

## Our Christ-centered Faith

### Objectives:

- To gain insight into Count Zinzendorf's experience when viewing Domenico Feti's painting *Ecce Homo*.
- To explore their personal understanding of Jesus Christ by viewing and comparing pictures of Jesus.
- To consider setting a goal for making Christ more the center of their lives—today.

**Materials:** See pictures of Jesus, below. Note that more (and different) pictures of Jesus can be found on the Internet, as the instructor finds necessary. A sheet with Bible verses is included.

**Contextual Notes:** This exercise differs from a number of more didactic youth-centered lessons in that it is meant to be very open-ended. The intention is to set a context in which students can freely ask questions of themselves about their own faith lives. The first part of the lesson is meant to help students place Jesus in personal context, through the viewing of various depictions of Jesus. Using the young Zinzendorf's experience with Feti's *Ecce Homo* as a transition, the second part of the lesson is meant to encourage students to set some kind of personal goals for making Christ more of the center of their lives. It should be noted that the goal of this lesson is to make real, practical beginnings for making Christ the center of each student's life; moreover, it is understood that this is a process, rather than a simple, one-time commitment.

### Procedure:

- 1) The instructor introduces the lesson by describing, briefly, how artists have been depicting Jesus in various media almost from the beginning of the early Christian church. Special emphasis should be given to the fact that, while the images of Jesus vary widely from century to century and culture to culture, each image represents an artist's personal understanding of what Jesus looked like. (3 min)
- 2) Instructor distributes the pictures so that all the students can see all the pictures. The students are then given time to look at and comment on the various pictures. (5 min)
- 3) After looking at the pictures, students will pair into partners and consider the following questions.
  - Which image least resembles what you imagine Jesus to be like? Why?
  - Which image most resembles what you imagine Jesus to be like? Why?
  - Which image of Jesus do you like the most? Why?(5 min)
- 4) Partners then share their answers with the larger group. At this point, the instructor should feel free to explore the possibilities suggested by students' answers. Discussion about why particular students disliked specific images may be fruitful. Likewise, it may be productive to explore instances when a student likes one image of Jesus, but finds another image to be more like Jesus "is." At this point, the instructor's aim should be to help students think about who Jesus is, as an individual. (8 min)
- 5) Students return to their partners. While each student focuses on the picture of Jesus that he or she likes or is drawn to the most, they will consider the following verses about how Jesus (distributed to partners):

## Some of the things Jesus did for people—and for us

**Healed the blind:** John 9: 1, 6-7 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

**Fed the hungry:** Mark 6: 41-44 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

**Healed lepers:** Luke 17:12-16, As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him-- and he was a Samaritan. Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

**Taught others:** Luke 15:8-9 [Jesus said] "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.'

**Wept for people:** Luke 19:41-42 As [Jesus] approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace-- but now it is hidden from your eyes.

**Was committed to others:** Luke 22: 39-44 Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

**Sacrificed himself:** Luke 23:33-37 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals-- one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

- Consider the verses on the sheet. Which of these things do you see your image of Jesus most naturally doing? How would he do them—joyfully? Seriously? Casually? Formally?
  - Compare your image of Jesus to the other pictures. How would your image of Jesus do the same things differently from the person shown in those pictures? What do these differences mean to you, in your relationship with Christ? (10 min)
- 6) Partners share their discussion with the larger group. During this time, the instructor should encourage any discussion that places Jesus in a personal context of relationship with each student—with the emphasis that Christ still strives to do the above mentioned things in our lives. (8 min)
  - 7) Students return to their partners and consider the question that motivated Count Zinzendorf: “What will you do for me?” In other words, if we consider ourselves followers of Christ—and if this is Jesus, as we know him—what things are willing to do in our lives to commit to a relationship with Jesus. Partners may use the scripture categories above (healing, feeding, teaching, weeping, committing, praying, sacrificing) to find one thing they can do regularly for Jesus. Note that the one thing they choose should be realistic and attainable; the hope is that each student can set a goal that will help them actively engage in their relationship with Christ. (8 min)
  - 8) Partners share their one thing with the larger group. During this time, the instructor should frame their responses as personal goals that students will attempt to follow through in their lives. (8 min)

**Follow-up:** As noted above, this lesson is meant to be an invitation to a longer process. The expectation is that students will respond differently to this invitation. Students who seem committed, however, can be encouraged at a later date by the instructor; similarly, social networking tools can be suggested as a means for students to encourage one another to follow through with their goal









