

## Doctrinal Themes: Revelation

### Introduction

This segment is meant to help you reflect on Revelation, which is the first doctrinal theme in the text. It will also help you see which aspects of Revelation are most age appropriate. Just follow the outline. Begin by reflecting or journaling on the first question. Watch the video *Theological Foundations: Revelation* and note how the explanation sheds light on the topic for your own understanding. Then read the article “Revelation” and write down your responses to the reflection questions.

### First Question

How have you learned about who God is and what he is like?

### Video

Watch *Theological Foundations: Revelation*, and respond to these questions:

- Besides reason, in what other ways does God reveal himself?
- Jesus is the fullness of God’s Revelation. What does that tell us about God?
- What role do the Pope and bishops play in God’s self-communication?
- Why is the faith community important?

## Article: Revelation

Read the following article and respond to the questions:

Think about how you and your best friend really got to know each other. You probably know a lot more about each other today than you knew the first time you met. We reveal ourselves to one another gradually. Others learn about us from what we tell them, or from what they see us do. Doing things together gives us windows into who a person is. Observing a friend learn something new, be rejected or successful, endure hardship or enjoy good times reveals new or more in depth knowledge of who they are. We never perfectly know a friend. There are times we surprise each other by our responses, and there are times we may even say, “He or she is a mystery!”

Although this analogy is imperfect, in some ways it helps us to understand how God reveals himself to humans. We get to know God by looking at his creation and realizing what he must be like because of its awesomeness, beauty, balance, and complexity. At times, God reveals himself to us in others through acts of kindness, sharing, or forgiveness, and we say “That’s what God is like!” God’s greatest and most complete self-revelation is in the person of Jesus, God made flesh. Throughout history God has revealed himself over and over again to people. We find evidence of that in the Scriptures, which are records of God’s communication with humans.

We come to know Jesus through our two primary sources of Divine Revelation—Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

“Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together...” Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to

remain with his own “always, to the close of the age.” (CCC 80)

One of the major differences between Roman Catholics and other Christian traditions is the fundamental belief that there are two different ways God reveals himself to us: through Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Other Christian traditions believe God’s only revelation is in the Scriptures. Catholics believe that the Magisterium or teaching office of the Church, which is the bishops in communion with the Pope, has been given the task of interpreting God’s revelation of himself in the Word of God and Sacred Tradition.

As a catechist, what implications does this have for your catechetical sessions? The first three sessions in *Alive in Christ* (K-8) are sessions based on the doctrinal theme Revelation.

### K-3

Young children are not cognitively capable of grasping all the “facts” about Revelation. For them the emphasis on Creation helps them sharpen their sense of the presence of God and God’s providence. Scripture stories help young children know what God is like, and the use of the Gospels informs them about who Jesus is. The rituals of holding the Bible and placing it in a special place in the session space enable them to sense that the Scriptures are holy.

## Grades 4-6

Young people in middle grades are much more able to deal with the facts of Revelation. They are developed enough that they can name their experiences of God and have developed an image of who or what God is. They are at a moral development level where God's Revelation in Law makes sense to them. They like structures and are curious about the Magisterium of the Church and how it operates. This is the time when young people are familiarized with the Bible as a library of sacred books and a collection of a variety of forms of literature. In the early part of this phase, young people should know how to find chapter and verse. By the end of the middle grades they should know the names and order of the books in the Bible. It is at this stage that young people can benefit from guided reflection with the Scriptures and experiencing many different prayer forms which help them pay attention to God's Revelation.

## Grades 7-8

At this age some young people will begin to ask "how" questions; for example, "How can God...?" "How do we know the Bible is inspired?" This does not indicate they are losing their faith or trying to be difficult. The intellectual capacity of the middle school student is beginning to grow and they will practice using it. Allow them to grapple with their questions and emphasize that faith is not about how God or the Church does or articulates things but faith is about "Why?" By this time young people are hopefully beginning to know how to locate texts in Scripture. They are learning the structure of the Bible. They are able to understand how the Bible was written and developed and what is meant by inspiration. The practice of

breaking open the Sunday Scriptures on a weekly basis helps them integrate the principles and values of the Scriptures and deepens their faith. Young people are ready to learn about how Sacred Tradition develops, what Apostolic Succession is, and why it is important in the development of Tradition.

### Reflection Questions

- In what ways do you experience God's self-revelation most strongly?
- What do you think is the most important thing for you to emphasize about Revelation with your group?