

## Doctrinal Themes: Kingdom of God

### Introduction

This segment is designed to help you reflect on the mystery of the Kingdom of God, which is the last major doctrinal theme in the text. It will also point out how to approach the mystery of the Kingdom with young people. Just follow the outline. Begin by reflecting on or journaling the first question. Watch the video *Theological Foundations: Kingdom of God*, and note how the explanation sheds light on the topic for your own understanding. Then read the article “Kingdom of God” and answer the reflection questions.

### First Question

What image would you use to describe the Kingdom of God?

### Video

Watch the video on Kingdom of God and respond to these questions:

- How have you experienced the “sense of more” that Father Hater talks about in the video?
- Name some people who have shown you the Kingdom of God (through forgiveness, caring, reaching out to the poor and oppressed).
- What do you see as the difference between believing in the Kingdom and showing the Kingdom to others?
- Who are the Good Samaritans (the enemies or outcasts who act as

neighbors) in contemporary life?

## **Article: The Kingdom of God**

Read the following article and respond to the questions:

“In Christ’s word, in his works, and in his presence this Kingdom reveals itself to us....Before all things...the Kingdom is clearly visible in the very Person of Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, who came ‘to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many’ (Mk. 10:45)” (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, #5).

JA primary mission of Jesus Christ was to show us what the Kingdom was. He came among us to proclaim that the Kingdom of God is close at hand (Mark 1:15), to call us to conversion and repentance (Luke 10:13- 15; Matthew 11:20-24; Luke 13:1-5, 19:41-44), and to urge us to be watchful and ready for the Kingdom (Luke 12:35-40; Matthew 25:1-13).

The Kingdom of God that so preoccupied Jesus was not a kingdom in the worldly sense. “My Kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36), Jesus insisted. For us the word Kingdom does have something to do with power and authority. Even in ordinary human conversation, we give it that meaning. “Don’t go in the workroom. That is Dad’s kingdom.” What the warning means is that “Dad” reigns supreme in a given sector of a home. What he says there goes. Anyone who tries to enter will have to contend with Dad.

The Kingdom of God has a similar meaning. It exists wherever God’s will is at work. God’s will is at work wherever people are faithful to the command that we love one another as God first loved us.

We know that we can only love when God, who is Love, is present to us. One “who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 John 4:16). The God of Love empowers us to love. Therefore, the Kingdom of God is present whenever God’s power makes love, reconciliation, and healing possible.

We believe that the Kingdom of God is past, present and future.

- **The past:** The Kingdom of God has already come, in the person of Jesus Christ.
- **The present:** As the Church, we are called to be living and vibrant models—or signs—of the reality of the Kingdom of God. People today, both inside and outside the community of faith, look at this model and know that God still lives, and that the presence of God is a presence for healing, reconciliation, justice, peace, and freedom.
- **The future:** The Church, through its preaching, teaching, and actions, points to the coming Kingdom. The mission of the Church is to focus people on what yet lies ahead, when God “will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things will have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

The Kingdom of God is a multi-faceted concept. When teaching students about the Kingdom, the use of images is important at all age levels. Start with the images and stories that Jesus uses in the parables and Sermon on the Mount. Younger students can identify with things they can see, feel, hear, and smell. Older students can take the images further and discuss them and/or find similar images in contemporary life. With both older elementary school and middle school classes, it is helpful to delve into some of the background on Jewish culture at the time Jesus preached the parables and used images. For example, why

is the lost coin so important to a woman? What is the significance of welcoming the son back to the table and giving him a ring?

Jesus also preached the Kingdom by his actions. The healing stories are important, but it is essential to stress all of Jesus' actions as actions for the Kingdom. Young people will not identify with an ability to heal, but they may be challenged by Jesus' inclusion of the outcasts and strangers. In a way, young people act their way into this belief, and that is why it is so important to plan and do activities with them that reach out to the marginal and poor.

### Reflection Questions

- How has this section broadened your idea of the Kingdom of God?
- What do you see as the most challenging aspect of presenting this theme to your students?