

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND

Sunday's first reading from Isaiah 5.1-7 describes God as a farmer who cultivates a vineyard on a fertile hillside. The farmer digs up the dirt, digs out the stones, terraces the hillside, and plants vines where they will flourish—a picture of God planting Israel in the promised land.

In the parable Jesus invites the chief priests and elders to see themselves as the tenants of the vineyard, those charged with helping the people of Israel flourish as a holy people. Instead the chief priests and elders identify with the owner of the vineyard and judge themselves by wanting to punish and kill the rebellious tenants.

The killing of the heir of the vineyard links the parable to Jesus. For Christian Jews, Jesus is the heir of Israel, the messiah. He is God's son (in Hebrew, *ben*) who was crucified, the stone (in Hebrew, *eben*) rejected by the builders which God has made the cornerstone of a new community.

SHARING LIFE STORIES

Objective: The young people will get to know one another.

Icebreaker: Names Create an accepting and hospitable atmosphere at this first *SPIRIT* session. If your group members don't know each other, have them pair off, interview each other, then introduce each other to the whole group. See also the *Introductions* section of *Icebreakers for Teen Groups*.

Music: See *SPIRIT XTRA* for a song that fits the gospel theme.

PRAY **Pray (cover)** Ask group members if any of them have special concerns in their hearts they wish to name or for which they wish to make a prayer petition. Make a petition or name a person or concern yourself to model how to join in this opening prayer. To conclude, invite your teens to find and pray the prayer with you.

Objective: The young people will explore the power of good and evil in *Harry Potter*.

READ **Interview: The final *Harry Potter* film. What opens at the close? (pages 1-3)** Have your group identify the characters in the photos: Harry, Herminone, Ron (cover, page 2, middle), Dumbledore (page 2, top), Voldemort (page 2, bottom), and Dobbie (page 3). Invite your teens to respond to question 1 that asks which character is their favorite. In Part 2, Neville may be a favorite.

- Introduce the interview by reading aloud the first statement in yellow. Have your teens take parts and read the interview aloud. Invite them to respond to the interviewer's questions, too, as you read each section.
- Discuss questions 2-3. 2. *Openended. The Death Eaters thrive on destruction, can't get enough of it. Voldemort seeks to be immortal through separating and isolating parts of himself. He lives not by any common rules but by his own desire to rule and dominate. Rather than abhor killing, he thrives on it.* 3. *As Harry learns that his mother's love saved him, he slowly realizes love is his inheritance from his parents and love for his*

friends moves him to give his life to save them. Only love is stronger than evil. Discuss why Harry breaks the elder wand.

REFLECTING ON THE GOSPEL

Objective: The young people will recognize the kind of harvest Jesus expects.

GOSPEL **Who yields a good harvest? (page 3)** Have six young people proclaim the gospel. Invite your group to ask questions about the gospel, so they gain skill in using their thinking ability to reflect on the gospel. Hold the questions; this passage is a complex and highly symbolic parable. Teens' questions will ready them for the *Our Catholic Faith* feature on page 4, which explores the parable and historical background of Matthew's gospel.

- Discuss questions 4-7. 4. *Openended. Note the chief priests identify with the owner. Those of us who rent may identify more with the tenants or with the servants caught in the middle.* 5. *All of us are tenants who should care for Earth but we tend to use Earth for our own ends without considering its sustainability.* 6. *Jesus expects us to build a harvest of loving relationships in which we care for one another and seek justice for the poor.* 7. *Jesus was put to death rather than accepted but became the cornerstone of a new community—the Christian church.*

LIVING OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

Objective: The young people will explore how Jesus uses parables and how Matthew interprets the parable of the tenants.

Our Catholic Faith: Let's talk about the gospel (page 4) Have teens who asked questions remind the group what they asked. Have teens volunteer to read aloud, taking turns one paragraph at a time up to the photo. Jesus' cleansing of the temple earlier in Matthew 21, explains why the chief priests are challenging him in Sunday's gospel. The fact the poor come to Jesus in the temple when the sellers leave explains why Jesus is challenging how the priests care for the people.

- Call out the description of a parable. Five of the first eight gospels this fall are parables. A parable allows hearers to see themselves and change. Help the teens see how the chief priests judge themselves when they make a judgment about the tenants.

- Read the second half of the feature which explains how differences grow between Christian Jews and those who follow other rabbis.

Live It! Invite teens to do their own skit or pursue item 2 about helping care for Earth.

LIVE IT! **Concluding prayer** Gather in a circle. Have a volunteer read aloud Jesus' final words in the gospel. Invite your group to say how they think Jesus is the cornerstone of our Church and our lives. Invite them to make petitions for their group and their concerns. Pray together again the prayer on the cover, upper left.