

ALIVE IN CHRIST

GRADE 8

The Church

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Our Sunday Visitor

Life in Christ

♥ Let Us Pray

Leader: God Almighty, we gather in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us make choices that will bring the light of Christ to the world.

“The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I lack.” **Psalms 23:1**

All: Dear Lord, help us make good choices!

✚ Scripture

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and
recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

Luke 4:18-19

Have you ever thought...

- What does Jesus' mission mean to you?
- What difference can believing in Jesus make in how you live?

Getting Started

In this chapter, you will discover the ways our belief in Jesus affects our lives, learn about justification and righteousness, and consider the role of conversion in our lives.

Below are some titles for Jesus that come from the Gospel according to John. Jesus used these words to describe himself and how he provides for us.

1. Add the missing words to complete the titles.
2. Then choose one and describe what it means and how it connects to the new life Jesus offers us.



Titles of Jesus

I am the _____ Shepherd.

I am the _____ and you are the branches.

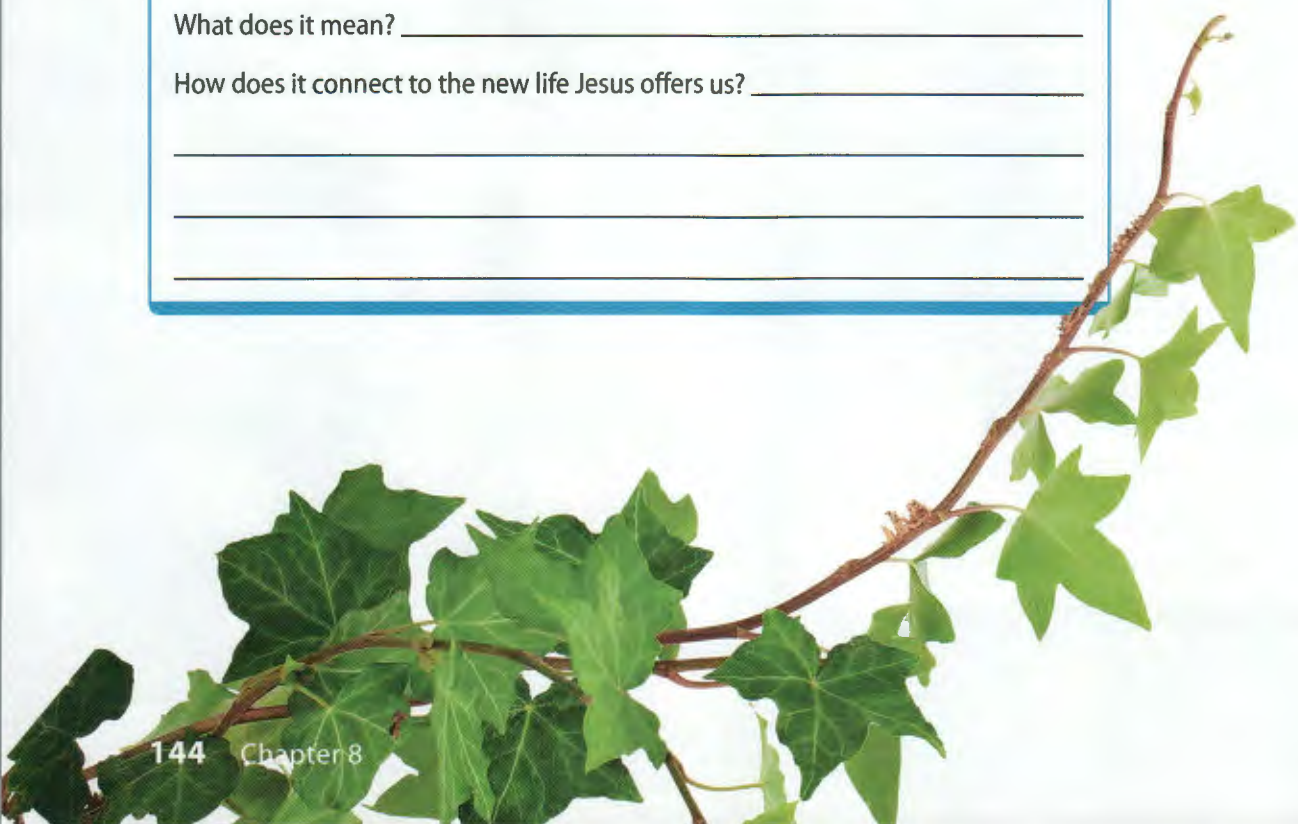
I am the _____ of the world.

I am the Bread of _____.

Title you chose: _____

What does it mean? _____

How does it connect to the new life Jesus offers us? _____



Catholic Faith Words

• justification

• eternal life

• righteous

• conversion

WRITE

Who Are You? You have different roles and titles, and each tells something about you and the people or activities that are a part of your life. For instance, you are a son or daughter, a student, a friend, possibly a sibling or cousin, perhaps a soccer player or a pianist, and so on. List five of the roles you have and name one way your life is affected because of each role.

1. _____

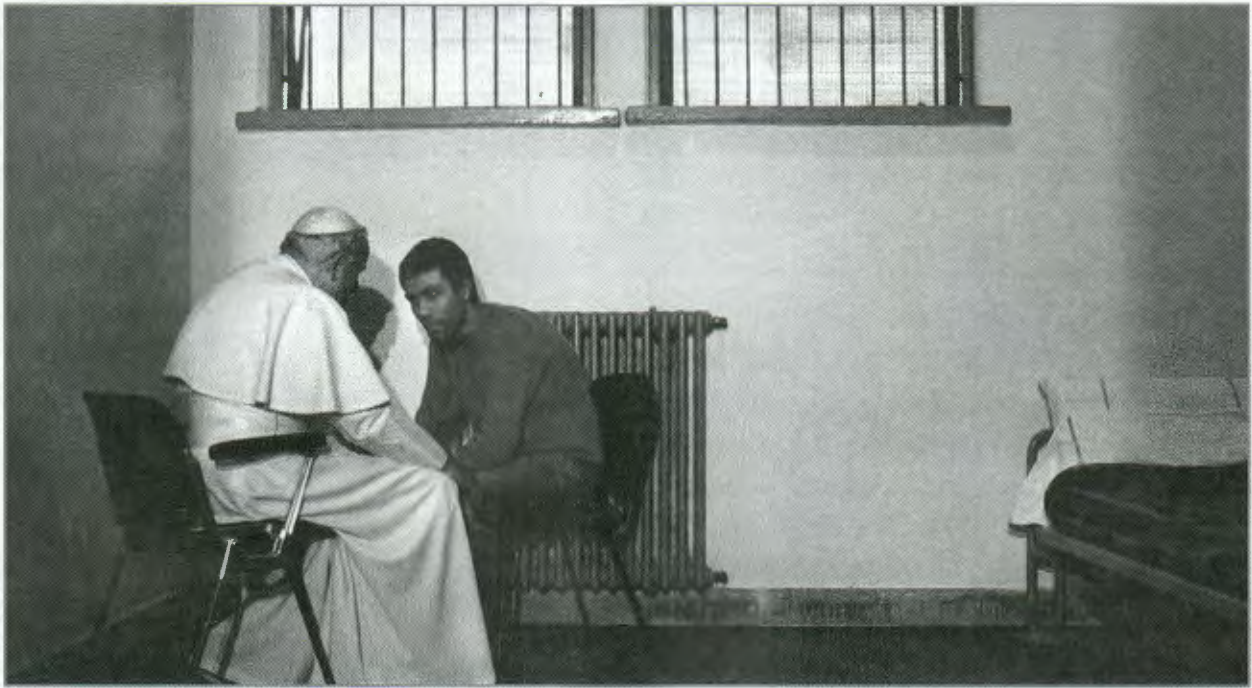
2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Now choose two roles and describe how you make a difference in the lives of others through those roles.



Pope Saint John Paul II speaks with his would-be assassin Mehmet Ali Ağca in his jail cell in 1983.

The Promise of Life

How do we know who Jesus is?

How do we get to know Jesus? In the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we find out a lot about who Jesus is. We discover what he says about his relationship with the Father and with us. The Gospels tell us about Jesus' teachings and remind us that Jesus loves and understands us, knows our needs, and wants to give us what only God can give: life.

In his letters, Saint Paul reminds us of the power our relationship with Christ brings us:

Scripture

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth."

Ephesians 5:8–9

Pope Saint John Paul II labeled the violence, hatred, fear, and anger in society as part of the "culture of death." He challenged Catholics to live in and create a "culture of life"—to live as "children of light" and to bring about a transformation of our culture.

While Pope Saint John Paul II was speaking about broad social issues such as the violence of poverty and unjust distribution of resources, he also advocated smaller, personal changes. For example, instead of seeking revenge, we can show forgiveness whenever we are wronged. Pope Saint John Paul II made a point to visit his would-be assassin in his jail cell, where they spoke and the Pope forgave the man. Instead of accepting violence in movies or video games, we can turn away from it and choose other entertainment. Instead of being afraid of people who are different, we can look for ways to appreciate those differences.

Jesus' I Am Statements

Jesus Tells Us	What It Means for Us
"I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus is the source of life. Think of yourself as bringing good and healthy fruit to others through your actions. • _____
"I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me" (John 10:14).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus is the caring shepherd who knows what you need and takes care of you. • Think about some things you might do that would show your care and concern for family, friends, or neighbors.
"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst" (John 6:35).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus gives us spiritual life the way food and drink nourish our bodies. • Think of what you can do to increase your spiritual life, to nourish your soul.
"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus is your companion in life, shining a light on the path so you know where to walk. • If you follow his teachings, they will show you the way to respect the dignity of life—yours, and that of everyone else you meet. • _____

In the spaces provided, write ways you can live by Jesus' teaching.



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INTERVIEW

In groups of two or three, imagine that you are talking with Pope Saint John Paul II. Write six questions that you would ask him about our world, his idea of the "culture of death," and how a "culture of life" can change things.

Made Just and Right

How does Jesus affect your life?

If Jesus is the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, and the Vine, what are we? We are his followers who sometimes stumble in darkness. We are the spiritually hungry and needy. We are the branches that are connected to Jesus and give witness to him by all that we say and do. And as the Church, we are all in this together.

These images of Jesus remind us that Jesus offers life, but how do we respond? How are we to live now so that we can know the happiness of living forever with God? We learn from the New Testament letters that doing what is just and right, and standing up for what is good, are a big part of our response: “But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness” (**Romans 8:10**).

Justification and Righteousness

“Just” and “right” are good qualities. We say someone is “just” if he or she acts fairly. We say something is “right” if it is correct.

Our spiritual life needs to be just and right. Justification and righteousness are words that try to capture concepts that have to do with God’s action and our response. They help us understand our need for Jesus in our lives.

Justification is the forgiveness of sins and the return to the goodness for which humans were first created. Justification goes beyond our sins being pardoned. It involves being made holy and being renewed spiritually. Jesus has “justified” humans by giving his very self in love for us.

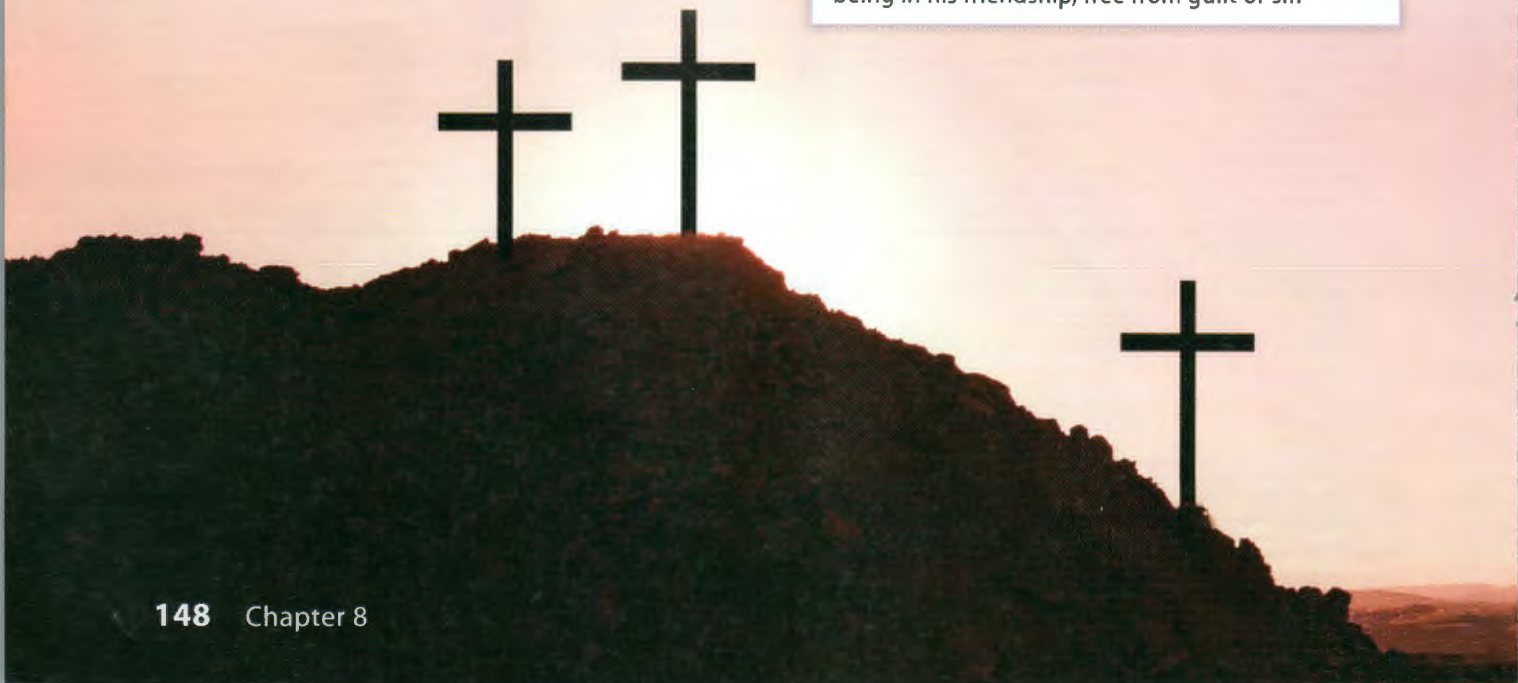
What does it mean to be justified? The word *justify* means “to demonstrate or prove to be just or right,” and “to declare free of blame or to absolve.” By the act of his becoming human, dying, and rising to new life, the Son of God has made it possible for people to be just and right once again with God. All we

Catholic Faith Words

justification the forgiveness of sins and the return to the goodness for which humans were first created

eternal life life forever with God for all who die in his friendship

righteous to act in accordance with God’s will, being in his friendship, free from guilt or sin



need to do is accept God's grace by following Jesus in faith. When we are justified, we

- are motivated by the Holy Spirit to see what is sinful in our lives and to turn away from the things, people, and actions that keep us from God
- grow in our love for God, by the choices we make, the people we spend time with, and the ways we pray
- accept forgiveness and live righteous lives, living in accordance with God's will, free from guilt or sin
- desire to avoid sin and strive to strengthen our relationship with Jesus
- receive grace (God's free and loving gift of his own life and help) and grow in holiness
- are replenished and made like new

Free to Us

Justification was earned for us by the Passion of Christ and is given to us when we are baptized. God makes us just by the power of his mercy. Being justified brings us to praise and give glory to God for the gift of **eternal life**—life forever with God for all who die in his friendship.



Scripture

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." **Romans 5:1**

Eternal life is God's free gift! We cannot buy it, and we do not earn it. God rewards us with eternal life because he freely chooses to share it with us.

To gain this free gift of eternal life, we must respond to God's grace and cooperate with his ways. We live in "right" relationship with God because, through the sacrifice of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, we have been given Divine life in Baptism.

We are **righteous** when we live as disciples of the Lord, acting in accordance with his will and being free from guilt and sin. After this initial turn toward God prompted by the Holy Spirit, we can achieve eternal happiness if we follow Jesus and continue to live in God's friendship. The Holy Spirit inspires us and moves us to live as Jesus' followers. He lives within us and influences us to live right and just lives.

REFLECT

Write about a part of your life that is going well. What are you grateful for?

Think of something in your life that is not going so well. Write about how following Jesus more closely could help you improve things so they become more "just" and "right."

Making a Change

What is conversion?

The world is full of stories about people who used to perform sinful actions, but changed their lives around and now do good. Perhaps you have heard or read about

- someone who used to be in a gang that injured people and destroyed property, but now spends time helping other gang members get out and find support
- someone who used to be a computer hacker, illegally accessing people's personal information, who now volunteers with nonprofit agencies making their networks more secure
- someone who used to be very prejudiced against certain groups of people, who now speaks out whenever he or she hears a racial joke or comment



In their own ways, each of these people experienced a conversion.

Conversion means change. From a faith perspective, **conversion** is a sincere change of mind, heart, and desire to turn away from sin and what keeps us from growing in God's love. It includes turning away from evil, wanting to change one's life, following the path of renewal, and being moved by God's grace to turn back toward him.

Sometimes we have big conversions, and sometimes we have smaller ones. Conversion doesn't happen overnight or just once in our lives. It's ongoing, a continual process of becoming the people God intends us to be. As we are exposed to new and different challenges, sometimes we don't make the best choices or do the right things. But our faith really is Good News because God is merciful and forgiving! The Holy Spirit works in us, helping us appreciate that conversion must be part of our lives. It is a response to God's love and forgiveness, and it is sustained through life by our cooperation with God's grace.

A sin always involves failure. If we recognize what we did wrong, and ask for forgiveness, we can learn from it and change our ways. Our sins may get more serious if we keep doing them over and over again without improving or growing spiritually.

Catholic Faith Words

conversion a sincere change of mind, heart, and desire to turn away from sin and evil and turn toward God

Former gang members and drug addicts pray with religious sisters from a Catholic shelter

Conversion in Action

Once we recognize that something we have been doing is sinful, then we need to

- be sorry for that sin
- reject our past sinful ways
- seek God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and his grace to strengthen us against future sin
- commit to trying to avoid sin in the future

We know that God is merciful and forgiving, and he gives us hope and a share in his life. The grace that leads us to conversion is a free gift from God. We cannot buy it, and we didn't earn it. The Holy Spirit moves and inspires us, and participation in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation brings us closer to eternal life.



WRITE

Recall a conversion story that you have heard or were a part of—a story about a person who overcame a particular sin and turned into someone who “lived in the Light” of what was just and right.

Write out that story in your own words. You could also write a personal story about one of your own conversions, or create a fictional story of someone who experiences a conversion in a surprising way and how the person's change affected others.

IN SUMMARY Catholics Believe

Through Jesus' saving act on the Cross, God offers us forgiveness and eternal life.

- Jesus is the Vine, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World who offers eternal life to those who accept God's grace by following Jesus in faith.
- We are justified by Jesus. We are forgiven and made whole again. We don't earn our own righteousness; it is God's free gift.
- Conversion is a continuing process. The Holy Spirit helps us recognize our past sinfulness and helps us overcome sin in the future.

Our Catholic Life

Young people spend a lot of time thinking about their relationships with friends, family, team members, and people they get to know at Church. We wonder how our friendships are going, what people think of us and our decisions, and whether we are showing our best to everyone we know. But our most important **relationship** is with God. There are ways we can make this relationship better and stronger. These steps include spending time in prayer and reading the Bible, getting to know Jesus and his teachings better, paying attention to the way the Holy Spirit might be calling us to act, and finding people—friends and trustworthy adults—who can help us grow spiritually, and asking for their help.



➤ **What is one thing you can do this week to make your relationship with God stronger?**

People of Faith

Blessed Victoria Rasoamanarivo, 1848–1894

Victoria Rasoamanarivo founded the Catholic Action movement in Madagascar. This organization focuses on improving the conditions of the people in different nations. There were few priests on the island, so Victoria taught the people about the blessings they would receive through acceptance of Jesus as Lord. She helped the poor and promoted the rights of women. During his visit to Madagascar in 1989, Pope Saint John Paul II beatified Victoria Rasoamanarivo. The Church celebrates her feast day on **August 21**.

For more, go to aliveinchrist.osv.com



CONSIDER

Remember a few times during your life when you recognized your sinfulness and changed your way of acting. How have you grown and matured in your ability to recognize sinfulness, make good decisions, and follow through?



Reflection on Jesus

Leader: The reading from Philippians tells us there will be a time when every nation will praise the name of Jesus. But Jesus did not come to Earth to force us to praise him. Jesus came with gentle power, humility and selflessness. Jesus is God. It is right, as Saint Paul says, to offer him our praise and worship without hesitation.

Reader 1: A reading from Saint Paul's Letter to the Christians at Philippi:

“Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others. Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus,

Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God

something to be grasped.

Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.”

Leader: Jesus, you must show us how to follow. In our own ways, we must learn how to empty ourselves of pride and selfishness. We too must learn how to be obedient and to do our Father's will.

Reader 2: A continuation of the reading from Saint Paul:

“Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:3-11

Leader: God, our Father, we often fail to honor Jesus' name. The Angel Gabriel told Mary to name her son “Jesus,” which means “Savior,” or “Redeemer.” Jesus is our Savior. We should honor his name always.

Side 1: Jesus Christ, you are our Lord. Let our tongues always “confess” or proclaim it. “Praise you, Lord Jesus Christ.”

Side 2: Jesus Christ, you are our Lord. Let us always remember to always show that we honor you.

Leader: Please mention any intentions you would like everyone to pray for.

All: (after each petition) We praise and honor you, Jesus.



Sing or play “Christ Is Lord”

 Go to aliveinchrist.osv.com for an interactive review.

A Work with Words Complete each sentence with the correct term from the Word Bank.

conversion	justification
disciples	holiness
Christmas	culture of life
righteous	Lent
Pentecost	

- _____ is the forgiveness of sins and the return to the goodness for which humans were first created.
- When we are _____, we want to live in accordance with God's will, in his friendship, free from guilt or sin.
- _____ means turning away from what keeps us from God and turning back to him.
- The season of _____ helps us focus on what would make our lives more just and right.
- By showing forgiveness, we can help create a _____.

B Check Understanding Indicate whether the following statements are true or false. Then rewrite false statements to make them true.

- Jesus is the Light of the World and the Bread of Life. **True/False**

- The word *justify* means "to declare free of blame or to absolve." **True/False**

- When we are baptized, we are joined to the righteousness of Christ who justifies us. **True/False**

- Conversion is a change that happens once in our lives when we are baptized. **True/False**

- Being justified brings us to praise and give glory to God for the gift of eternal life. **True/False**

C Make Connections Write a one-paragraph response to the following: Name and explain one of Jesus' "I Am" statements presented in this chapter. Create one modern "I Am" statement to describe who Jesus is to you right now.

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