*Teachers’ notes for background*

**THE CONCEPT OF SACRIFICE IN CHRISTIANITY**

Christians believe that Christ sacrificed himself on the cross as a necessary action to make up for the sins of humankind. In the first generation after Jesus' death, the apostle Paul wrote: *... Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and ... was buried, and ... he rose again on the third day. . .* I Corinthians 15: 3-4.

Christ 's death was the final sacrifice, which meant that there was no longer any need for the practice of animal sacrifices to be made: *Having therefore a great high priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus Son of God. . . because he continues forever, he has an everlasting priesthood.* (Hebrews 4: 14, 7:24). Jesus’ act of giving himself up in this way is seen as a spiritual sacrifice.

Christ was both a *priest* and *sacrificial victim.*

Christianity often refers to Jesus’ crucifixion as the "ultimate" or "perfect" sacrifice. The Christian church believed that Christ’s death occurred as the ultimate absolving of sins and that it made the obsolete the need for sacrifices named by the Old Testament (ie animal sacrifice). Christians turned from the *animal sacrifice* to *self-sacrifice*.

There are many methods by which Christians symbolically rid themselves of sin to show supreme gratitude for Christ’s sacrifice: baptism, pilgrimage, giving their lives for others, taking communion.