

Family Letter on Unit 1

Jesus Christ the Way

Your young adolescent is beginning the study of Unit 1, *Jesus Christ the Way*. As the students look to Jesus, who called disciples to follow him, they will be reminded of their baptismal call to follow Jesus. Through prayer and study, they will come to know Jesus and the WAY he asks us to walk with him.

Looking to Jesus

Jesus is the perfect model for any family. As you thoughtfully read the Gospels, be especially alert to the interaction between Jesus and his disciples. You will find that Jesus used many skills for helping people come to maturity. He himself led them along the WAY to the Father.

Let us look at one incident recorded in Luke 22:24–27. A dispute arose among the apostles about who was the greatest. Jesus listened, recognizing the apostles' attitude as the opposite of what he was seeking to teach. He did not get upset with them. Instead he gave them an example of how their non-believing neighbors viewed things and allowed them to see that they were reflecting the same attitudes. He restated his teaching that the greatest is the one who serves. Then he showed the authenticity of his words by reminding them that this was the WAY he lived. This was the WAY to the father.

Jesus listened. He confronted. He lived with what he taught. He invited the apostles to begin again to walk his WAY with him.

Following His Way

Adolescence is a time of transition, a time of passing from one way of thinking to acting a new way. Think back to when your young adolescent was learning to walk. Remember holding your child securely, allowing his or her little legs to learn balance and movement. Recall how you gradually gave more and more freedom, but also total security so when the legs began to buckle, you held your child up. Soon you were able to let go, but you kept your support within easy reach. Finally, you knew it was time to move away and to encourage your child to walk alone. Remember the joy you shared with your child as he or she successfully crossed the room and collapsed in your arms.

These joys should be yours once more, for your children are striving to set out again. This time it is not legs and feet that are striving for independence; it is minds and wills.

Young adolescents are beginning to think for themselves. This is a normal part of growth. As young people develop, they turn to every area of their lives, searching, questioning, and trying to make their own decision to respond positively to the faith of their Baptism.

As they struggle toward independence, young people need love, acceptance, and encouragement more than ever. They need these signs of love from their family when they are clumsy and bungling more than when they are successful. They want and need families who will set limits and only gradually widen the horizons.

Adolescents want and need mature adults who themselves are on the WAY to the Father. They want adults who will admit to the lifelong struggle of the journey, but who have found deep peace and happiness in walking the WAY of Christ with him and his people.



Family Checklist

One of the important tasks of a family is to help children develop and maintain a good self-image. The following questions are meant to help you look at some of the ways you are doing this and some of the ways you may need to improve. Reflect on each question, asking yourself how well you are doing it. Thank God for helping you to do your best and ask Jesus to send you the grace to help you improve where needed.

Do I express appreciation to my young adolescent for his or her good qualities?

Does my child know that I love him or her in a deep and unique way?

Does my young adolescent experience God's forgiving love in my response to accidents, thoughtlessness or sinful behavior?

Do I express interest in what he or she considers important?

Do my words and actions help my young adolescent develop respect for the gift of sexuality and a sense of modesty?

Do I listen to my child and show that I care what he or she thinks?

Do I give my young adolescent an example of a person who is authentically striving to follow Jesus?

Focusing on Family

Those who walk with Jesus will be able to say with him, "Here I am among you as one who serves."

Have each member of your family list ways he or she has seen the others giving service within the family. Share this good news. Thank one another for walking with Jesus, the WAY.

Encourage family members to do a special act of loving service for different family members each day. Try and set aside time each day for family prayer.

Visit www.ChristOurLife.org/family for more family resources.

