also suffered as they shared God’s word. Ezekiel was deported to Babylon while Jeremiah was left behind for a time in Jerusalem’s ruins. Although his identity remains a mystery, Second Isaiah also witnessed the horrors of captivity and enslavement.”
- Have students review pages 183–184 and write “Five Facts about Ezekiel” on five 3” X 5” index cards. Students should also do Jeremiah and Second Isaiah cards in the same way. When completed, students can exchange the fifteen-card “decks.” Have students share selected facts aloud with the whole group. (*Plan about fifteen minutes for this activity.*)
- Sum up the visions and symbolic acts of Ezekiel (pages 184–187) and sample student opinion: “Was Ezekiel mentally unstable? Or, was this prophet just severely traumatized by the tragic exile, slavery and sins of Israel?”
- Discuss the terms “post-exilic” and “remnant” in the context of the Jewish return to Israel. It was a mixed blessing. Though many Jews returned home, things were not the same. Many Jews longed to see the Temple rebuilt but were grieved that it was not as glorious or impressive. Others longed to seek revenge on those who had destroyed their Temple, capital, and way of life. The Jews were still enslaved—in their own homeland. Neo-Babylonian control was replaced by Persian control. The Jews were under foreign control for nearly 600 years before Christ, and for several centuries, under the Romans, after Christ.
- To conclude the Part II Lesson, have students re-gather in small groups to read and discuss “Jonah: The Reluctant Missionary of Peace” (pages 196–197). Remind students that this material presents the book of Jonah as a parable—a symbolic story with moral truths.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Have students sit in a circle around one small candle. As they sit quietly, wind some vines (real or artificial) around the chairs, forming a loose connection among all in the circle.
- Ask students to recall and mention people who helped to *connect* them to the faith. Now, invite each one around the circle to mention an event or experience that helped them feel connected to Christ. (*First Communion, a Confirmation retreat, service project etc . . .*) Recall that Isaiah portrays Israel as a vineyard that God tears down when wild grapes (sin) begins to grow there. The image of a vineyard is used often in Scripture. (*The Vineyard Song, Isaiah 5:1–7.*)
- Have a student read John 15:1–5. (*Jesus says “I am the vine, you are the branches . . .”*). A quiet meditation should follow the reading. Ask students to quietly consider what things can damage their connection, their lifeline with Jesus.
- Conclude with a prayer asking for the strength, wisdom and grace to cultivate and protect our living connection with Jesus, the vine.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Assign the “Review and Reflection” Questions on pages 178, 182, 190, 193, and 198.
- Have students read Chapter 9, “A Spiritual Journey: A Look at Wisdom and Apocalyptic Literature” (pages 202–223) for the next session.

Chapter 9 Parish

Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 9, “A Spiritual Journey: A Look at Wisdom and Apocalyptic Literature,” pages 202–223.
- Students were also asked to complete the Chapter 8 “Review and Reflection” questions from pages 178, 182, 190, 193, and 198.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Hand out seven or eight index cards on which common aphorisms or proverbs are printed. (“A friend in need is a friend indeed”, “Haste makes waste”, “Waste not, want not”, “A stitch in time saves nine”, “Make hay while the sun shines”, etc.) Ask students if they think that there’s really good advice in these old sayings? Invite students to explain and share proverbs popular in their own families. Are there any that no longer make sense?
- Remind the group that the Wisdom literature they’ve just read about is a collection of wise sayings, proverbs, short stories collected by Jewish authors during the Exile and post-Exilic periods. Even though these proverbs don’t carry specifically religious messages, the Jews saw all human wisdom as coming from God.
- Have students exchange the assigned Chapter 8 Review and Reflection questions done as homework. Recruit different students to read aloud answers for these fifteen questions.

Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Introduction, Wisdom Literature: Themes and Styles, Wisdom Books: A Unique Form of Spirituality (202–210)

- Write the Hebrew word for wisdom—“hokma”—on the board or on an overhead projector overlay. Sample student opinion about why people search for wisdom. (*It helps people to make sense of life, helps people to be happy, guides them through troubles and grief, etc.*)
- In small groups, have students select three favorite movies or songs that have wise messages about life, happiness, or pain and grief. The groups should write a brief summary of each movie or song, and then find a related proverb from Wisdom literature—Proverbs, Sirach, or Ecclesiastes. Have the groups present their movies or songs and their related proverbs. (*This exercise should take about twenty minutes.*)
- Connect the movie or song messages back to themes found in the Wisdom books. Revisit and recap the concepts presented by the text in “Wisdom Literature: Themes and Styles” and “Wisdom Books: A Unique Form of Spirituality,” (pages 203–210):
 1. Wisdom teachings helped to unify and strengthen the Jewish community, especially in the Diaspora or areas outside the homeland.
 2. The Wisdom books of the Old Testament are: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Sirach and Wisdom.
 3. Jewish Wisdom literature was written in the post-Exilic period.
 4. Jewish Wisdom literature borrowed heavily from other cultures, especially Egypt and Greece because “wisdom is wisdom. . . .”
 5. Nonetheless, Jewish wisdom is unique. It maintains that “the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord”—human wisdom is rooted in the understanding that God is our Creator.
 6. The use of contrasts was a popular wisdom literature style.
 7. A “sage” was a person honored for experience, judgment, wisdom.
 8. Authors of Jewish Wisdom literature were likely wealthy and experienced men of Israel.
 9. The book of Job challenges the standard beliefs of the time – that a good person is rewarded with health, wealth and happiness.
 10. Although Wisdom is sometimes called “Wisdom of Solomon,” it was written by a Jew living in Alexandria, Egypt and reflects a “Hellenistic” or Greek influence.

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Assign students to do the journal assignment on page 210. They should offer their own words of wisdom but also refer to proverbs or wise teachings they’ve encountered in the Wisdom books.

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: An Inward Journey: The Book of Psalms, The Rise of Apocalyptic Literature, Apocalyptic Writing in the Old Testament, Further Reflections (pages 211–222)

- Show a ten to twelve minute segment of the video “Praying the Psalms” (Corpus Video) to focus in on the psalms as a type of wisdom literature that draws believers into prayer and worship. Sister Joan Chittister, O.S.B. discusses how to apply the Psalms to life.
- Review material on the origins of the Psalms from the text. Important points include:
 1. The Psalms, written over many centuries, were originally organized as five separate books.
 2. King David (ca 1040–970 B.C.) is the author of some psalms but almost two-thirds of the psalms were probably written between 520 and 333 B.C., long after David and long after the second Temple was built.
 3. Psalm 29 may be the oldest psalm since it alludes to Yahweh in a style similar to Canaanite poetry. Psalm 23, “The Lord, Shepherd and Host,” is one of the most popular.
 4. There are four main categories of psalms: Psalms of Lament; Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving; Psalms of Instruction, and Liturgical Psalms. The Psalms of Instruction share wisdom literature themes but also include historical psalms which retell the history of the Jews.
 5. Today, the psalms help us to better understand the faith, life and longings of our Jewish fathers and mothers in faith. What’s more, many of them can still express our faith, life and longings.
- Distribute Handout 9B, “Kinds of Psalms,” and have students work in small groups. Have each group research either 1 and 2 (Psalms of Lament and Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving) or 3 and 4 (Psalms of Instruction and Liturgical Psalms). (*Allow ten to fifteen minutes for this Scripture research.*)
- Conclude Part II Lesson by summarizing important things to know about apocalyptic literature:
 1. Apocalyptic literature dates from the same era as the Wisdom literature.
 2. Apocalyptic literature focuses not on history—what God *has done*—but on what God *will* do in the future. Some of it (called Eschatology) even describes the end times or “last things”: death, judgment, immortality, heaven, and hell.
 3. There are apocalyptic passages in many places in the Bible but the book of Daniel is the major Old Testament example of it; Revelation is the major example of apocalyptic writing in the New Testament.
 4. Written during periods of great turmoil, apocalyptic writings typically express an urgent longing for change, a warning about coming catastrophes, a chastisement by God and the end of history as we know it. Strange beasts were often used as symbols of new threats, and the writings appeared under a pseudonym to protect the author who criticized the political and social status quo.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Begin the prayer by playing or singing together “The Lord Is My Light” by David Haas from “Gather” (GIA).
- Light the prayer candles and have students sit in silence for a few moments, attending to the flickering light of the candles.
- Read or have several students slowly read Psalm 19, “God’s Glory in the Heavens and in the Law.”
- Repeat the psalm’s last line: “Oh Lord, my rock and redeemer.” Holding a fist-sized rock, say: “God is still our rock, today. A rock is solid, unchanging, indestructible under most circumstances. We need a rock like God in our lives.” Pass the rock around the group, letting each one hold it for a few moments.
- Read or have a student read Thomas Merton’s modern psalm on page 222. It could be read against a background of appropriate instrumental music.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Assign the Review and Reflection questions on pages 203, 205, 210, 215, 217, and 220.
- Have students read Chapter 10, “The Journey Leads to the Time of Jesus and Beyond” (pages 226–248) for the next session.

Chapter 10

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 10, “The Journey Leads to the Time of Jesus and Beyond,” pages 226–248 for this last session.
- Students were also asked to complete the Chapter 9 Review and Reflection questions on pages 203, 205, 210, 215, 217, and 220.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Conduct a “talk with your feet” poll on attitudes toward “home.” (*Prepare the space by placing a line of tape on one side of the room with a sign that reads: “Strongly Agree.” Put another tape—“Strongly Disagree”—on the opposite side of the room. Put two other tapes marked “Somewhat Agree” and “Somewhat Disagree” in between.*) Students will “answer” by moving to the area that best expresses their opinion. Have students react to statements such as: “I feel most at home when only my family is there,” “I could move to another home or city and not look back” “If my home was robbed or damaged on purpose, I could easily forgive and forget” “I could feel at home anywhere—in a motel, apartment, mobile home.” “I really treasure my country as my *homeland*.” Ask a sampling of students to explain their positions.
- Read the first paragraph of the Chapter 10 Introduction about the centuries of foreign rule in the Jewish homeland. Ask students to link the feelings they expressed about “home” to the longings the Jews must have had.
- Extend the focus on homelands, pointing out that because Israel was under foreign domination for so long, many Jews turned to their faith for consolation, strength and hope. Some Jews wanted to free their homeland and believed that violence against their enemies would be justified. Others favored peaceful resistance.
- Have students hand in the assigned Chapter 9 Review and Reflection questions completed as homework.

Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Introduction, How God’s People Lived Under Foreign Rule, Tracing Jewish History Prior to the Maccabean Revolt, (226–234)

- Ask students to brainstorm for words and phrases connected with the word “minority.” Record the responses on the board or a flip-chart. Encourage students to critique and prioritize the list, selecting 4 or 5 words or phrases which would best describe someone who belongs to a minority group.
- Divide the class into small groups. Assign each group to prepare short skits based on Daniel, Tobit, Esther or Judith. Urge groups to review the textbook, referenced Scripture passages and the “minority” material. Allow plenty of “creative license” in developing the characters, scenes, props and dialogue. (*This activity will require fifteen to twenty minutes.*)
- Display a large map to refocus attention on the political status of Israel several centuries before the birth of Christ. Point to the Babylonian, Persian, and Greek Empires and the vulnerable location of tiny Palestine.
- In addition to political domination, Israel’s culture was also vulnerable to foreign influences. Ask the students to describe the effects of Zoroastrianism, the Persian religion, and Hellenization on conquered nations. (*Add that there were positive fruits of Hellenization. The Septuagint, the oldest, complete translation of the Old Testament was translated into Greek, a language spoken throughout the Middle Eastern world. Another byproduct of Hellenization was the creation of a Jewish community in Alexandria, Egypt, a great center for learning.*)
- Briefly sketch and summarize the historical chain of events that touched Palestine after its conquest by Alexander the Great in 333 B.C. The rule of Generals Ptolemy and Seleucus, the Ptolemies dynasty (320–200 B.C.), the repressive Seleucid Dynasty, the brief Jewish Hasmonean Dynasty, the cruel rule of Antiochus IV and his attempts to ban traditional Jewish worship and practices.

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Assign students to do the Journal Assignment on page 229.

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: From the Maccabees to Roman Control, Cooperation or Resistance: What Was the Best Course for the Jews?, What Happened to the Jews?, Further Reflections (pages 235–248)

- Read selected portions from the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees to dramatize the religious persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV. Challenge students to imagine what it would be mean—as Catholics—to suffer religious persecution today.
- Ask students to retell the story of Judas Maccabeus and his recapturing of the Temple. How is the Jewish feast of Hanukkah connected with this event? Maccabeus is a hero and an enduring symbol of political and military resistance to foreign domination. Other Jews, including Jesus, promoted spiritual resistance in the face of persecution.
- With broad strokes, summarize the history of the Hasmonean Dynasty which developed from the Maccabeus family. Make sure that students are generally familiar with the terms **Sadducees, synagogue, rabbi, hasidim, Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots, Talmud** and with the major personalities involved in the transition to Roman rule: Aristobulus II, the Roman General Pompey and finally King Herod of Judea.
- Invite students to recall what they know or read about the creation of the synagogue and the development of the state of Israel in 1948.
- Distribute poster boards and art supplies for small groups. Provide Bibles, reference books and photo magazines (*i.e. issues of "National Geographic" with articles on the Middle East*) Challenge the groups to create a collage-style poster illustrating their study of the Old Testament—from Genesis up to the birth of Jesus. Provide some printed downloadable photos or illustrations, magazines and newspapers and perhaps a computer printer to generate headlines or titles. Other possible supplies: fabrics, dried flowers, photos of Jewish feasts, etc.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Light the candles of a menorah for the last prayer session during this study of the Old Testament.
- Play "Shelter Me, O God," by Bob Hurd from *"In the Breaking of the Bread"* or *"Breaking Bread"* (OCP); *Gather* (GIA).
- Allow a few minutes for silent reflection. Then, quietly remind students that God does shelter each of us in many ways. Long ago, God created the first human beings out of love. Though they sinned, He made a covenant with them. God led his Chosen People to a new land, gave them the Ten Commandments and the promise of a Savior. God promised to guide and protect the Jews and all of his people forever.
- Join hands and pray together Psalm 27, "Trust in God" through verse 3.
- Conclude by singing together "Shelter Me, O God" followed by greetings of "Shalom," handshakes and hugs.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Distribute materials that students will keep from their Old Testament study and collect textbooks and assignments.
- Display the Old Testament collages.