Level: 1 Grade: Prep

God's Great Family

In *God's Great Family* students learn about belonging to family and to the People of God. They explore the story of Abraham and Sarah as a story of promise and trust, and formative to our identity as the People of God. They also learn about some of the people in Jesus Christ's family and some of the gospel stories concerned with his childhood.

DOCTRINAL FOCUS

In planning to teach this unit the following references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are recommended:

#121 The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value, for the Old Covenant has never been revoked.
(See *Compendium* #21 *What is the importance of the Old Testament for Christians?*)

#123 Christians venerate the Old Testament as the true word of God.
(See *Compendium* #23 *What is the unity that exists between the Old and the New Testaments?*)

#72 God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants.
(See *Compendium* #26 *Who are the principal witnesses of the obedience of faith in the Sacred Scriptures?*)

#60 The people descended from Abraham would be the trustees of the promise made to the patriarchs, the chosen people, called to prepare for that day when God would gather all his children into the unity of the Church. They would be the root onto which the Gentiles would be grafted, once they came to believe.
(See *Compendium* #102 *How did God prepare the world for the mystery of Christ?*)

#1655 Christ chose to be born and grow up in the bosom of the holy family of Joseph and Mary.
(See *Compendium* #104 *What does the hidden life of Jesus Christ in Nazareth teach us?*)

#1223 All the Old Covenant pre-figurations find their fulfilment in Christ Jesus. He begins his public life after having himself baptised by St John the Baptist in the Jordan.
(See *Compendium* #105 *Why did Jesus Christ receive from John the 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins'?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

God's people have a history that begins with Abraham and Sarah. Who are the figures in this history that inspire you or resonate with you?

The story of Abraham and Sarah is a journey of promise, transformation and blessing. Like Abraham and Sarah, what journeys have you undertaken into the unknown? Was

there transformation during the journey? Were there blessings of people, new insights, new directions?

Like Abraham and Sarah, many in our world undertake journeys to foreign lands as refugees and migrants. Is this part of your family story? What was the journey like for your family? What were the challenges and the blessings?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Students come to this unit bringing a variety of experiences and understandings of family. *How can we encourage students to feel comfortable about sharing their family story and respecting the family stories of others?*

For many students the experience of family gives them an important sense of belonging, identity and heritage. *How can we lead students to an appreciation of belonging to God's family?*

The stories of the Old Testament stimulate many children's imaginations and can help them to form religious images. It is an appropriate time for cultivating a sense of wonder and appreciation of a world that reflects the presence and goodness of God. They can make basic links between their story and that of the Old Testament. *Can students recognise times when they have been called to be responsible or have chosen to do a special task?*

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Gen 12: 1–9 The Call of Abraham
Abraham and Sarah are told to leave their country and their family for an unknown land. And they do! This is a major move for them. Blessings and promises accompany such a journey of faith. They have been promised land, descendants and fame. It requires great faith in God to believe in a new life in a foreign land. Such a journey is symbolic of the many refugees over the centuries and up to our present time who continue to travel to freedom and new life. We are all on a symbolic journey with our loved ones. The journey of Abraham and Sarah, their nephew Lot and all their flocks progresses from Shechem, through the land of Canaan to Bethel and the Negev desert. This same route is repeated later by their grandson Jacob (Gen 33: 18; 35: 1, 6, 27; 46: 1) and also by the conquering Joshua (Josh 7: 2; 8: 9, 30). Thus it would seem to be a sacred, symbolic biblical route.

Gen 15: 1–6, 18–21 Abraham's Family
God had promised Abraham, in Chapter 12 of Genesis, that he would be the father of a great nation. But here in Chapter 15 'some time later' Abraham is still childless. His faith in God's promise is being severely tested. Yet God again promises 'your heir shall be of your own flesh and blood' (verse 4). Furthermore God is even more eloquently generous. Abraham is promised as many descendants as the stars in the heavens, which we now know are practically countless. Despite all conditions to the contrary, Abraham believed God. We call Abraham our father in faith. He certainly showed great faith in the goodness of God's pledge. So we, like our father in faith, Abraham, can rely on God to be faithful. We can interpret those final verses (19, 20, 21) to mean that a great variety of people are included in God's family.

Gen 17: 1–8, 15–22 Abraham's Family and Covenant Relationships With God
These remarkable verses reiterate the profound covenant that God has with Abraham and all people. It is a covenant of care and security, of protection and love. God is

very involved and interested in Abraham and his family, as well as in us and our families. This is what covenant means. It is all about loving relationships – God with us and we with others. God again promises what seems impossible – many children to a childless and elderly couple. This is a moving metaphor for the concern and interest God takes in our lives and our families.

JESUS CHRIST'S FAMILY

Lk 2: 22–40 Jesus is Presented in the Temple

These verses from Luke's version of the birth stories of Jesus Christ are different from Matthew's version. They depict Mary as mother and observer of Jesus. She and Joseph, as good Jews, do what the law requires of them by offering sacrifice for Mary's purification after childbirth, and by having Jesus circumcised. During these events the elderly Simeon and Anna met Jesus and his parents in the Temple. The picture we are given of Mary in these verses is of a wondering, not fully understanding, mother. She too, Simeon suggests, will suffer to believe in Jesus Christ and his message. 'And (he) said to Mary, "You see this child: he is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too."' It will not be easy for her as it is not always easy for us. Luke is the only New Testament writer to record any of these events.

Lk 2: 41–50 Jesus is Found in the Temple

When we reflect carefully on Mary, Jesus' mother, in this text we perceive her as a good Jewish woman making the yearly Passover pilgrimage to Jerusalem with her family. But when they return to Nazareth Jesus stays behind in the Temple, asking questions of and discussing with the educated men the finer points of the Law. Thus Mary and Joseph must search for and finally locate Jesus in the Temple. Unexpectedly, it is Mary who speaks and questions Jesus. Mary does not understand Jesus' response to her question, 'Why have you done this to us …?' (verse 48) and so again she needs to ponder (verse 52) what is happening in her life. Mary 'stored up all these things in her heart' (verse 51). Mary is listening within herself in order to understand how to respond to God and her family.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Lead students in a guided meditation, e.g. 'Family' in *You and Me God*, p. 14 or 'A Visit to Joseph' in *To God on a Magic Carpet*, p. 22.

- Decorate the prayer place in a deep indigo or purple, add many gold stars pinned to the purple drapes. Add a candle, Bible and picture of the Holy Family. Pray the prayer in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 19, p. 145.

- Prayer Celebration:
  - Begin with a song related to Jesus' family, e.g. 'Song to St Joseph' (Michael Mangan, *Saints and Celebrations,* Litmus Productions).
  - Invite students to pray the following prayer. It is similar to one Jesus Christ would have prayed with his family. The teacher reads a line with accompanying action and invites children to echo the words and action:

    PRAYER
    I will love the Lord my God *(hands raised)*
    with all my heart *(hands crossed over heart)*

and with all my soul *(arms stretched out)*
and all my might *(hands raised)* (Deut 6: 4–9).

- Invite students to share their own prayers of thanks for the Holy Family and for their own families.

- With arm outstretched in a gesture of blessing pray the following over students:

  BLESSING PRAYER
  May God bless you
  in your waking and your sleeping.
  May God guide you
  in your learning and your growing.
  May God's love and peace
  be with you now and always.
  Amen.

- Closer to Christmas set up the Nativity scene. Gather around it while students pray their prayers of thanks for Jesus' family.

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten: Chapter 12, Our Parents in Faith; Chapter 16, Jesus' Family; Chapter 19, Getting Ready for Jesus.

Faith concepts: family, heritage, story, belonging, chosen, identity.

Understandings:

All families have a story about their history.
The story of God's people is told in the Bible.
God's people have a story that begins with Abraham and Sarah.
Abraham and Sarah were chosen by God to lead God's people.
Mary and Joseph were chosen by God to be Jesus Christ's family.
John the Baptist was chosen as a special messenger from God who helped people get ready for Jesus Christ.

Unit specific learning:

Students will learn about	Students will learn to	Students will undertake to
Knowledge and Understanding	*Reasoning & Responding*	*Personal & Communal Engagement*
• The setting, characters, events and message of the scripture story of Abraham and Sarah. • Ways in which God keeps God's promises. • The people in Jesus' family, i.e. Joseph, Mary, Elizabeth, Zechariah and John the Baptist. • The setting, characters, events and message of the scripture stories of Jesus presented in the Temple and Jesus found in the Temple. • Some of the qualities of Mary, Jesus and Joseph. • The relationship between Mary and Elizabeth, and John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.	• Represent their ideas and beliefs about Jesus' family. • Express their feelings about their own families. • Reflect on their experiences of family life. • Respond to scripture stories through the use of 2D and 3D materials. • Make a connection between their own families and Jesus' family.	• Be part of class prayer sessions. • Engage in meditation sessions.

Part 1: Abraham and Sarah, Our Parents in Faith

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	Wondering Invite students to wonder with you: Do you know any stories about your family? Why do we tell stories? Why are stories important? What is the story of your family? ***Suggested Home Activity*** Create a take-home sheet for families to illustrate or write about an interesting family story.	**Assessment for Learning** This activity will indicate students' understanding of the role of story.
	Responding Students make and decorate a family name card using *WordArt* or lettering stencils. Make a family name mobile. On the mobile have pictures of a significant family story.	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
Abraham and Sarah The name Abraham means 'father/leader of many'. Abraham is regarded as the founding patriarch of the Israelites whom God chose to bless, out of all the families on the earth. In the midst of a world that believed in many gods, he believed in **one** God. He is a critical figure in both Judaism and Christianity, and is a very important prophet in Islam. These religions are often referred to as the 'Abrahamic religions'. Abraham and his wife Sarah are models of faith. They trusted and believed that nothing was impossible for God.	**Telling the Story** Read the story of Abraham and Sarah from *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 12, pp. 80–87. **Wondering** Invite students to wonder with you using the 'I wonder' from *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 12, p. 88. Invite students to wonder with you: I wonder if you have ever made a promise? I wonder if that promise was hard to keep? I wonder if someone has ever made you a promise? I wonder if that promise was kept? I wonder if it is hard to wait for a promise to be fulfilled?	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
The Bible is a collection of sacred books, inspired by God, which were written by people over thousands of years. The Bible expresses the ongoing relationship between God and God's people**.** It is made up of two major parts: The **Old Testament** (or *Tanakh* to Jews) and the New Testament. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew before the time of Jesus Christ. It is part of both the Jewish and Christian traditions. The **New Testament** (a collection of gospels, letters, Acts of the Apostles and the Book of Revelation) was written in Greek after the time of Jesus Christ. It belongs to the Christian tradition.	**Responding** Students cut out star shapes and decorate using art materials, e.g. sequins or glitter. Write their names on their stars. Make a banner with the words 'God's Promise'. Use the stars to decorate around the words. **Praying the Word** Introduce the students to the Bible as a story of our faith history. Set the scene for the retelling of the story of Abraham and Sarah: – Place a dark blue cloth on the prayer place (representing the sky.) – Prepare sand in a tray for the prayer place. (Abraham and Sarah were nomads. They travelled through the desert, living in tents.) – Scatter glitter stars around the sand in the tray. (God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky.) – Light a candle. – Read Gen 15: 5–6.	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	Responding Collect materials – sand, rocks and scrap fabric – to make an individual or small group diorama. Use 2D or 3D figures to represent Abraham and Sarah. Students retell the story in small groups. Groups share with the whole class.	**Assessment of Learning** This activity will indicate students' ability to retell the story of Abraham and Sarah.
	Praying the Word Add candles to the prayer place to represent the stars. Play reflective music to create a reverent atmosphere and participate in a prayer experience. Pray the prayer from *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 12, p. 89.	

Part 2: The Holy Family

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
The Holy Family Little is known of Jesus' life with his family at Nazareth. What we can know comes from the gospels and from an exploration of first century Judaism, and from what we might know about daily life in first century Palestine. The Holy Family is seen by Christians as the model of a good and happy family life.	**Wondering** Invite students to wonder with you: Who belongs to your family? What makes you a family? What do you do with your family? Record students' responses.	

<table>
<tr><th>Additional Reading for Teachers</th><th>Learning & Teaching Sequence</th><th>Assessment</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>Responding
Students illustrate their families and write/dictate to the teacher the names of the members of their families.

Teach the students songs about family such as ‘One, Two, Three, Family!’ (Abba, K, Abrahams, J & O’Brien, M, Great Times with Jesus).</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Wondering
Invite students to wonder with you:
What do you know about the family of Jesus?
Who were Jesus’ parents?
Where did they live?
What do you want to know about Jesus’ family?
How can we find out?

These findings can be placed in the following chart:
<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Topic:</td></tr>
<tr><td>What I know about this topic</td><td>What I want to find out</td><td>How I can find out what I want to learn</td><td>What I learned</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>(oral assessment towards the end of unit)</td></tr>
</table></td><td>Assessment for Learning
This activity will indicate students’ prior knowledge, understanding and perceptions of Jesus’ family.

Assessment as Learning
This graphic organiser will enable students to reflect on their learning throughout the unit.</td></tr>
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Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple This event is described in the Gospel of Luke (2: 22–40). According to the gospel, Mary and Joseph took the baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem forty days after his birth to dedicate him to God, in line with Jewish law of the time. They offered a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. This is a sign that they were not a wealthy family. Wealthy families offered animals from their fields.	**Telling the Story** Read the story about Jesus' family and the presentation of Jesus at the Temple from *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 16, pp. 120–122. **Wondering** Invite students to wonder with you: I wonder if you have ever made your parents worry? I wonder what you did to make them worry? I wonder why your parents were worried? I wonder how your parents reacted? **Responding** Students represent their image of Jesus' family using paint or other art media, e.g. pastels, textas. Display images of Jesus' family around photos of the students' families.	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
When Jesus, at the age of 12, was left behind in the Temple, it was doubtful that his parents missed him through carelessness. Usually the women and children in caravans started much earlier than the men because they travelled more slowly.	**Telling the Story** Read with the students the story of Jesus being found in the Temple from *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 16, pp. 123–125.	
Joseph may have thought Jesus was with Mary, along with the women and children, while Mary could have thought that Jesus (being old enough) was travelling behind in the male party. When the men caught up with the women in the evening it would have been discovered that Jesus was in neither of the two parties. When Jesus was finally found in the Temple he was surprised that his parents did not know that he ought to have been in his Father's house.	**Wondering** Invite students to wonder with you using the 'I wonder' questions from *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 16, p. 126.	
	Responding • In groups students roleplay the story of Jesus being found in the Temple. • Students make their own paper bag or stick puppets to retell the story of Jesus being found in the Temple. Students retell the story to a partner. • Sing songs about the holy family, such as 'Song to St Joseph' (Mangan, M, *Saints and Celebrations*).	**Assessment of Learning** These tasks will indicate students' abilities to recount and retell biblical stories. These tasks may also enable students to express their ideas and beliefs about Jesus' family.

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	Praying the Word Read the story of Jesus being found in the Temple (Lk 2: 41–50). Lead students through a meditation about Jesus in the Temple (Reehorst, J, *Guided Meditations for Children*, pp. 82–84). **Praying the Word** Students participate in a prayer celebration (see 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship').	

Part 3: Jesus' Family

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
Mary was related to Elizabeth, perhaps a cousin. Elizabeth's son is John the Baptist.	**Telling The Story** Explore with students the makeup of their extended family. Use 3D materials to tell the story of Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth (Lk 1: 39–40, 56–60) to introduce the students to Jesus' extended family.	**Assessment for Learning** This activity will indicate students' understanding of the extended family.

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	Responding The class explores Jesus' family tree (including Elizabeth and John). Students write or draw their own family trees, including their aunts, uncles and cousins. ***Suggested Home Activity*** Students take the family tree home to share with parents. Students add extra information.	
John the Baptist Luke states that John the Baptist was a *Nazirite* (consecrated to God by a vow). The gospels agree that he spent his early years in the mountainous district of Judea leading a simple life, clothed in camel's hair with a leather girdle about his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey (Mt 3: 4). John called people to repent because the Kingdom of God was near at hand. He baptised people for the forgiveness of their sins. He was the one who would go before Jesus and prepare the way for him. John the Baptist marks the transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament. In later catechesis the students will learn more about this great prophet who holds such a prominent place in the liturgies and art of Eastern and Western Christianity.	**Telling the Story** Read the story of John the Baptist from *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 19, pp. 140–143.	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	Wondering Invite students to wonder with you using the 'I wonder' from *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 19, p. 144.	
	Responding • Using an outline of a person, students use art materials (e.g. hessian, fur fabric) to dress the person of John the Baptist. Display the images of John on a desert mural. Students describe what John the Baptist was like. • Teach the students songs about John the Baptist such as 'Watch Out!' (Mangan, M, *Sing Your Joy*).	**Assessment of Learning** This task will indicate students' knowledge and understanding of John the Baptist.
	Praying the Word Create the atmosphere for prayer. Read the story of John preparing the way for Jesus Christ (Lk 1: 80; 3: 2–3, 15–18). Share the prayer from *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 19, p. 145.	

RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Prep/Kindergarten: Chapter 12, Our Parents in Faith; Chapter 16, Jesus' Family; Chapter 19, Getting Ready for Jesus.

Teacher Resources

Abba, K, Abrahams, J & O'Brien, M 2003, 'One, Two, Three, Family!', *Great Times With Jesus*, Willow Publishing, NSW.
Mangan, M, 'Song to St Joseph', *Saints and Celebrations*, Litmus Productions, Albany Creek.
Mangan, M 2000, 'Watch Out!', *Sing Your Joy*, Litmus Productions, Albany Creek.
Reehorst, J 2002, 'Finding Jesus in the Temple', *Guided Meditations for Children*, Harcourt Religion Publishers, USA.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 1 standards.

Students relate to sacred story including the image of the Good Shepherd by making connections to their personal experiences. Students contemplate and reflect about God, themselves and the world by responding to their wondering, feelings and ideas through prayer and a range of media.