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Spring 2017

Restoring Order to Catechesis: A Practical Guide to the Implementation of the Restored Order of the Sacraments

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Recommended Citation

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Forward

Telling the Story

I first stumbled upon the idea of the Restored Order completely by accident (at least it seemed like that at the time). The Catholic sacrament of Confirmation is one that has interested me as a thesis topic since my sophomore year of college when I took a class on Catholic sacramental practice. Theologically, Confirmation is a small and confusing sacrament, and practically it is a huge ordeal, often consisting of a two-year sacramental preparation program and parties and ceremonies that have been called by some a Catholic Bar Mitzvah. Since that class, I have been immensely interested in this disconnect, how it originated, and how it can be corrected (if it even needs to be corrected at all).

My thesis process began in my junior year with the idea that I would write a curriculum for Confirmation preparation for middle schoolers that sought to find the root of Confirmation and to help engage adolescents in learning about the faith and forming a relationship with God. After a few months of researching, I found myself telling an RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) teacher about my plans and research one day after Mass, and he asked me if I would be writing anything about the “Restored Order.” In the months of reading and research I had conducted so far, this term had never come up. He explained to me that it was something the Archbishop of Denver was doing to move Confirmation down to third grade. I wasn’t sure I agreed with this change, so I decided to ignore it at first. But I believe that God led me to the research and opened my heart to this idea of Restored Order.

After I read about all the history, theology, and child development pedagogy behind the change, I couldn’t help but be convinced. The arguments for and against this idea of the Restored Order will be the main topic of my first chapter. There are many misconceptions and

misunderstandings surrounding the sacrament of Confirmation that I wish to clear up. Hopefully, by the end, my reader can be as convinced as I have become.

Looking into the Restored Order really helped me to better understand the disconnect between the theological meaning of the sacrament and the practical implementation of the sacrament. I was able to see that many misconceptions about Confirmation attached themselves to the sacrament because of the age at which Confirmation was usually given. Because Confirmation is usually given in adolescence, the sacrament began to be seen as a sacrament of maturity, choice, and a graduation from religious education. But none of these ideas are essential to the sacrament of Confirmation. Part of the purpose of the Restored Order is to make the real purpose and meaning of the sacrament clearer to the faithful.

This realization was very helpful for thinking about how students should prepare to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. Once I stripped away the unnecessary pieces, I was able to see the core purpose of the sacrament: for God to reach out to the baptized and bestow His blessing and grace. To be prepared to receive this sacrament, children only need to be ready to reach back to God and accept these gifts. With this new understanding of the sacrament's purpose, it seems the primary purpose for a sacramental preparation course would be to foster a relationship with God. There is factual knowledge that should be taught, but mainly for the purpose of furthering and deepening this relationship. The questions then become, when preparing a sacramental preparation curriculum, how do we strike a balance between the factual knowledge and relationship building? And how can my curriculum lead children to a relationship with God? These are the questions I explore in my second chapter and in Appendix A.

The next two appendices were conceived naturally out of pure necessity. No learning is isolated to a student. Curricula must take teachers, parents, communities, and parishes into

account as well. It was a natural next step to include information of educating and supporting parents and catechists as well.

My main audience for this thesis are these parents, catechists, parishes (particularly Directors of Religious Education, and other heads of catechesis within the parish), and those concerned with catechesis at the diocesan level in the Archdiocese of Denver. But this thesis could be helpful to any diocese that is undergoing a change to the Restored Order, or is already implementing the Restored Order. It may also be of value to anyone interested in Catholic sacramental practice and catechesis.

My main goal with this thesis is to provide a resource for Confirmation preparation from an educator's perspective. I wish to invigorate the Religious Education of our young people. I was always left wanting more out my own RE experience as a child, and I used that desire to guide my thought and ideas. I also hope to share the deep insight I have received into the Restored Order. I truly believe that I have been lead down this path by God for a purpose. There are so many reasons for the whole Church to be moving in this direction, and I believe God wants me to be a part of it. The journey has just begun; let us enjoy it.

All the Best,

Jessie Wilkerson

Chapter One

Introduction to the Restored Order of the Sacraments

What is it?

In May of 2015, Archbishop Samuel Aquila sent out a pastoral letter to the people of the archdiocese of Denver. In this letter, Aquila announced that the Denver archdiocese would soon move to using the Restored Order of the Sacraments. This move for Denver is not new for Aquila, but rather a continuation of the change he made in Fargo, North Dakota, while he was Bishop there. Archbishop Aquila, with his background of theological studies and experience with the Restored Order in Fargo, obviously thinks that the move will benefit the people of the Church, and this writer is inclined to agree. The Restored Order brings us back to our original traditions, which are extremely important to the Catholic Church. More importantly however, the Restored Order organizes the sacraments in a way that makes more sense developmentally and theologically. Before we flesh out these claims, we have to answer a few practical question: What is the Restored Order? Why has the bishop decided to make this change? What benefits does the bishop anticipate for the archdiocese?

To answer the first, most obvious question of what the Restored Order is, we need to look into the history of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is a sacramental community. The seven sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick) are celebrated throughout the life of a Catholic. It is the three sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) that are affected by the Restored Order. These three sacraments are celebrated to bring a person (usually a child, but there is a rite for people who convert in adulthood) into the Church community. The contemporary practice in the Western Church (the Eastern Church keeps a more ancient initiation practice) is to baptize

children when they are babies. They then receive their first Eucharist around age 7 (dubbed the age of reason by the Church), and then they are confirmed in late middle school - early high school. This is not the traditional order, nor the developmentally and theologically appropriate order. The history of how we got to this inappropriate order is a convoluted one. It involved a series of random events and decisions made for practical reasons with little to no theological backing.

According to the history in Thomas Santa's *Essential Catholic Handbook of the Sacraments*, in the early Church the sacraments of initiation looked very different than they do today. At this time, it was mostly adults who were being initiated. There is some biblical evidence of whole families being initiated (most likely including infants) but infant baptism did not become the norm until much later. When adults were initiated into the Church, they underwent an extensive catechesis that ended in the initiation ceremony, containing all three sacraments of initiation, at the Easter Vigil. On top of this, the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation were not separated. The bishop would baptize the candidate through the pouring of water, the anointing with oil, and the laying on of hands all in the same ceremony. The candidates would then enter the sanctuary where they would receive their first Eucharist and be accepted as full members of the Church.

This all changed rather radically after Christianity was legalized. There was such a huge influx of people wanting to be baptized that the pouring of water (Baptism rite) was separated from the laying on of hands and anointing (Confirmation rite). The bishop had been the ordinary minister of Baptism, but it was no longer feasible for him to be at every Baptism in the diocese. To ease the demand on the bishop, Baptism was delegated to the priests, but people also desired a formal approval of the Baptism by the bishop (in the Eastern Church the whole ceremony was

delegated to the priests and the sacrament remained intact). It became the job of the newly baptized to travel to the bishop and receive the laying on of hands and anointing before they could receive their First Eucharist and be considered full members of the Church. The special anointing ceremony became known as Confirmation. Another change occurred in the fifth century when the Roman Empire fell leaving much of the Christian world in chaos. The newly baptized and their families no longer felt safe traveling long distances to be confirmed by the bishop. Thus, even after the Council of Lyons declared in 1274 that it was a sacrament necessary for salvation, Confirmation fell out of use. Confirmation did finally return to the public sphere after the Council of Trent in 1566 (Santa, 2001).

At this time infant baptism had become much more normalized and Confirmation was celebrated once children reached the age of reason (around 7 years as mentioned earlier), and then received their First Eucharist at age 11 or 12. Over the years, parishes and parents expressed desires for children to undergo something like the rigorous catechesis that adult candidates endured in the early Church. Parents and Church leaders wanted children to receive more instruction and have a better understanding of the faith before being confirmed (Aquila, 2015, p.10). This caused the age Confirmation to be pushed back and back until most children were receiving both their First Eucharist and Confirmation around age 12, the highest end of the spectrum of ages suggested by the Council of Trent.

Thus far in the story of the sacraments of initiation, the traditional order of the sacraments has remained intact. Confirmation has gone in and out of use, and the ages at which these sacraments are received are all over the map, but they have still always been received in the order of Baptism, followed by Confirmation, followed by First Eucharist. The order did not really get disrupted Church-wide until rather recently in the history of the Church. In 1910 Pope

Pius X wrote a decree *Quam Singulari*, lowering the age of First Eucharist to 7. Because he made no mention of Confirmation in the decree, that sacrament continued to be given at age 12, whether that was the pope's intention or not (Aquila, 2015, p.10). The trend of pushing the age of Confirmation back continued until children were being confirmed as late as early high school. The Restored Order of the Sacraments seeks to remedy this unintended change.

Archbishop Aquila intends to move the age of Confirmation back from late middle school/early high school to third grade. He also intends to move First Eucharist from second grade to third grade as well. Once the Restored Order is fully implemented in 2020 children will still be baptized as babies, but then they will receive two remaining sacraments of initiation in the same mass at the end of the third grade year, Confirmation followed by Eucharist.

What is Confirmation?

Many parents and catechist (myself included) experienced an immediate feeling of resistance upon first hearing that Confirmation will soon be given in third grade. Confirmation is supposed to be the sacrament of Catholic maturity. Students are encouraged to choose the faith for themselves now that they are considered mature. They are asked to confirm the faith into which they were baptized as infants. Many would even question the maturity of middle schoolers, there is no way that third graders can be considered mature Catholic adults. Confirmation requires extensive preparation and must be earned by passing a test or exit interview at the end. In fact, many Confirmation programs are actually two year programs. How do we expect 3rd graders to get the proper preparation in just one year, and then be expected to prepare for First Eucharist in the same year? Confirmation is also a kind of graduation from parish religious education. After a youth received Confirmation (in a parish program, not Catholic school) his/her religious education journey is often over. Larger parishes are able to still

attract a few post-Confirmation teens into youth group programs, but smaller parishes, like the one I attended in my childhood, do not have the resources or student population to maintain youth group programs after Confirmation. Certainly the Church would want children to receive religious education past the third grade. There would also be a concern for youth programs. For many youths the sacrament of Confirmation is the only thing bringing them so far in religious education. The chance of decreased participation in religious education beyond third grade seems too great a risk. The adolescents are at such a vulnerable age when it comes to their spirituality, we cannot afford to allow these vulnerable souls stop their religious education after 3rd grade. This would lead to even more youth falling away from the Church, due to lack of knowledge and shallowness of faith.

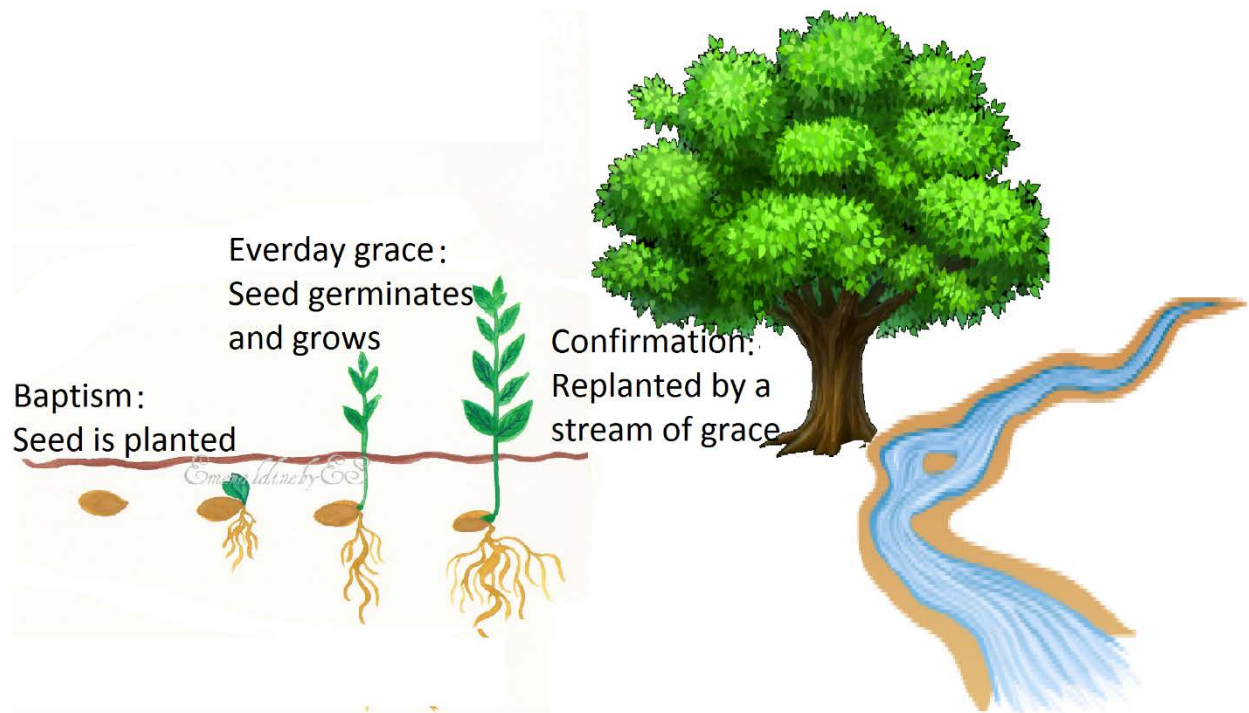
Much of this resistance, however, comes from a misunderstanding of what Confirmation is really all about. The objections of parents and catechist make many assumptions that are simply not true. Though not true, they are very pervasive in the faith, even among those who write about the faith. Joseph Martos, in his book *Doors to the Sacred*, a book to be considered one of “the most complete work on the sacraments” (Santa, 2001, p.xvi) makes the assumption that Confirmation is about maturity when he calls Confirmation candidates “adults... called to a mature life of faith” (1982, pg.77). We see the assumption that a mature choice is an important aspect just by looking at the names of some common Confirmation programs, “Decision Point” by Dynamic Catholic and “Choice” by Paulist Press, just to name a few. The idea of Confirmation as a graduation has been pervasive enough for Pope Francis to even take notice and feel the need to address it. In an address to the youth of Sardinia, Pope Francis sadly remarked that the name Confirmation could be changed to the “sacrament of farewell” (2013).

Although Confirmation may be closely linked in the minds of the faithful with maturity, choice, and farewell, none of these elements are essential to the sacrament.

When working with teenagers though, these elements seem like important things to discuss. In fact, these misunderstanding about the point of Confirmation probably arose from catechists and Sacramental Preparation curricula needing to meet the needs of the adolescents they served. Adolescents are moving quickly towards maturity, and some have reached it already. They are worried more and more about the choices they make as they are given more opportunity to choose in their lives. High school and middle school students are able to choose some of the classes they take. Often parents will give their adolescents more choice when it comes to what activities they are involved in, and how they spend their time. The farewell element makes sense as well if we think that religious education is all about preparing students for the sacraments. If there are no more sacraments of initiation to receive (and who knows when or if they will receive the sacraments of marriage or Holy Orders) then there would be no point in continuing their religious education.

While these elements make sense when working with middle and high schoolers, third graders are a whole different animal. They are not mature, or anywhere close to reaching maturity. They are not concerned about choice as teenagers are. And they still have quite a bit of schooling to go, they are not even close to ready to graduate from anything. To make a curriculum for third grade Confirmation then, we have to put aside these false assumptions that have been compiled through years of confirming adolescents, and get back to the heart of what Confirmation really is. Simply put, Confirmation is a completion of Baptism. When a baby is baptized he/she is indelibly (permanently) marked for Christ, washed free from original sin, and take the first step into full initiation in the Catholic Church. Confirmation is another outpouring

of the Holy Spirit that grants the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit to the candidate and is one more step in the initiation process (the last step is the common contemporary practice, but the second step in the Restored Order). Baptism and Confirmation are intimately connected in that “Confirmation increases and deepens the roots of grace that were first experienced at [B]aptism and enables those confirmed to become fuller witnesses to the power of God working within them” (Santa, 2001, p.44). We might think of faith as a tree, as Jesus does in His parable of the mustard seed in Matthew 13:31. When we are baptized the seed of faith is planted in the soul, a huge event for the little seed to be sure. As the child grows, the Father pours out his graces through everyday sacramentality: through seeing the beauty in nature, finding joy in family, and trying very hard to live the life God has planned. This grace feeds the little seed of faith and it begins to germinate and push its little roots further into the soil of the soul to be nourished more and more by God’s love. Confirmation is another significant event for the little seed. In Confirmation there is a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the seed can take a huge leap in its growth since it has been given such wonderful nourishment. This outpouring was so great that it would be like the seed being replanted by a flowing stream so that it can receive more constant nourishment and have room to grow.



This stream of grace left by the outpouring of the Spirit and the seed's leap in growth may be seen as a metaphor for the indelible mark that Confirmation leaves on the soul. The confirmed are said to be "sealed" as the bishop calls the candidate by name (the new saint name they have chosen in the faith), anoints their head with oil, and prays "be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit" (Santa, 2001, p.44). This word seal has a great deal of historical and theological significance. It harkens back to the old days when letters would be sealed with a special wax indentation that showed who had written the letter, the tattooing of members of the Roman army to show their participation in the Empire's wars, and the branding of sheep to show to whom they belonged (Martos, 1982, p. 47). Baptism and Confirmation put the seal of Christ on a person's soul. This invisible mark shows that the person has come from God, is now part of God's flock, and will fight for and with God.

This seal also confers a special sacramental character upon the candidate. Martos writes that the character of Confirmation is "a power to live a life of active faith, an ability to publicly

confess Christ, [and] a capacity to participate fully in the church's worship" (1982 p. 78). These powers and abilities are given to the candidate by the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of God (also called wonder and awe). They are gifts freely given by God who joyously gives the necessary tools to anyone who sincerely asks for them; this sincere asking is often achieved through the preforming of the sacramental rite itself. This reality counters the idea that Confirmation and the gifts it bestows "must be earned" (Becker, 2015). The two-year preparation courses, tests, and exit interviews are not necessary if a candidate is going to receive these free gifts despite what they know and understand about the faith.

Confirmation is really a rather small sacrament. It is exceedingly beautiful and necessary for full initiation into the Catholic Church, but are very few requirements for the sacramental ceremony. A child needs to be past the age of reason, and preferably younger than 16, although there are many cases when a person seeks Confirmation in his/her adulthood, having not received it in their youth. If seven year olds are viably able to receive Confirmation, maturity must not be a necessary element of the sacrament. Both this point and the reality of the freely given gifts also refute the idea that Confirmation should be a graduation from religious education. One is not ready to graduate at seven years old, and there is so little book learning necessary to earn the sacrament that the student still has so much more to learn about Christ and the faith. Confirmation is the beginning of a deeper relationship with God and Church, not the end.

Students may not need all the extensive preparation they commonly receive today, but since the Church has decided that a child needs to have reached the age of reason to receive the sacrament, there must be some kind of understanding needed. According to the Catechism of the

Catholic Church “preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian towards a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit – in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life” (CCC 1309). It is as simple as that. There is no need for students to understand the intricate workings of the Church, or every aspect of Catholic social teaching. They don’t need to memorize the order of the books of the bible or the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Catechism is putting more emphasis on the relationship aspect of faith. Indeed, we cannot really call ourselves Christians unless we work to know and love Christ to the best of our abilities. Knowing the workings of the Church and social teaching may help us to love Christ more, but not if they are presented in a dry and isolated manner or forced down students’ throats. There needs to be an active engagement with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. And this is where teenagers can be a problem.

Benefits of Third Grade Confirmation

Moving the sacrament of Confirmation back to third grade provides many benefits for understanding the sacrament and also for growing the faith of the youth. One of the main spiritual effects of Confirmation is to equip the youth with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Though the gifts are freely given by God, not everyone is ready to receive them. If a person goes through a sacramental rite and is not in the proper disposition to receive the gifts God is offering, they will experience few, if any, of the graces. “Pride, fear, greed, love of self, or some other such attitude might be a sort of spiritual obstacle” (Martos 1982 p.88) to receiving the gifts. These are vices that often plague adolescence. Adolescence is a beautiful time of self-discovery, growth, and questioning authority. Adolescent pride is large and fragile, mostly based on what their friends think of them. This also leads to many fears of not being accepted by their friends. They are also starting to experience greed as they try to break away from their families and become

their own people. These are not overly attractive qualities but for most adolescents they only last for the small transitional period to maturity. In the end, they do serve adolescents well as they grow into mature adults who can think and live for themselves. As Martos points out, however, they are not particularly useful qualities for preparing the soul to receive gifts from the Holy Spirit.

With all the emotional change they are experiencing there is no doubt that adolescents need the gifts of the Holy Spirit to help them through. But if they aren't ready to receive the gifts of the sacrament they will not be able to experience the graces and strength until "the obstacle of sin or vice [is] removed" (Martos, 1982, p. 89). Thus, many teenagers would not be able to access the graces offered by the sacrament until they are well into adulthood and experience a conversion. Some students may never be able to sufficiently remove their vices and may go their whole lives without receiving the grace and strength they really needed in their adolescence.

If we want adolescents to have access to the grace and strength given by the sacrament of Confirmation, then we should really consider bestowing the gifts at a time when they are less likely to have vices that would prevent them from cooperating with God's gifts. The archbishop has found "third graders to be the most receptive to the gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Aquila, 2015, p. 18). One only needs to place a teenager beside a third grader to see a stark difference in demeanor. Third graders often still have a love of learning and are able to see the wonders of life around them. They are often smart and reasonable, but they are very much still children, which works in their favor when it comes to faith. For as Jesus said, "unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 18:3). Third graders do not need to "turn and become like children" because they already are children, and in that sense they have an advantage over adolescents and even over adults. Aquila marvels at third graders' "ability to see

the truth and to trust God completely” (Aquila, 2015, p. 18). This ability “allows them to receive the graces of the sacrament more deeply” (Aquila, 2015, p. 18). Third graders are full of wonder and life, they are humble and have an innate ability to trust God and see the truth. They still retain much of their childlike innocence. All of these things make them much more likely to receive the gifts and graces freely given by God through Confirmation. When we offer these gifts and graces in third grade, we are not only allowing our children to grow into a deeper and more loving relationship with Christ and His Spirit sooner, but we are also fortifying them for the spiritual battle of adolescence and adulthood.

Another huge benefit of third grade Confirmation is that it sets the priority of the sacraments aright. Once Confirmation is moved before First Eucharist the correct order of the sacraments of initiation will be restored placing the sacraments in the way that highlights Eucharist as the most important sacrament of our faith. There is no question about the correct order of the sacraments of initiation, theologically speaking. The Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly labels Baptism “the first of the sacraments of initiation” (CCC 1210), Confirmation “the second sacrament of initiation” (CCC 1285), and Eucharist “completes Christian initiation” (CCC 1322). It is clearly written in the laws of the Church. As we have already discussed, it is also clearly written in Church history. This order is not common in the initiation process for children (except among the 10 US dioceses that implement the Restored Order), but it does exist in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). When adults convert to the faith they are given all the sacraments of initiation in one mass at Easter Vigil, much like it was in the early Church. They are baptized with water, anointed with oil for Confirmation, and then receive their First Eucharist. Eucharist’s place as the last sacrament received helps to emphasize the importance of the sacrament to the faithful. Pope Benedict XVI

reminds us in his Apostolic Letter *Sacramentum Caritatis* that “our reception of Baptism and Confirmation is ordered to the Eucharist” (Benedict XVI 2007). Thus, with the sacraments of initiation reordered so that Eucharist is the final sacrament, more focus can be put on catechesis for Eucharist. More work can be done to give students a fuller appreciation of this beautiful sacrament and it can return to its rightful place as paramount sacrament in the minds of our children. Plus, they will have received the gifts of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation before receiving their First Eucharist. This will help to prepare their souls to understand, appreciate, and love the Eucharist more fully.

Conclusion

After this in-depth look at the history, meaning, and effects of Confirmation, it is clear that the Restored Order will help the faithful to understand and experience the sacrament of Confirmation as it is meant to be. The Second Vatican Council in its document on the Sacred Liturgy recognized that something was amiss among the common practice saying, “With the passage of time ... there have crept into the rites of the sacraments and sacramentals certain features which have rendered their nature and purpose far from clear to the people of today” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 62). This Vatican II document then makes a clear directive for change stating, “hence some changes have become necessary to adapt them [the sacraments and sacramental] to the needs of our own times” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 62). This directive was given over 50 years ago and has still not been widely heeded. More recently, Pope Benedict XVI worked during his papacy to bring order back to the sacraments of initiation. Archbishop Aquila was able to meet with Pope Benedict in 2012 after he implemented the Restored Order in Fargo, ND to tell him about how things were going in his diocese. After listening intently, the pope replied, “You have done what I have always wanted to do” (Aquila, 2015, pg. 11). If the Pope’s

praises are not enough to convince a Catholic that they are on the right path, I don't know what is.

More recently still, Pope Francis urged parents in a general audience concerning the sacraments “if you have children ... at home who have not yet received it [Confirmation] and are at the age to do so, do everything possible to ensure that they complete their Christian initiation and receive the power of the Holy Spirit. It is important!” (Francis 2014). Pope Francis is eager for children to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit and fully enter the Church as soon as they are “at the age to do so.” He is certainly in favor of children receiving Confirmation earlier. All of this urging from Church authorities has made little difference in the sacramental practice here in the United States. This is made clear by the fact that only ten of the nearly two hundred Catholic dioceses in the United State currently implement the Restored Order (Smith, 2015).

This is probably because there are many practical issues around making such a change. The misconceptions around Confirmation are deeply ingrained and will need quite a bit of information and adult education to resolve. There is also the practical matter of moving Confirmation from middle school/ high school, all the way down to third grade. The dioceses and parishes would need to make sure everyone still received the sacrament until the transition is complete. This might require large multi-grade Confirmation classes which causes many issues regarding catechesis, especially in parishes with little funding and few volunteer catechists. These problems can and should be overcome for the sake of saving the souls of our young ones, and creating the saints that our Church so desperately needs. The Church is in crisis. When we see that “85 percent of young people stop practicing their faith within seven years of being confirmed” (Becker, 2015) we know we have a problem. If the Restored Order and third grade Confirmation has even a chance of helping to lower that percentage, we need to try it. Besides, it

is not as if the Archdiocese of Denver is the first diocese to transition to the Restored Order. There are already dioceses that have paved the way, it is now up to the rest of the Church to follow. This is about the souls of our children; in the words of Pope Francis “This is important!” (2014).

Chapter Two

Changing Confirmation Preparation

The biggest and most immediate challenge facing the Archdiocese of Denver is changing the sacramental preparation curriculum. Catechists will be addressing a completely different audience when preparing third graders to receive Confirmation as opposed to high schoolers. The curriculum and standards created for sacramental preparation in the Denver Archdiocese should be written to deeply engage third graders where they are. It is a more complicated task than just taking the current Confirmation curriculum and simplifying it for a third grade audience. We will need to teach different things in a different way so they speak to our new third grade audience. There is also the matter of the misconceptions surrounding Confirmation and the preparation required. These misconceptions need to be addressed. Parents and catechists need to be educated, but the preparation curriculum itself should also work to counter and correct the misconceptions. As the Archdiocese faces this change we must look at the most important elements of Confirmation preparation. Children should be given opportunities to authentically encounter Christ through prayer, scripture, and service, so that they can be better inclined to accept the gifts of the Holy Spirit offered in Confirmation and be prepared to meet Jesus physically in the Eucharist. The importance of these elements in forming the faith of our children and helping them to encounter the living God are expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the standards for religious education (I will use the standards from Denver even though they have not written new standards for the Restored Order, and standards from Fargo, ND and Honolulu, HI, both of which currently implement the Restored Order), and Joseph Martos, Mary Reed Newland, Ryan Hanning, and many other religious writers and speakers.

Authentic Encounter with the Trinity is the most important aspect of Confirmation preparation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church does not use these exact words when describing what is necessary for preparation, but they do get at the idea when they say, “Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian towards a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit – in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community” (CCC 1309). Ideas of “union,” “familiarity,” and “belonging” appear to be most important in preparing students to receive Confirmation. These are all words that describe relationship more than factual knowledge. Therefore, catechists must introduce their students to Jesus, His Holy Spirit, and the Catholic Church through Authentic Encounter. When they have walked with Jesus through the stories of His life in scripture, they are ready to achieve true union with Him through the reception of his Body and Blood in the Eucharist. When they are taught to pray for themselves and others, they become familiar with the working of Holy Spirit in their lives. When they see God as their Father and humanity as their brothers and sisters they cannot help but feel that the world is just an extension of their family. Authentic encounter with God will allow them to receive the gifts and graces of the sacrament and will lay the foundation for their Christian lives.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed in Confirmation are free gifts. They do not need to be earned by attending a class, gaining knowledge, or passing a test. But students who are receiving the sacrament of Confirmation do need to be prepared to do one thing, reach back to the God who is reaching out to them, and receive the gifts. A gift given by a stranger will be accepted in much of a different way than one offered by someone you love and cherish. Imagine

that a complete stranger, and maybe even a suspicious looking stranger, walks up to you on the street and hands you a box, saying that it is a free gift. I would be hesitant to accept such a gift because I don't know what the gift is nor do I know the intentions of the giver. While if my beloved father, whom I love and who I know loves me, offers me a box saying it is a gift, I would accept it with excitement, anticipation, gratitude, and many other pleasant emotions. It is the same idea for children receiving gifts from God. If a child does not know God (or worse, if they have misconceptions about God's role in their lives and about God's wonderful love for them), they will be much less likely to accept His gifts. To receive the gifts that God has to offer our children, they need to know that He loves them and has wonderful plans for them. They need to love God in return and be willing to follow Him. Not only will they be able to accept the gifts with loving hearts, but they will also see the gifts as sign and symbol of the love and relationship they share with their Father in Heaven.

This relationship does not necessarily happen naturally, however. God is constantly reaching out and loving our children, but He is not as tangible as a mother who can hug, kiss, and nurture her child in a very physical way. It is the job of parents and catechists to help children see the ways God interacts with us and teach them ways to authentically encounter Him. To do this we must teach our children to pray, serve God in the community, and listen to Jesus speak to us through the Scripture. Because we are working with third graders, we must achieve all these things through stimulating all of the senses, both physical and spiritual.

Prayer

Prayer is one of the greatest tools we can give our children to authentically encounter God. It is a direct line of communication to the Father who loves us and is waiting to hear from us. All three standards (from Denver, Fargo, and Honolulu) mention multiple times the

importance of teaching third graders how to pray and consistently praying with them. Because it is so important, every class should begin and end in prayer. Not only will this help to set the mood for the rest of class and serve as a quick reflection of the lesson after class, but it will also give children plenty of practice in prayer. The focus in many of the standards seems to be on memorizing formal prayers like the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Creed (Fargo list 16 formal prayers that students should have memorized by the end of their third grade year). These formal prayers are beautiful and powerful and certainly should be given to children as tools to use, but the most of the prayers before and after class should be unscripted and spontaneous.

This spontaneous prayer is also included in the standards of all three dioceses, highlighting its importance in forming the faith of our little ones. The most fruitful way to teach this kind of spontaneous prayer to our children is to use a formula as Mary Reed Newland does in her book *How to Raise Good Catholic Children*. Newland identifies four main elements of prayer; “contrition, asking, praising, and thanksgiving” (2004, p. 29). All these elements can be found in many formal prayers like the Our Father, but they can also be used by children to form prayers in their own words.

Newland suggests starting off with contrition through an examination of conscience, “because it’s easier to settle down to a really good talk with God after we get our sins out of the way” (2004, p. 25). This element of prayer is also identified in the standards as the Archdiocese of Denver requires that their third grade children “use the Ten Commandments to write a personal Examination of Conscience” (2012, p. 89) Even without going this in depth the children should be encouraged to look back on their day and apologize for the times when they were not everything God wanted them to be and ask for the grace to do better in the future. Once they are freed from guilt by a sincere apology, they can ask God for what they need. In the intentions,

children ask God to bless all the people they love and for help with their struggles. A standard from the diocese of Fargo dictates that children should “be aware that one’s prayers and sacrifices can really help other people” (2003, p. 44). Praying for their wants and needs helps children to know that God cares about every aspect of their life and that no request is too big or small for God. Praying for others helps children to reach outside of themselves and increases their feeling of being part of the larger Church and a part of God’s family. The last elements of prayer are praising and thanking God. These are the parts of prayer most often neglected, but the parts that children do best at. Children are much more able to see the beauty of the world around them and often thank God for seemingly silly things “from babies and books to lollipops and circuses” (Newland, 2004, p. 29). Children are reminded through this praise and thanksgiving that all things come from God. They can revel in the joy of creation and love God all the more for all the beautiful and wonderful things they encounter every day.

This formula should be modeled in the Religious Education (RE) classroom by the catechist the first few classes. The catechists can put a poster in their classroom that lists the elements so that the children can take over the prayer before and after class as soon as possible. This classroom practice will give them plenty of experience talking to God in a supportive and constructive setting. It will help them get more comfortable talking to God so they can begin to do it on their own and on a daily basis.

Sitting down and saying prayers out loud or in your heart can be very powerful, but if children, who are naturally active, think that is the only way to pray they might be inclined to think that it is boring, and that would do no good for fostering a habit and love of prayer. Children should know that play and work can also be used as prayer. Catechists can borrow from St. Paul and end each prayer before class saying, “Whether we eat or sleep, whether we work or

play, may it all be for honor and glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:13). Children should be taught that work and play “done for the love of God is as tangible an act of love as if they were to run to Him with an embrace” (Newland, 2004, p. 31). Children will need much practice and many reminders to get this idea down. Catechists should not be afraid to remind a child who is struggling through a lesson to offer it to God, to embrace Him with his/her work, and likewise if they are enjoying themselves through play. In these ways we can make prayer accessible and exciting for children.

Another way to give children an authentic encounter with Christ in prayer is to lead them in contemplative prayer. This type of prayer works really well with children’s natural talent for imagining. Catechists invite the children to imagine that they are with Christ and other figures from the bible. This can be done using a bible story, reading it to the children and asking them to picture the story in their minds and fill in the details left out. They should use all their senses and imagine what the scene would smell like, what sounds they might hear, what things they might feel with their bodies and their souls. Catechists can also make up their own story and place Jesus in a world that the children might have an easier time imagining. Newland makes this suggestion in her book, giving an example of the scene she would set for her own children:

Why don’t you pretend you’re walking down a street in Nazareth, and you come to a little house with a blue door. You knock at the door, and when it opens, there is the most beautiful lady in the world. The Blessed Mother! And she says, ‘Why, Jamie! I was just thinking of you. Do come in, and have a glass of milk and some cookies, and we’ll have a good talk. Tell me all about your day. All the things that bothered you and all the things that were fun. And afterward, you may go out to the carpenter shop in the back. Jesus and Joseph are out there making me a birthday present, but they won’t tell me what it is. Maybe they will tell you, and let you help. And then you can go to the well with Jesus and get the water and help him milk the goat, and pick the peas for supper. (Newland, 2004, p. 34)

A scene like this sets the stage perfectly as they can tell the Blessed Mother whatever is on their minds, and they can play whatever games they like most with Jesus. Newland would set this scene for her children who lived in the country and were accustomed to milking goats and picking peas, but catechists should tailor these scenes to the children in their class. If all the children are from the city, they might prefer to help Jesus set the table, finish his homework, or clean his room. The set-up gives the child just enough to take the scene wherever they want it to go. Jesus doesn't have to be some distant figure from the bible who speaks in ways that the children don't understand, but he is a child just like them and likes just the things they like. He is concrete and approachable, a real friend. We don't often imagine Jesus as a child, and children often delight to think that Jesus had to do chores and played games and did school work. When they can imagine Jesus in this concrete and relatable light, they can really begin to foster a special friendship, in which they can visit Jesus any time in their prayers and in their minds. When they are excited to talk to God, they will pray more and grow their faith and relationship with Him through this authentic encounter.

Scripture

The diocese of Fargo's *Parish Resources* emphatically states "every catechist needs a Bible for EVERY lesson or catechetical endeavor" (2003, p. 80). The Sacred Scripture is a wonderful and necessary tool for building the faith of our children and giving them an authentic encounter with God. Scripture is God's Word spoken directly to us. All the standards from all three diocese recognize the importance of the Scripture and how students should apply it to their lives. Denver puts a special emphasis on having students "retell Bible narratives" (2012, p. 88). Students should be engaging deeply with Scripture and should be shown that scripture is not only sacred and holy, but also alive and exciting. Catechists are sometimes tempted, in trying to help

the children venerate and show respect for Scripture, to have children sit silently and simply listen while a passage is read to them. New lessons-plans created by the Archdiocese of Denver have children engage in a *Lectio Divina* type Scripture reading, in which the catechist reads the bible passage twice while the children listen quietly. The first reading helps to orient the children towards what is going on in the passage and key elements are reviewed. While the children listen a second time they are asked to look for a word or phrase that draws their attention. They then meditate and pray on this word while catechists “remind them to be silent” (2016). *Lectio Divina* can bear wonderful fruits in the minds of children. The children may hear God speaking to them as they listen to the passage and meditate. But by the time the activity is completed, the children have been sitting silently for 8-10 minutes.

This may help children to take Scripture seriously, but, as a whole, children are not serious beings. *Lectio Divina* can and should be used every now and again, but not every class. The class should begin with using more interactive participation with the scripture. The students will be drawn in by the new and exciting ways to look at the Scripture and will engage deeply. Their minds and hearts will be more opened towards Scripture and their relationship with the Word of God will mature through this experience. After this opening and maturing the students will be more prepared to engage in the *Lectio Divina* style of prayer and meditation. Their style will prove much more effective if their young souls are prepared first through contemplative prayer, oral story-telling, props, and role playing.

Contemplative prayer with the Scriptures was already mentioned in the last section. This is a beautiful and important use of the scripture, but it should not be the only way we use it in our RE classrooms. Children have a world in the minds and imaginations, but we cannot forget that they are very physical beings as well. Children should be given plenty of opportunities to

experience and act out the scripture stories with their bodies as well as with their minds. This is where props and role-playing come in to give a more authentic view of the Scripture.

The words read straight from the bible can have such power. Ancient authors heard the Word of God and wrote it down. Through the years, biblical scholars have crafted beautiful translations that continue to capture the Voice of God in English. For this reason, passages should be read straight from the bible and only if necessary translated into simpler language (Newland, 2004, p.11). But reading directly from the bible does not need to look like the catechist reading while students sit at their desks in silence. Children get this kind of reading already in Mass once a week; they need something different in their classroom. Instead, the catechist should practice oral story telling. They can gather the children in a circle on the floor and recite the story either completely word for word or taking the most important phrases right from the bible. The catechist may also use props to allow the children to experience the stories more tangibly. The story of the Last Supper would feel completely different if the catechist brought in a bowl of water, washed their feet, then shared some unleavened bread and a chalice of grape juice with them, all while reciting the story of what Jesus did on that night. They would be brought into the story and feel something of what the apostles would have felt all those many years ago.

Role-playing and play acting can also be a wonderful way for children to dig deeply into scriptural passages. If time is short, as it always seems to be in RE classes, then catechists can use pre-made scripts from bible stories and give them to the children to act out. If the catechist really wants the children to understand the passage from every angle, it might be worth the time to work with the children to create a script of their own. This is a wonderful activity and will force children to really think about what the characters were thinking and feeling in the story. To

make an effective representation on the stage, the children will really need to analyze what the story is telling them and how the audience ought to respond. What a beautiful experience they would have if they had to make a script for and act out the story of Pentecost. They would show with their words and bodies the fear the apostles felt before the descent of the Holy Spirit. When their characters transform and become brave enough to preach in the temple even in the face of persecution, they will be readying their souls to experience the same change when they receive the Holy Spirit in Confirmation. How much more powerful and memorable that would be for the children than simply having the story read aloud to them while they sat quietly.

By reading the Sacred Scripture, children can authentically encounter God as He speaks to them through the words passed down through the ages. The words themselves are so important, but more important is the feelings, lessons, and meaning behind the words. These feelings, lessons, and meanings do not exist completely in the mind, but need to be felt and acted upon with the body. Children especially are active beings that need to experience things tangibly. They can and should have opportunities to sit quietly with the Word of God, meditate and listen for His voice. But they should also have opportunities to really understand the Scripture and bible stories on a physical level. When they can physically enter into the story with props and role-playing, they can develop a more accurate picture of what feelings, lessons, and meanings lay behind these stories. This deeper and more accurate understanding will foster a love for the Scriptures that will never die.

Service

For anyone who has read the gospels, there is no question about whether Jesus wants us to live in service to others. Jesus spent His life with the poor and downtrodden. Though He is our Lord and Master, He was constantly serving strangers as well as His friends. Again and again

throughout the gospels, Jesus commands us to serve as well. He takes it one step further when He says “whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (MT 25:40). Jesus tells us, clear as day, that when we serve, we are really serving Him, encountering Him. The importance of service for forming faith is also emphasized in the standards from Denver, Honolulu and Fargo and they all require children to “participate in school, church, and community service projects” (Denver, 2012, p. 91). Our children should have plenty of opportunities to engage in service projects to experience this authentic encounter.

Children can do amazing acts of service without ever being taught or told what service is. When their eyes are opened to suffering or injustice their young hearts often yearn to help. This ability should be cultivated and nourished through service projects starting as early as pre-school in the Religious Education programs. Service in pre-school and kindergarten might look like a child comforting a fellow student who misses his/her mother. By first and second grade catechists can open the world a little more and introduce the children to suffering beyond the classroom. With the help of their parents and catechists, these children sponsor a drive for their old toys and clothing for children in need. In third grade, as the students prepare to become fully initiated members of the church, their service should look a little more mature. By this point, they have practiced interacting on a personal level by easing the suffering of their classmates in pre-school and kindergarten. They have also been introduced to greater suffering beyond their immediate environment and have helped behind the scenes. It is now time to open the world one step further and invite children to engage with suffering strangers. They should experience the wonderful Jesuit idea of being “for *and* with others.”

Third graders might bring some games to local nursing home and spend some time easing the residences’ loneliness and listening to their stories. They might spend an evening caroling

and handing out candy canes at the hospital. The kind service project they do is not important, as long as they have a chance to meet the people they are serving face to face. They should see the effect their service has. They should be able to see the Christ in others' eyes and realize that the people they serve are people just like them. They should know, that by encountering people through service they are also encountering Christ.

Apostolic Responsibilities

Receiving the sacraments is a big deal. Now that both Confirmation and First Eucharist are administered in together, third grade has become even more important. Through Confirmation and initiation, children are made “more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life” (CCC 1309), participation in the faith, service, and evangelization being among these responsibilities. The Holy Spirit will give them the spiritual graces and strength, but it is the job of catechists to give them the physical tools; prayer, scripture, and service.

When children know how to pray, they can talk to God and listen for His Will. Prayer does not change God, for God is always the same, but it does change the person who prays. They are more open to Will of God, more able to bear the weight and evil of the world, because they know that God is on their side. They will never be lonely when they know that they only have to speak in their hearts and minds and God will hear them. Doing the Will of God has to be the greatest apostolic responsibility. Teaching the children to pray will prepare them to hear God's Will for them, will change their soul in a way that helps them to live that Will, and so help them to assume that apostolic responsibility.

Developing a life-long love for the Scripture will have an effect on the mind and soul of the reader as well. Children who read the Scriptures often will better know what God expects of

them, but it will also make them a better evangelizer as well. Children who have fostered a deep love and excitement for the Scriptures cannot help but share it. Children like this can bring many people to Christ, not by standing on a street corner and handing out booklets and reciting Scripture to anyone who is walking by, but by living the faith and genuinely wanting other people to experience what they have through the Scriptures. Through an authentic encounter with God through Scripture, the Church can make children the best evangelizers she has.

Service is an apostolic responsibility in itself, so it would only makes sense that children who practice service would be more prepared to serve in the future. By showing children what service looks like and introducing them to suffering in the world, catechists are setting a foundation for student created and student lead service projects in the later grades. Practicing service will also help students to assume the responsibilities of participation in the faith and evangelization as well. There is no better way to spread the love and word of God than through living that same love and word. When our children can touch the lives of people through service, people may start to wonder what Jesus is all about, and take their first steps towards Him. Service to the church is a wonderful way to deepen participation in the faith as well. Our children may be called to serve as an alter server, lector, usher, or in the choir at Mass. When they see service as encountering God, children will be more than willing to participate in the Mass.

Educational and Developmental Theory

The curriculum included in Appendix A is based on these pillars of Christian spirituality: Scripture, prayer, and service. The approaches used to teach these pillars and other Catholic content, however, are based on research and theories posited by many well-known educational philosophers and child development psychologists. The most common approach to religious education is based on earlier methods of teaching that are not as effective as they could be. The

curriculum in Appendix A draws upon the research and theories of child psychologists Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, as well as educational theorist Howard Gardner. Church catechesis should look to these experts in education to find more effective ways of teaching children so that their knowledge of the faith will permeate their lives forever.

Child psychologists Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky performed research into child development that led to the creation of a theory known as Constructivism. This theory “reflects the cognitive psychologists’ views that the essence of learning is the constant effort to assimilate new information” (Sadker, 2012, p. 199). Constructivist teachers do less direct teaching and lecturing (a method that allows children to only retain as much as 50% of the material taught), and they instead facilitate deep discussion through penetrating questions and organize meaningful activities and experiences to help the students come to an understanding of the material as they interact with catechists’ instruction on multiple levels. Such levels from Bloom’s Taxonomy include recall and memorization, explanation and reporting, applying and demonstrating, organizing, appraising and valuing, and developing ways of integrating information into their lives (Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching, <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy>). Catechists who use this curriculum will engage students in discussion and activities that are carefully developed to lead children to a richer understanding of the concepts taught. Catechists will engage children in reading the scripture and reading about the saints, reflecting on and making religious art, moving physically, listening to music, seeing God in nature, talking with others, and practicing self-reflection and prayer.

The curriculum found in Appendix A uses many of these theories and methods to help increase and deepen student learning. Learning about the faith, developing a relationship with

God, and forging a path to heaven are among the most important learning children will acquire. Therefore, it is vitally important to teach these things in a way that will ensure retention and rich understanding.

Aims and Outcomes

The theoretical and practical information given in the previous sections are very important, but it is a mistake to think that just utilizing good practices and keeping the right mindset will ensure that children will learn what you want them to learn. Catechists must keep the aims of the sacramental preparation in mind and utilize measurable outcomes to ensure that the students are making progress towards those aims. Jared Dees, creator and writer for the website *The Religion Teacher*, expresses the importance of goals and outcomes, saying that catechists “must focus on learning goals before [they] choose the right learning activities” (Dees, 2010, p. 7). It is a temptation, even among trained teachers, to jump straight to planning activities and lesson topics. But if teachers or catechists DO not know concretely what they want their students to learn and how they are going to know if the students learned it, then their teaching will be far from effective. LACK OF AGREEMENT; CHOOSE PLURAL OR SINGULAR IN FIRST PART OF SENTENCE TO AGREE WITH “THEY”. These concepts are important in the realms of teaching children math, English, science, and social studies, and they are perhaps even more important when teaching children how to love God and to become saints.

The aim of preparation for the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist have been alluded to throughout this chapter, but plainly stated there are two major aims for the students: one more abstract and the other more concrete. The students should be able to understand that God is reachable. They should be able to form a relationship with God and know that they should foster and grow this relationship throughout their whole lives. The second major aim is for

children to know and understand their apostolic responsibilities and to be able to fulfill these responsibilities in their lives in a way that makes sense to them and follows God's plan for their lives. When parishes, catechists, and parents know these end goals or aims, they will be more likely to engage the children in activities and learning that are directed toward these aims, in and outside the classroom.

Just as important as keeping the aims in mind is having measurable outcomes that can tell us if the students are making progress towards these aims. In schools, these measurable outcomes often look like tests. Tests would not be very effective in calculating how well the students are forming a relationship with God or how well they understand how to fulfill their apostolic responsibilities. We must think of more appropriate ways to assess these goals. One of the best ways to understand a child's relationship with God is to listen to them pray. If a child is talking to God as friend, then parents and catechists can know that they are making great progress towards a healthy relationship with God. If their prayers are more distant and detached then parents and catechists can know that this child may need a little more help opening up to God and seeing Him as a friend, forming a relationship with Him.

Listening to a child pray out-loud, while it can be extremely enlightening, should not be the only outcome used to measure a child's understanding of God's reachability. Not all children may be comfortable praying aloud in front of people. They may become nervous, and this could lead to a reservation that does not accurately reflect the child's relationship with God. Conversely, a child may be very good at understanding what words they ought to say and may not actually have as deep a relationship with God as his/her prayers would suggest. To help to address these issues, parents and catechists should also conference with children about their prayer journals.

Children should be required to keep a prayer journal throughout the class. They should be encouraged to write about any time they see God in their lives and about things they want to thank God for or ask God for. They should also be encouraged to write down prayers and reflections. Catechists should then have a short conference with each child about halfway through the year and then again at the end of the year. The child should bring his/her prayer journal, share some pieces, and talk to the catechists about what they have written and why. The catechists can then measure the child's understanding of God's nearness in much the same way they would with a spoken prayer. It will provide another piece of evidence to measure his/her understanding and progress towards his/her goals.

Catechists and parents also need outcomes to measure the child's understanding of his/her apostolic responsibilities and how to apply them in their lives. There are a few ways to measure this goal as well. The catechists should be teaching about these things in their classes. So a great way to get immediate feedback is to use a sort of review page. In my curriculum, I have built in time to fill out a review page at the end of each lesson. The students can fill out the review sheets by themselves and then share with the class, or the class can have a discussion and fill in the answers together. There should be a combination of both methods used throughout the year to bring variety to the review and assess both whole class knowledge and individual knowledge.

When the discussion technique is utilized, the catechist should use some sort of student tracker to determine which students are answering questions and which students are not. The catechist should then target questions at the students who are not answering so that he/she can gauge their understanding as well. When the students fill out the papers on their own, the catechists should collect these papers and review them over the week, returning them to the

students at the next class. At that time, the catechists can ask clarifying and leading questions if any student needs some help coming to the correct answer.

Another great way to measure the students' understanding of apostolic responsibility and how they are fulfilling the responsibilities is to monitor things like Mass attendance and participation in Mass and service. This can be done by utilizing a Mass journal or by interviewing the child and the child's parents (like the prayer journal conferences, these interviews would be most helpful if done in the middle and end of the year, and perhaps at the beginning as well to get a baseline). The catechists can measure how well the students are already performing their apostolic responsibilities through looking at measures like these. Of course, family restrictions and complications will have to be taken into account if a student is not attending Mass or participating in service. In these cases, a meeting with those individual parents to see how the parish can assist them may be helpful.

Aims and outcomes should be the first thing that parishes, catechists, and parents think about when teaching children anything, including religion and sacramental preparation. When the goals are clear, it will be much easier for catechists to determine what activities and topics would be best to meet those goals. Likewise, when children's progress towards these goals are monitored, the catechist will be better able to determine the success of their teaching. They will also be able to make adjustments in teaching accordingly. If the whole class is still struggling with one topic, the catechist should spend more time on that topic, and perhaps approach it in a different way. If the whole class seems to have a strong understanding of a topic, then perhaps the catechist should move on to a new topic sooner than planned. If only a few students are struggling or excelling with a topic, then perhaps the catechist can spend more time with a small group of students, giving extra help or providing extension activities to deepen knowledge.

When parishes, catechists, and parents keep aims in mind and use measureable outcomes to determine progress, the opportunities for deeper and more meaningful learning are endless.

Conclusion

Authentic encounter with God through prayer, Scripture, and service helps to prepare children to assume “the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life” just at the Catechism says they should in preparation for Confirmation. Parishes and catechists can and should measure this understanding by keeping aims in mind and using measureable outcomes. There is another reason to engage in these practices, and it perhaps even more important; prayer, Scripture, and service will lead our children to Heaven. If we can help our children to love God, love talking to Him through prayer, love hearing His Word in the Scriptures, and love serving Him through service to their fellow man, then we can make saints of all of them. There is not a saint in Heaven who didn’t pray, serve, and read the Scriptures with all the love they had. If it is at all possible that giving children an authentic encounter of God is going to save their souls and let them live forever with God in heaven, then we must make the attempt.

Chapter 3

The Journey Continues

The Restored Order in Denver has faced many challenges, and will continue to face many challenges in the future. There will be the very practical challenges of educating parents and catechists. Parishes will face challenges when moving the age all the way from middle school or high school down to third grade. They may have to endure very large Confirmation classes containing students of various different ages. They may experience a drop-off in RE attendance after 3rd grade. It will certainly be a long road, but this thesis and all the resources contained herein will help to answer the challenge of how to prepare third graders for the sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist. It will also help parishes to educate parents and support catechists through the change.

This project is certainly not finished in my mind. There is still much for me, and anyone else who wishes to join me on this journey, to do. First and foremost, this idea of authentic encounter needs to be carried further than just third grade. Children should be experiencing God in the Religious Education classroom from pre-school all the way through high school. Parishes should also be given resources for adult programs that give adults opportunities and skills to encounter God more fully. It will be a large undertaking, but my end-goal for this project would be a complete Religious Education curriculum spanning from pre-school to high school, all giving children an opportunity to encounter God in a real and vibrant way.

There are also many pieces that I wish to add to my curriculum. I wish to add ideas for day and overnight retreats (depending on the age). I also will add elements to better engage children in Mass. There are so many connections between the Mass and the things students will be learning in class. The curriculum would benefit from books, sheets, or processes for the kids

to use in Mass to help to extend and deepen their learning and relationship with God. I would also like to include more optional activities in my lesson plans so that catechists can read many different options for engaging their students and choose the option that works best for them and their classes. In the end, I hope to create a much richer and fuller program to create an even better experience for catechists, students, and parents.

In the end, I would like to have all of these resources approved by the diocese and published online for easy and free access. I envision student work books and lesson plan books available in print for parishes to utilize. I would love to get an opportunity to teach the curriculum myself and to tweak the program to make it more effective. I would also take feedback from catechists and parishes on how to make the program better.

The vision I have for this project is vast and it will take a great deal of effort. But this project has been put on my heart by God Himself, and I will be sure to see it through. The journey may never end, but my sincerest hope is that it can be carried on for years and years to come, even after I am gone. Our children deserve better; they deserve a rich and deep relationship with God the Father. And if we can achieve this, we might just save a few souls and make a few saints along the way.

Appendix A

Curriculum Materials for 3rd Grade Sacramental Preparation

This curriculum is meant to be used by catechists to help children prepare for the sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist in 3rd grade. It was written to help children more authentically encounter the Living God. But even the most meticulously and beautifully written curriculum cannot do this without a devoted catechist to implement it. For this reason, this appendix will be prefaced by some suggestions for how best to use the curriculum, suggestions for best practices, and a list of additional resources.

How to Use This Curriculum

This curriculum is made up of 24 lesson plans plus an optional day retreat. It is meant to be split into two semesters starting in September and ending around Pentecost. The lessons are written to fill about an hour time slot and should be given about once a week. Each lesson plan outline contains a quote from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, a list of materials, goals, central questions, a scripture passage, a write-up of the activities and materials to be introduced during the lesson, a reflection and closure, and homework and extension activities for parents and children to do at home.

Every good religion lesson starts with the rationale taken from Church teaching. The quotes from the Catechism are included mostly for the catechist to use as a reference. Many of the quotes are above the reading level and processing skills of a third grader so there is no need to post the quotes or read them to the students during the lesson. The catechists should, however, look to the catechism for knowledge and inspiration when preparing for a lesson. The paragraph numbers of each quote are listed after the quote in the lesson plan so that catechists can find the

quotes and read them in context. They are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the teaching of the Church and receive their rationale for the lesson from the Catechism.

The materials for each lesson are also listed. There are a few materials that should be used for every lesson that, for brevity's sake, are not listed under each lesson plan. A bible will be needed for every lesson. One of the simplest approved translations is the Contemporary English Bible. The readings were chosen from this translation and while other translations will be similar they may not be perfectly matched to the lesson. Bible reading can be found easily based on the translation at Biblegateway.com, but catechists should have a physical bible to read from every class. The children should get used to seeing a bible on your lap as you read the scripture reading for the week. They should know what the book looks like and become comfortable and familiar with it, so that they can turn to their own bible when they need it.

Catechists will also need sticky-notes for nearly every lesson. Each lesson begins with a warm-up activity or question that I have called a "sponge." I have given this activity this name because it is meant to soak up the time at the beginning of class that would otherwise be spent chatting and getting settled. Children should still have time to get settled into class, but the sponge activity will help them to get into the mindset of the lesson much sooner. It will also give the catechists a chance to get things like attendance and snack taken care of while the students work. Most sponge activities will be written on a sticky-note, unless otherwise specified in the lesson plan, or unless the catechist thinks a different kind of paper would better suit the activity. The sticky-notes are useful if you want the students to share out their answers. They can share and then bring the sticky-notes up to the board or stick them on the wall and you can see answers from the whole class all in one place. This will also give the students a chance to see their classmates' answers and thoughts as well. The easiest way to arrange this sponge activity is to

have the directions and questions on the board and a sticky-note and pencil at every desk before the students even come in. The students will need the activity pointed out to them for the first few lessons, but they should get into the routine fairly quickly.

Catechists will also need any worksheets and homework sheets needed for the lessons. Master copies of each worksheet can be found after the lessons plans. Each worksheet and homework sheet will be labeled with the lesson number it belongs to. The worksheets will also be referenced in the lesson plan itself. Not every lesson requires a worksheet or homework sheet, but there will be something that I've called a "Review Page" needed for every class. This Review Page will have questions about the content of the lesson that the catechist should help the students answer at the end of each lesson. It will also have space for the students to write the most important thing they learned that class. The last element of the Review Page will be a list of suggested extension activities for the parents to do at home. These Review Pages can and should be used in a variety of ways. They can be used at the end of each lesson as a quick review and wrap-up. They will be useful for catechists to know if the children have understood the most important elements of the lesson. They will be useful for parents who wish to know what their children are learning. They will also be useful for the students themselves who can and should collect these sheets in a folder or binder to look back in before the final review games at the end of the year. It will also help the students to summarize the lesson and help the lesson content move from their short-term memory into their long-term memory.

Another constant homework "assignment" or activity are the Saint Book Bags. The students should be reading about the lives of the saints. The most obvious reason is because they will be choosing a saint name to take when they are confirmed. The other, and more important, reason is so they can start to emulate the saints and begin the path to becoming saints themselves.

Catechists must not forget that their number one job is to create saints. So it is vitally important that catechists get as many stories of as many saints into the children's hands as possible. The Saint Book Bags are meant to do just that. Catechists should have access to a collection of picture books that tell about the lives of saints. They should have enough for every student to take a different book home once a week. These books should be read with their families and they should respond to each in their saint journal, making connections between the saints' lives and their own, and finding a favorite element in each saint's story. Picture books on the saints may be available at a public library, but parishes should be encouraged to have a library of their own for the catechist's use.

One last thing to mention is snack. Children love snacks and will be much better able to focus if they are not hungry. Therefore, every lesson should have a healthy snack available. The easiest place to put snack would be at the very beginning of the class. Students can come in to the classroom, sign in, grab their snack, and sit down and get working on their sponge activity. Snacks can be provided by the parish budget or catechists can enlist parent volunteers or other parishioners to provide snack. The most important thing is that the children feel safe and ready to learn. A snack at the beginning of each lesson will help to provide that.

Preparing for Each Lesson

Preparation for each lesson should always start with prayer. Catechists are encouraged to pray in whatever manner they like best, but this beautiful prayer from Loyola Press may be a good place to start.

Loving God, Creator of all things,
you call us to be in relationship with you and others.

Thank you for calling me to be a catechist,
for the opportunity to share with others
what you have given to me.

May all those with whom I share the gift of faith
discover how you are present in all things.

May they come to know you, the one true God,
and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.
May the grace of the Holy Spirit guide my heart and lips,
so that I may remain constant in loving and praising you.

May I be a witness to the Gospel and a minister of your truth.
May all my words and actions reflect your love.
Amen (Loyola Press 2017)

The prayer is particularly beautiful because it will help the catechists to remember the main reason for their teaching. Their main purpose in teaching is to help children to know “the one true God.” Saying this prayer will put them in the right mindset to read through the lesson plans and prepare with their priorities aligned correctly. It will also help them to remember their enormous responsibility to “witness to the Gospel” in their “words and actions.” It is not enough to read through the lesson plans, teach the kids the content and then go off and live in any immoral way they choose. This prayer, or something similar, will help catechists to remember that.

The next step should be reading the lesson plans through completely. It is wise to read the whole of the curriculum in its entirety before even starting to teach so that catechists will know where they are leading their students and so that they can reference future or past learning in their lessons. It may also be wise when preparing for one lesson plan, to skim through the lesson directly before and after. These lesson plans can be taken exactly as they are written, but a wise catechist will read over the plan and decide what fits with their classroom and teaching styles and

modify the lessons accordingly. Catechists must then gather all the materials needed and make any necessary copies of worksheets or homework sheets.

There are few things that will be helpful for catechists think about and consider as they prepare for a lesson. They should first make sure that they have a firm grasp on the concepts being taught. If a catechist does not feel like he/she knows the topic inside and out, they should spend some time with the catechism, bible, or Catholic Encyclopedia. Catechists should anticipate possible questions for students or possible problems that their specific class might have. For example, if a catechist has a good number of students who struggle with writing, they might have to think of an alternative to certain written work during class time. Inexperienced catechists might also want to practice how they will present material with a child, spouse, friend, or in front of the mirror. Having what they are going to say already in their mind can be very helpful to ease nerves and to create a class that runs smoothly.

Catechists should pray again before the lesson, just to make sure they are in the right mindset to be molding the faith of the young children. If the catechists are preparing with fervent prayer, sufficient advanced organization, anticipation of questions or problems, and practice if necessary, they can be confident that they have done all that they can to make the lesson a great one. The rest is in the Lord's hands.

Scope and Sequence

These lesson plans are organized in a way that makes the most developmental sense. They build upon each other and the student responsibility grows as the year progresses. For this reason, I suggest teaching the lessons in the order they are given. There are elements of each lesson, however, that can be taken and used independently of the others if a need should arise. Certain topics can also be rearranged if need be.

Semester 1	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Getting to Know you	Church Community	Power of Prayer	Ways to Pray	Planting a Seed	Good Ground
	7	8	9	10	11	12
	God in All Things	The Effects of Sin	Following the Saints	Choosing a Patron	Serving Christ	Jesus and Children
Semester 2	13	14	15	16	17	18
	Recalling Baptism	Confirmation	Gifts of Holy Spirit	GoHS Part II	Fruits of the Spirit	History of Eucharist
	19	20	21	22	23	24
	Bread and Wine	Magnificat	Adoration	Holy Thursday	Stations of the Cross	Review Games

Another consideration that was taken when organizing this curriculum was the liturgical year. Quite a few of the lesson topics line up quite nicely with liturgical seasons or feast days if the semester starts in September and ends around May. I have made suggestions in each lesson plan as to the liturgical week in which the topic would make the most sense. I understand that all parishes have their own calendar of events and may need to take weeks off of sacramental preparation classes to accommodate parishes' calendars. For this reason, I am including a list of lessons that make most sense or whose meaning is deepened when placed during a specific time or around a certain feast day.

Lesson 9: Following the Saints – Around All Saints Day

Lesson 11: Serving Christ – Feast of Christ the King

Lesson 12: Jesus and the Children – 1st Week of Advent

Lesson 13: What is Initiation? - Recalling Baptism – Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Lesson 22: Holy Thursday- Feet Washing and Agony in the Garden – 5th Week of Lent

Lesson 23: The Stations of the Cross- Palm Sunday

Happy Teaching!

Jessie Wilkerson

Lesson 1: Getting to Know You

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 24th Week of Ordinary Time

Church Teaching: “catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community” (CCC 1309)

Materials:

- Crucifix statue
- Bible and props for readings (fetus model, or something similar)
- Interview Sheets (student-student and student-family)
- Poster board

Lesson Goals: Students will recall that God knows and loves them and want us to know and love others by living in community.

Central Question(s): How can we use our knowledge of God’s love for us to love each other?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Teacher-led Prayer: “Lord Jesus, thank you so much for bringing us together tonight so that we might know each other better and come closer to You. Please forgive us all our wrongdoings and help us to only do things that are good and pleasing to You, our best friend. Bless everyone here tonight and help us to have fun and get to know each other better today. Help us to see You in all everyone we meet today. I thank you for Your great love and beautiful students. I love you so much! Amen” OR something to that effect.
- Either Psalm 139: 1-6 and/or 13-16 OR Jeremiah 1: 5-8

Lesson:

- “Sponge”: On the sticky note on your table write or draw something you want to thank God for today. Be creative”.
- Review and Set-up: “Does God love us a lot or a little? A lot! God is like our parents or our best friends who have known us for a long time (only God knew us way before any of them) so He knows us really well. And He loves each of us like we were the only people in the world to love! When you have two different friends, how do you want those friends to feel about each other? You know that they know and love you, but don’t you want them to know and love each other too? It is the same for God. He wants all of His children and friends to know and love each other. He wants to all be one big community. So we are going to practice that today, by getting to know each other a little better.”
- Join the students in a circle on the floor for a beginning prayer. The prayer holds the crucifix statue to make it clear they are talking to Jesus. Pass the crucifix around while students say one thing they want to thank God for today. No repeating, invite them to be creative. They can all put the sponge sticky notes up on the bulletin board.

- Invite them back to the circle and read the bible passage to them, taking the role of story-teller and proclaimer.
- Hand out the interview forms† and put the children in interview pairs. Try to be mindful of putting children together who may not know each other very well.
- As the students are engaged in the interviews walk about and listen. You can also take pictures of each student so that you can make some sort of display with their faces in the classroom. Give the students about 20 minutes to finish the interviews then gather the students back together.



make some sort of display with their faces in the classroom. Give the students about 20 minutes to finish the interviews then gather the students back together.

- Have each student introduce the person they interviewed and share a few new and/or interesting things they learned about the person they interviewed. Collect the interview sheets.
- Congratulate the students on starting to build a community. Ask

them what else is needed to have a successful community (rules, guidelines, good ways to interact with each other. If the students need help getting this answer give an example of if you got upset and pushed one of the students, would that help to build a good classroom community?) Ask the students to help you form guidelines for the classroom community. Write the ideas in the form of guidelines on a poster board that can be displayed in the classroom at all times.

- Introduce the Saint Book Bags†.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Pass out the “Review Page†” and explain how they are to be used.
- Pass out the student-family interview sheets†. Remind them that God wants us to know and love each other and live in community, especially in our families.
- Closing Prayer: “Father, thank you for the wonderful new friendships we have formed today. Thank you for helping us to build our community. We pray that it will only continue to grow throughout the year. We pray that we will build our community here in the classroom, in our parish here in (city, state, parish name, etc.), and in Your whole Church around the world. Help us to love You and each other as You love us. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.” Or something similar.

Bring it Home:

- Share Review Page with their families
- Read their saint book and write in saint journal
- Interview their family members. They do not need to return the interview sheets.

Notes: The interview sheets will be a great tool for the catechists. They should look at them and think about how to tailor the lessons to the interests of the class.

Lesson 2: Church Community

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 25th Week in Ordinary Time

Church Teaching: “In Christian usage, the word “church” designates the liturgical assembly, but also the local community or the whole universal community of believers. These three meanings are inseparable. “The Church” is the People that God gathers in the whole world. She exists in local communities and is made real as a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly. She draws her life from the word and the Body of Christ and so herself becomes Christ’s Body” (CCC 752)



Materials:

- Crayons
- A tooth pick for each student
- A bundle of tooth picks
- Extra shoelaces

Lesson Goals

- Students will be able to identify the different levels of community in the

Church and develop a strategy to build community through their actions.

Central Question(s):

- How is our classroom community like the Church community?
- How can we help to build a strong community through our actions?

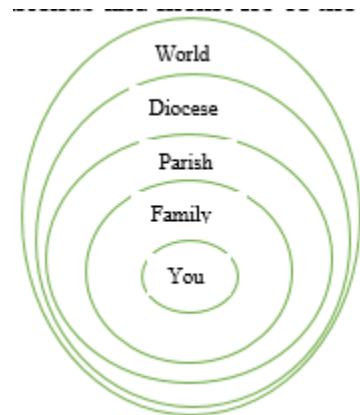
Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Teacher-led prayer: “Thank you Lord Jesus for bringing us all together again today. We are so happy to part of your community. Please forgive all the times that we have done things to hurt our community, the hurt the bond we have with others and with You. Help us to know the good things to do and to choose to do those things even in the face of temptation. Please bless all the children here tonight, all the people of our parish, and every member of your Church throughout the whole world. Bless Pope Francis, Archbishop Aquila, and all the priests who help to lead our community. Thank you for giving us your Church to keep us safe from all the evil and sin in the world. We love you so much! Amen” or something similar.
- Hebrews 10: 19-25

Lesson:

- Sponge – “Draw a picture of our Church”
- Gather the students in a circle on the floor for the prayer and bible reading. After the reading pass a single tooth pick out to each student. Ask them to try to break the stick. Was it easy or hard? Then pass around the bundle of tooth picks and have students try to break that. What can those tooth picks tell us about community? (We are stronger together).

- Have the students share their drawings with a partner.
- Have few people to share their drawing with the whole class. Try to have an example of both a picture of a building and a picture of people. Show this as an example as well: http://sspx.org/sites/sspx/files/styles/news_big/public/news/saints_in_heaven.jpg?itok=rTqOA2G8. Ask the students to notice similarities and differences. Which one looks more like a Church to them?
- Introduce the two meanings of “church.” Lower case “church” which talks about the building where we meet for Mass, and upper case “Church” which refers to group of people who call themselves Catholic. The “Church” will be the focus of this lesson.
- Write the words “Priest, Bishop, and Pope” on the board. Have students talk with a partner for one minute about what they know about each of those people and how they might contribute to the Church community. Students should follow along with their note catchers*.
- Ask for a few volunteers to share their ideas.
 - o The priest is the head of a parish community, one church building. He helps to build the Church community by celebrating mass and bringing everyone in parish together and celebrating Communion.
 - o The Bishop is the head of a group of parishes called a diocese or archdiocese. He contributes to the community of the Church by helping to bring new people into the Church through Confirmation and RCIA.
 - o The Pope is the leader of all the parishes and dioceses in the whole world! He helps to build the community of the Church by speaking to every Church member in the world through his letters and speeches. He gives direction to the whole Church, all the people, on what to do and which way to go.
- Draw circles on the board. Ask the students if they can think of one more level. Remind them of the book bags they brought home talking about the saints. The saints are still part of our Catholic community and they pray for us from heaven and we can think of them as our friends.
- Gather all the children into a circle. Lead them in the Shoelace Community Activity†.



Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Complete the Review Page†
- Closing Prayer: “Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for letting us to have a fun time in class today and helping us to learn more about your Church. Help us to always make choices that keep your Church healthy and happy. I pray that we can closer and closer to you every day. We love you very much! Amen” or something similar.

Bring it Home:

- Complete Action Plan† worksheet with their families.
- Pay attention to the ways they pray at home.
- Share Review Page with their families
- Read their saint book and write in saint journal

Lesson 3: Power of Prayer

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 26th Week in Ordinary Time

Church Teaching: “The catechesis of children, young people, and adults aims at teaching them to meditate on The Word of God in personal prayer ... The memorization of basic prayers offers an essential support to the life of prayer, but it is important to help learners savor their meaning” (CCC 2688)

Materials:

- Prayer books skeleton (construction paper pieces connected into a book)
- Prayers printed and cut out
- Glue sticks
- Crayons
- Poster board

Lesson Goals

- Students will be able to distinguish memorized prayer and spontaneous prayer and construct a formula for spontaneous prayer.

Central Question(s): What is the best way to pray?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- “Dearest Father, be with us today as we delve deeper into our relationship with you. Help us to see You as the wonderful friend and father that You are. Please forgive us for the times when we don’t pray like we should, and when we don’t talk to You as often as You would like. Help us to keep you always in our minds and to share our daily experiences with you. We want to be near you always. Today, thank you for our wonderful minds and active imaginations. Be with us always, Amen.” Or something similar.
- Luke 11: 1-4, 9-13

Lesson:

- Sponge “What is your favorite prayer?”
- Gather the children on the floor to pray and share the reading. Invite the students to close their eyes and try to picture the scene. Ask if they recognize the prayer Jesus gives the disciples? (The Our Father).
- Ask what happens when we pray? Return to the bible passage when they answer (God hears our prayers and will give us what we need). Prayer is effective, we can change the world with our prayers! Tell the story of St. Benedict†.
- Briefly point out that people before Jesus didn’t consider God their “Father.” Jesus told us to call God Father so that we can better understand that we are building a relationship with someone who knows and loves us. Ask them how often they talk to their parents. Would their relationship be different if they didn’t talk?
- The Our Father is a great prayer to know and say often, but it also gives us a formula for how to say our own prayers. Walk through the “Our Father” and stop after each line to

point out what Jesus is doing in the prayer. Use the Our Father Formula Guide*. Write out the steps on the poster board.

- Ask for a volunteer and ask them to do 2 or 3 tasks for you, but don't say thank you and don't ask nicely. Ask the students what they noticed, was I being a nice friend? What should I do differently (say thank you, and ask nicely). Have another volunteer come up and demonstrate those. Next accidentally run into the volunteer and don't say sorry. Ask again if that was being a nice friend. Have another student demonstrate saying sorry.
- Have the students bring up their sponge sticky notes and sort them by the prayer they chose. Comment about all the wonderful prayers they know and how many of their favorite prayers have the three elements they talked about.
- Pass out the prayer book materials and walk them through the directions. They can finish these at home if there isn't time in class.



Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Complete the Review Page†
- Gather the students on the floor for closing prayer. Tell them to listen closely as we say our closing prayer and see if you can recognize each element displayed on their board. "Dear Lord Jesus, thank you so much for all that we have learned today. Help us to talk to You, tell You that we are sorry for our sins, ask You for what we need, and tell You that we love You, every day. We want to be close to You because we love You and know You love us too. We ask you mother to pray for us as well as we pray together 'Hail Mary'..." or something similar.
- Next week one of you is going to take my place and lead us in our opening and closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer or pick a student at random.

Bring it Home:

- Practice talking to Jesus and praying in their own words.
- Notice all the different ways the prayer with the Times and Ways I Pray† sheet.
- Share Review Page with parents.
- Read their saint book and write in saint journal.

Lesson 4: Different Ways to Pray

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 27th Week in Ordinary Time

Church Teaching: “the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him” (CCC 2565)

Materials:

- 2 circles of cardstock paper for each student
- Pencils and crayons
- Brass fasteners

Lesson Goals

- Students will be able to construct an image from the reading of a bible passage and enter the scene with Jesus.
- Students will be able to recall that work and play can be forms of prayer as well if they are offered to God.

Central Question(s): What are other ways we can pray and grow closer to Jesus without using words?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer (since it is the first time, help the student if they are nervous, but have them lead). Say the Glory Be together.
- John 2: 1-11

Lesson:

- Sponge: “When do you pray during your day?”
- Gather the children in a circle on the floor to do the prayer and reading. As you are reading have the students close their eyes and imagine that they are with Jesus in the scene, paying attention to their 5 senses. When the reading is done, ask them what they saw, heard, smelled, tasted, felt (in body and soul). Jesus was at a wedding, have you ever been to a wedding or seen one on TV. What were people doing? Dancing, talking, laughing? Where you there with Jesus? Where you close to Him or did you just witness from the other side of the room? How did that feel? Write children’s responses in the chart to come back to later.

See	Hear	Smell	Taste	Feel (body)	Feel (soul)

- (Optional) Play the first 35 seconds or so of the Youtube video titled Jesus (1999) Wedding <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3R4y0TPA4aY>. This is what someone pictured with reading that story. Is it like what we pictured?
- Introduce the term Meditative Prayer, and ask the students what they thought of the experience. Is it still a good way to pray?
- You can use meditative prayer with the scriptures or with a story you think up. Invite the children to find a comfortable space either in their chairs or on the floor. Tell them you

are going to set the scene and get them started but then they should use their imaginations to finish the scene.

- “In this scene Jesus is just your age and He loves you very much. You are already good friends because of the prayers we have been doing here and prayers you do at home, but now we are going to spend some time with Jesus in our minds. Picture you’re walking down a street in Nazareth, and you come to a little house with a blue door. You know at the door, and when it opens, there is the most beautiful lady in the world. The Blessed Mother! And she says, ‘Why, hello! I was just thinking of you. Do come in, and have a glass of milk and some cookies, and we’ll have a good talk.’ You go into the house, can you smell the fresh baked cookies? The Blessed Mother gives you a plate and a glass of milk and says “Tell me all about your day. All the things that bothered you and all the things that were fun. And afterward, you may go out to the carpenter shop in the back. Jesus and Joseph are out there making me a birthday present, but they won’t tell me what it is. Maybe they will tell you, and let you help. Then maybe you can help Jesus set the table and after dinner maybe you can do some homework together. What will you tell her? What are Jesus and Joseph making in the shop. Spend some time with them and find out” (Newland, 2004, p. 34).
- Give the students about 5-10 minutes to sit in silence with Jesus. Afterwards gather them back at their desks where a new prayer journal should be waiting for them. Give them a few minutes to either share with a partner what they did with Jesus or write about in their prayer journal.
- Introduce work and play as forms of prayer as well.
 - o Work: When we are struggling with our work, like our chores or homework we can make this work a prayer by thinking of ourselves as working for God. Complaining, whining, and trying to get out of our work are not good and holy choices that help us get closer to God. But if you can say, “Jesus, I offer you this work” then Jesus will help us. And we can be happy knowing that we are working for Him.
 - o Play: Jesus also loves to see us having fun and wants to be a part of it. When you are playing and having a good time you can also offer your play to Jesus. This is like running to Jesus and giving Him a big hug. Imagine how good that would feel, and how much closer you will be to Jesus when you play with Him.
- Hand out materials and directions for the Ways I Pray Circle†. If there is time you can start the craft in class, otherwise have the students finish it at home.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Fill out the Review Page† with the students.
- Student led closing prayer. Pick a student to lead next week, volunteer or random.

Bring it Home:

- Use the How to Participate in Meditative Prayer sheet† with families and write in prayer journals.
- Share Review Page with parents.
- Read saint book and write in saint journal.



Lesson 5: Planting a Seed

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 28th Week in Ordinary Time

Church Teaching: “Thus a true filial spirit toward the Church can develop among Christians. It is the normal flowering of the baptismal grace which has begotten us in the womb of the Church and made us members of the Body of Christ. In her motherly care, the Church grants us the mercy of God which prevails over all our sins and is especially at work in the sacrament of reconciliation. With a mother’s foresight, she also lavishes on us day after day in her liturgy the nourishment of the Word and Eucharist of the Lord.” (CCC 2040)

Materials:

- Mustard seed and picture of mustard bush
- Cups/ little flower pots
- Potting soil
- Seeds (Mustard seeds are actually fairly good plants for this, or a bulb plant)

Lesson Goals

- Students will be able to demonstrate how the soul is effected through the sacraments.

Central Question(s): How do the sacraments affect us?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student lead Prayer
- Matthew 13: 31-32 and Luke 17: 5-6

Lesson:

- Sponge: What are the sacraments? How do they affect us?
- Gather the students for prayer and the bible reading. Pass around a small mustard seed and a picture of mustard plant as you read.
- Have the students share their sponge answers with a partner. Have some volunteers share their answers with the whole class. Write them on the board.
- Define Sacrament. (A ceremony or sign in which God gives a free gift of Grace so that we can live more like Him.) Something similar.
- Point out the word grace and ask if anyone knows what that means. Grace is favor and love that we don’t deserve or earn. We can give other people grace by being nice to them even if they are not nice to us. God gives us grace by loving us even when we sin. He also helps us to not sin again if we are truly sorry. God gives us grace in the sacraments and in our daily lives so that we can be in heaven with Him.
- Hand out the materials for planting the seed (cup, seed, soil). Provide a metaphor for each piece. Write them up on the board and draw a picture. Use the Planting the Seed Script† for help.
 - o Seed = Faith
 - o Planting Seed = Baptism, our seed begins to grow, but what things does a plant need to grow?

- Water = Grace (Prayer helps us recognize the grace and suck it up)
- Sunlight = Eucharist
- Pulling Weeds = Reconciliation
- Repotting (More Room to Grow) = Confirmation

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Review what the students need to give their plants to survive. Review what the pieces stand for, what does our soul need to grow in faith.
- Remind the Students that they need to take care of their plants ** because they will be replanted *** at the end of the year after they receive their First Eucharist and Confirmation, as a symbol of their new status in the Church. But it is more important that they take care of their souls, because in the end it doesn't just turn into a pretty flower, but into eternal happiness and fulfilment in Heaven with God.
- Complete the Review Page† questions.
- Student-led closing prayer and pick a student to lead prayer next class.
- Hand out homework and Reminder for Parents† if applicable.
- Next class we will talk about what kind of soil is best for nourishing our little plant and relate it to how our soul can best nourish our seed of faith.

Bring it Home:

- Care for their seed.
- Place the Caring for the Seed of Faith† sheet in and write in their prayer journals.
- Share Review Page with parents.
- Read saint book with their families.

Notes: * This is a lesson that can get kind of expensive if the parish or catechist is buying the materials themselves. There are ways to circumvent the expenses however. Start by asking for donations of materials from the parishioners. You can also ask a local hardware or garden store for donations of materials. There really shouldn't be too many things needed, but little pots or cups, a few little bags of seeds and one bag of planting soil should be plenty for one class, so hopefully stores would be willing to donate. If none of these money saving options are available then this lesson can be done by using just drawings for explanation, but it is not nearly as powerful or effective.

** There are a few options for the plants keeping the plants over the course of the year. The students can take them home and care for them there. There is the risk that one of the children's plants will die and that would not be good for the metaphor (although you could extend the metaphor to talk about mortal sin and once they go to confession they get a new plant and then just give them a new one). You can also keep them in the classroom or at the church if there is a person or society available to water the plants daily. The catechist could also keep them at her house and take care of them there and just bring them in when prevalent.

*** This Confirmation Garden will need to be coordinated with the youth group and the parish leaders obviously, but it can be a really beautiful experience and hands-on reminder of how we need to care for our souls. If there is no land for a garden then the children can be given a larger pot (again donated from parishioners or local stores) to re-pot their plant instead of planting in a garden once they receive the sacraments.

Lesson 6: Good Ground

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 29th Week in Ordinary Time

Church Teaching: : “Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly, lest they come to resemble the three first kinds of soil in the parable of the sower” (CCC 2707)

Materials:

- Reader's Theater Script
- Props for the play (**Be more specific once the script is written**)

Lesson Goals

- Students will be able to identify the dangerous situations that are not conducive for growing their faith and apply them to their real life.
- Students will identify qualities and behaviors that will help to prepare their soul to receive the graces offered to them in Confirmation and Eucharist and apply them to their real life.

Central Question(s): What activities should we engage in and what behaviors should we cultivate to prepare our souls to experience God's grace in the sacraments?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student Led Prayer
- Luke 8: 4-15

Lesson:

- Sponge: What are some things that you do to feel close to God?
- Review and Set- up: “Do any of you remember the things we talked about last class that are necessary for our souls to grow in faith? (Rewrite them on the board.) We are going to talk more today about how to prepare our souls to best suck up God's grace so that we are ready to receive the sacraments at the end of this year”
- Gather the students on the floor for the prayer and the reading.
- After the reading hand out the Reader's Theater Script†. Assign roles or ask for volunteers and give the students a few moments to look over the script. Read the story through again while the students perform the dramatization.
- Ask the students what they think the different seed would look like today. (They may have some good ideas. If they are having trouble you can give the example of someone their age and their habits and thoughts about going to church. Church is a good example because this is where we receive the Word of God read to us and other sacramental graces in the Eucharist. The seed that feel on the path would be like a child who doesn't ever want to go to Mass. They pretend to be sick or come up with other ways of getting out of it. The seed that feel on rocky ground could represent a child who starts out really loving going to Mass, but then her friend wants her to join a dance class that meets on Sundays during Mass time. She tells her friend that she can't because she has to go to Mass and the friend makes fun of her. The friend also tells her that if she were a good

friend then she would want to come to the dance class with more than sitting in a church listening to old people talk. The girl doesn't want to be a bad friend and doesn't want to be made fun of so she joins the dance class and stops going to church. The seed that fell among the thorns is like a child who again loves going to Mass at the beginning of the year. But as the year goes on he starts to get distracted more and more by things that he is thinking about. He thinks about the homework he has to do, football practice, or hanging out with his friends. He stops going to Mass so much because he just feels like he is so busy with sports, school, and friends. And when he does come to Mass he doesn't pay any attention.)

- This is a story about how we can make our souls ready to accept the God's Grace in the sacraments that we will receive this year. It is very important.
- Split the students into four groups and assign a "seed" to each group. Have them discuss what each kind of soil (or soul) would look like in their worlds (school friends). Have them write a script for act two of the play when Jesus explains the parable to his disciples. They can use whatever situation they come up with, but they should talk about it with the catechist to make sure it fits.
- Give the students plenty of time to work on this activity. When most groups are done have them share their scene with the class.
- Have the class put all the scenes together and practice a few times altogether.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Invite the parents to come early to watch the students put on their play.
- If inviting the parents does not work or not all the parents are able to come have the students complete a Review Page†.
- Gather the students for a student led closing prayer and pick a student to lead prayer next class.
- We have talked for the past two classes about what our souls need to receive grace and about making our souls good ground so that we can really soak up God's grace and grow closer to him and become saints. Next class we are going to do some practice with these ideas. We are going to go out into nature and try to find God there. Think this week about when you feel closest to God.

Bring it Home:

- Share the Review Page with their families.
- Read the Saint Book Bags and write in their saint journal.

Lesson 7: Finding God in All Things

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 30th Week in Ordinary Time

Church Teaching: “God speaks to man through the visible creation.” (CCC 1147)

Materials:

- Prayer Journals

Lesson Goals:

- Students will be able to connect the beauty of creation to the love God has for all things including them.
- Students will be able to apply the ideas of seeing something beautiful and thinking of God to their everyday lives; this will help to strengthen their prayer life as they learn to say “Thank you God” or “I love you God” continuously throughout their days.

Central Question(s): Where can we see God in creation? How can we use this knowledge of where to find God to orient ourselves towards Him?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer.
- Genesis 1:1- 2:4

Lesson:

- Sponge: What are some beautiful or interesting things that you have noticed today?
- Gather the students on the floor for the prayer and bible reading. Introduce *Lectio Divina* for this reading using the Guild to Lectio Divina† for help.
- When finished reading talk about the reading. All of creation contains God in it! Isn't that wonderful! We can look out on that field of grass and think God created that. He knew, even on that first day when he made grass, I would be looking out on this field on day. He was thinking of this grass and thinking of me and so I can think of Him.
- Play *Canticle of the Sun* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_ZkWVBg7k0.
- Have you ever thought about God being in all creation? Did you think of that? (let the students discuss and share stories of experiencing God in nature)
- Now we are going to go outside and look at just a small piece of God's creation. I want you to look all around. Remember everything has a piece of God in it, the sky, the clouds, the trees, the bugs, you classmates. I want you to look around and find something that you find really beautiful and draw it. Sit with it and talk to God about it. Thank Him for the beauty in the world.
- Take the children outside and give them a good amount of time to look, draw, and pray and meditate. *

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Bring the children back into the classroom and have them share their meditations with a buddy. Ask for a few volunteers to share with the whole class.
- Complete the Review Page†

- Hand out the Where Do I Find God† worksheet to do at home with their families.
- Gather the students on the floor for student led closing prayer. Pick another student to lead prayer next class.
- This class we have talked about the gifts God gives us in nature. When we notice them and use them as an excuse to talk about God.

Bring it Home:

- Where Do I Find God
- Share the Review Page with their families
- Saint Book Bag and saint journal

Notes: * There are usually ways for any parish to get their students outside into some kind of natural environment. It can be on the church grounds if you can ask for parent volunteers to join you on a walk to a local park. Or you can even have the class meet somewhere other than the classroom right away.

Lesson 8: The Effects of Sin

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 31st Week in Ordinary Time

Church Teaching: “The victory that Christ won over sin has given us greater blessings than those which sin had taken from us: “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rom 5:20)” (CCC 420)

Materials:

- Clear glasses of tea and coffee

Lesson Goals: Students will know the effects of sin, that Jesus forgives their sins, and that they should come to Confirmation and Eucharist in a state of grace (or free from sin).

Central Question(s): What are the effects of sin and what can we do about sin?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led Prayer
- 1 John: 1: 5-10

Lesson:

- Sponge: What do you know about sin?
- Gather the students on the floor for the prayer and bible reading (practice *Lectio Divina* again). Have them share their sponge answers with a partner and then pick a few to share with the class.
- Work with the students to come up with a definition for sin that is similar to “things that we know we shouldn’t do that hurts our relationship with God.” Remember the flowers that turned their face towards the light. When we sin we know that we have done badly and we don’t want to be in the light where God can see our sin, so we turn away. What does the passage that we read say about what we should do about sin? (Admit our sin and ask forgiveness).
- We all sin, but does that mean that it is okay? What happens when we sin? Write “The wages of sin are death” on the board. This is what Jesus says about sin. It is a pretty big deal.
- Take a clear cup full of tea and show the kids how the light has a hard time getting all the way through the water. This represent venial sins or sins about small things, like lying to keep from getting in trouble or disrespecting your parents.
- Then hold up a clear glass of coffee and show how no light can penetrate the liquid. That is because the sin is so bad that we really want to hide it from God. This represents mortal sins like murder or lying to ruin someone’s reputation.
- Ask the students how they feel about seeing the sins like this. (they should feel sad or worried)
- Tell them at Jesus though knew about how hard it is to stay away from sin. He was tempted by the devil for 40 days in the desert after all. He was able to resist the temptation because He was so close to God and always thinking about God. But He

knows that we are still growing towards that same closeness with God so He made a way for us to be forgiven of our sins so that we don't have to be separated from God forever and receive death for our sins.

- Have a student or two hold the glasses under the faucet and turn it on full blast so the liquid overflows out of the glasses until there is only clear liquid. This represents Reconciliation, the sacrament they received for the first time last year. It helps to clear our soul from sin and strengthens us to avoid sin in the future.
- The students have already received their First Reconciliation, but is it a sacrament we, as Catholics, should only receive once? (No!)
- Reiterate that Reconciliation is important for forgiving sins and helping us turn back towards the light of God's love and really soak up His Grace. It is also really important for preparing to receive any other sacraments, like Confirmation and First Eucharist at the end of this year and Marriage or Holy Orders further down the road.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Besides those reasons it is a wonderful gift from God. He knows that sinning does not make us feel good and He knows that if we had to live with the consequences of our sin that we could never be with Him in Heaven. Next class we are going to talk a little bit about Heaven and how we can follow the Saints to get there.
- Complete the Review Page†
- Closing prayer

Bring it Home:

- Perform an examination of conscience† with you family
- Share Review Page with their families
- Read their saint book and write in saint journal

Lesson 9: Following the Saints

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 32nd Week in Ordinary Time (around All Saints)

Church Teaching: ““We believe in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church; and we believe that in this communion, the merciful love of God and his saints is always [attentive] to our prayers” (Paul VI, CPG§ 30).” (CCC 962)

Materials:

- Crayons
- Saint Stories

Lesson Goals:

- Students will be able to define a saint and relate to events in their lives and apply the paths the saints took to heaven to their own life.

Central Question(s): What will Heaven be like? How can the saints help us to get to heaven?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer.
- John 14: 1-7

Lesson:

- Sponge: What do you imagine Heaven will be like? (Have them draw this in the top box of the Stairway to Heaven worksheet † or on a paper the right size to be pasted to it.)
- Gather the students on the carpet for student led prayer and the reading. As you are reading have the students close their eyes and imagine the scene. Give them some background – telling them Jesus was with his disciples in the upper room before the Last Supper. It is a small room and everyone is sitting close to Jesus. Think about how it might feel to be in Jesus’s presence. Think about how it feels to have Him say these things to you.
- After reading ask the students how they felt while putting themselves in the room with Jesus. What does Jesus say about Heaven? (He has a place for us all there) How can we get to Heaven? (Follow Him).
- Jesus says that Heaven is His Father’s house. Can you imagine what it would be like to live in God’s house?! Think about how it felt to imagine being close to Jesus and have Him talk to you. Someday, if we can get to Heaven, that will be every day! Wouldn’t that be amazing!
- Play *That Where I Am There You May Also Be* by Rich Mullins <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KaKOYIKyqvc> or *Big House* by Audio Adrenalin <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vZb7j7Mqa0>. * Encourage the children to get up and dance to the music.
- So did any of you picture saints in your image of Heaven? Saints are something that I think about whenever I think of Heaven. We know a little bit about saints since we have

been reading their stories in our book bags. What do you think makes a person a saint? (Take answers. Some of the students might know, or they might talk about the things that saints do in life to become saints. That is fine, just say something like “yes, many of the saints do have very deep prayer lives”). Define a saint as “Someone who loves and follows God and is with Him in Heaven.”

- So a saint is someone who the Church can say is in Heaven with God. That is wonderful news for us because it means that we know people who have paved a path to Heaven and we can follow in their footsteps.
- When we look at the stories of the saints they all have very different stories, but often they have similar habits or behaviors. These habits and behaviors are things that we can try to use in our own lives so that we can join the saints in Heaven when we die. (ex. All saints pray. Have the students write a prayer in the bottom box “stair” on their worksheet)
- Have the students work in partners or small groups to talk about other things the saints that they have read about have done that they think helped them get to heaven. Have them fill out the rest of the stairs with these habits and behaviors of the saints.
- If there is time have a few groups share.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- If there is time have a few groups share what they wrote on their stairs.
- Complete Review Page †
- Student led closing prayer. The catechist can hand out a prayer that they like that was written by a saint and follow the student led prayer by reading that with the class.

Bring it Home:

- Share Review Page with their families
- Read their saint book and write in saint journal. (maybe review your journal this week because we will be talking about your favorite saint and looking at their stories)

Notes: *I like the Rich Mullins song a little better because it takes the words right from the bible and also doesn't focus so much on the material elements like the Audio Adrenalin song.

Lesson 10: Choosing a Patron Saint

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 33rd Week in Ordinary Time

Church Teaching: “The patron saint provides a model of charity; we are assured of his intercession.” (CCC 2156)

Materials:

- Computer paper (the old kind where the pages are stuck together is best, but you can use long paper or just tape a few pages together as well)
- Saint images (cards, statues, books, pictures, etc.)
- Crayons / markers/ colored pencils

Lesson Goals: Students will be able to pray to saints who inspire them and begin to think about which saint they would like to make their patron at Confirmation.

Central Question(s): How can the saints intercede for us in Heaven? Why is a patron saint important?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer.
- Revelation 6: 9-11

Lesson:

- Sponge: What saint story that you have read so far have you liked the most? What has inspired you in their stories?
- Gather the children on the ground for the prayer and bible reading. Have the students close their eyes and imagine the scene. Discuss – who do you think the people talking to God were in this story? (Saints, many saints are martyr and died for their faith). Isn't it amazing to think that the saints can talk directly to God like that?
- So we have been talking a little bit about saints. What are some of our favorite saints that we have read about this year? (Let all students share). The catechist can share a short picture book or tell a story about their favorite saint. *
- The saints are so important in our lives. Remember from last class about how we can follow their example and take their stairway to heaven. They are people just like us who worked very hard to be close to God. They are also special and important because we can ask the saints to pray for us. Since they are so close to God and in Heaven with Him, their prayers can be especially powerful. They can talk directly to God, just like we saw in the bible reading.
- When you were baptized your parents gave you a name. This year, at your Confirmation you have the opportunity to take on a name of a saint. When you share a name with a saint they become your special patron (does anyone know what patron means? A person who prays very hard for you and takes care of you). So we are going to start thinking about what saint we might want to pick to help us get to Heaven.
- Hand out supplies for the saint paper doll chain. While they cut out the paper set up saint statues or saint cards or images of some sort in one area in the room. Tell students that

they can go borrow a saint image so they can copy their likeness on one of their paper dolls. Write a short sentence on the back of each saint that tells why the student likes or is inspired by that saint.

- Pass out the Litany of Saints sheet † for the students to write the names of the saints whose likeness they created.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- So you all are going to continue to read about the lives of different saints in your Saint Book Bags all through the year. If you find another saint you like, or one you like best you can add it to your Litany of Saints so that you can remember to ask for their prayers.
- Complete Review Page †
- Student led closing prayer

Bring it Home:

- Share Review Page with families
- Read Saint Book Bags and write in saint journal.

Notes: *catechists can also read or tell about St. Thérèse the Little Flower and her elevator to heaven to connect to last class.

Lesson 11: Serving Christ

Grade Level: 3rd

Liturgical Week: Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Church Teaching: “Intrinsically linked to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry is its character as service. Entirely dependent on Christ who gives mission and authority, ministers are truly “slaves of Christ,” in the image of him who freely took “the form of a slave” for us. Because the word and grace of which they are ministers are not their own, but are given to them by Christ for the sake of others, they must freely become the slaves of all.” (CCC 876)

Materials:

- Papers with scenarios on them.
- Notebook paper
- Pencils

Lesson Goals: Students will be able to develop a strategy for serving Christ when they give to others. They will be able to participate in a service project in which they give of their own time or treasure (toys or clothes or allowance money in the case of children).

Central Questions: Why do we serve? What are things we can do as children to serve others?

Daily Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer
- Matthew 25: 31-40

Lesson:

- Sponge: What are some ways that you serve others?
- Review/ Set-up: “The past few weeks we talked about the saints. One thing we noticed about many of the saints was that they did charitable work, or served the poor somehow. Today we are going to talk about serving Jesus, who we recognize this week as the King of the Universe, through serving people here on earth.”
- Gather the children on the floor for the prayer and bible reading (this is a good reading for *Lectio Divina*). Have the children share the word, phrase, or image that popped out to them (with a partner, with the class).
- What is Jesus saying about service in this story? (We serve Jesus when we serve others). What are some ways that they already serve others? (Share the sponge).
- It becomes easier to serve others when we can see Jesus in everyone we meet. Show the picture of



the Jesus as a Homeless Man statue. <http://imago-arts.org/jesus-the-homeless/> Have the kids discuss what they see. Point out the holes in the feet. Who is this? (Jesus.) What idea is this statue trying to convey? (Jesus is present in the poor and the homeless. When we help the poor we help Jesus.) So the most important part of service is to recognize the needs of others and recognize the Jesus in them.

- Present this scenario to the class. There is a kid, Jeremy, in your class who is really gross. He wears the same clothes every day and smells like he never takes a shower. Nobody wants to play with him. Does this person have Jesus in him? Are we able to see Jesus? It may not be easy, but every person is a special creation of God's. He loves every single one of us and lives in all of our souls whether we know it or not. So one day you see Jeremy sitting alone at lunch like normal, but today you notice that he doesn't have any food. You just got your lunch and have some nice chicken tenders, an apple sauce, some carrots, a dinner roll, and cold chocolate milk. You are hungry and looking forward to eating your lunch. But can you ignore Jeremy and let him be alone and hungry? What do you do? (Have the kids discuss in partners or groups then pick two children to come up and act out the scene.)
- Send them in pairs of at least two around to the service centers to help them practice seeing Jesus and serving others by doing the same sort of activity. Have a story at each station that requires the student to notice something and do something to help. Have the students brain storm an answer and then act it out in their group.
- (examples of scenarios) †

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Have each group share one scenario and their solution with the class.
- Complete the Review Page†
- Introduce the Secret Service † project. Encourage the students to bring the sheet back next week to share some of their ideas with the class.
- Student led closing prayer

Bring it Home:

- Secret Service (Advent Calendar)
- Share Review Page with family
- Read saint book and write in saint journal

Lesson 12: Jesus and the Children

Grade Level: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 1st Week of Advent

Church Teaching: “Remain simple and innocent, and you will be like little children who do not know the evil that destroys man’s life.” (CCC 2517)

Materials:

- Poster Board
- Markers / crayons / colored pencils

Lesson Goals:

- The children will apply the respect Jesus had for children to qualities they and their friends possess. They will create Public Service Announcements for the adults of the parish, teaching them how to be more childlike.

Central Questions: What qualities of children does Jesus praise? How can we help adults to gain these qualities?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer
- Matthew 18:1-5

Lesson:

- Sponge: How are children better than adults?
- Review/ Set-up: “Jesus had a special affection for children. He often instructed adults in his time to become more like children. So we are going to talk about what Jesus loved so much about children today and make some posters to help the adults of the parish learn how to be more like you guys.”
- Gather the children for the opening prayer and the bible reading. Have the children close their eyes and imagine they are the child Jesus shows the disciples.
- This is not the only time in the Gospels that Jesus praises little children. Why do you think He does this? What qualities do children have that make them so special to Jesus?
- Make a two column table on the board. Write the qualities Jesus praised about children on the left.
- How might these qualities be better than some of the things adults do? List things adults do in the right column.
- Jesus tells us in the bible story that we need to “change and become like little children” we cannot enter the Kingdom. You are lucky because you don’t have to change so much, you already are children! So you need to help us adults out. We are going to create posters for the adults. Hand out the “Be Like Children” Poster Assignment † and go over the requirements.
- Split the class into groups of four and have them create a poster for a quality of children the class talked about.

Children	Adults

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Let the groups share in the end and find a good place in the church to hang the posters so that the adults can see them.
- Complete the Review Page †
- Student led closing prayer

Bring it Home:

- Share Review Page with family
- Read saint book and write in saint journal



Lesson 13: Recalling Baptism

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: Baptism of the Lord

Church Teaching: “Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*) and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission” (CCC 1213).

Materials:

- Baptism Realia (basin, shell/pitcher, candle, oil, white garment, etc.)
- Baby doll
- Outside Inside booklet †

Lesson Goals: Students will depict the purpose and symbols of the Sacrament of baptism.

Central Question(s): What is the purpose of baptism? What do the signs and symbols tell about the spiritual change in the sacrament?

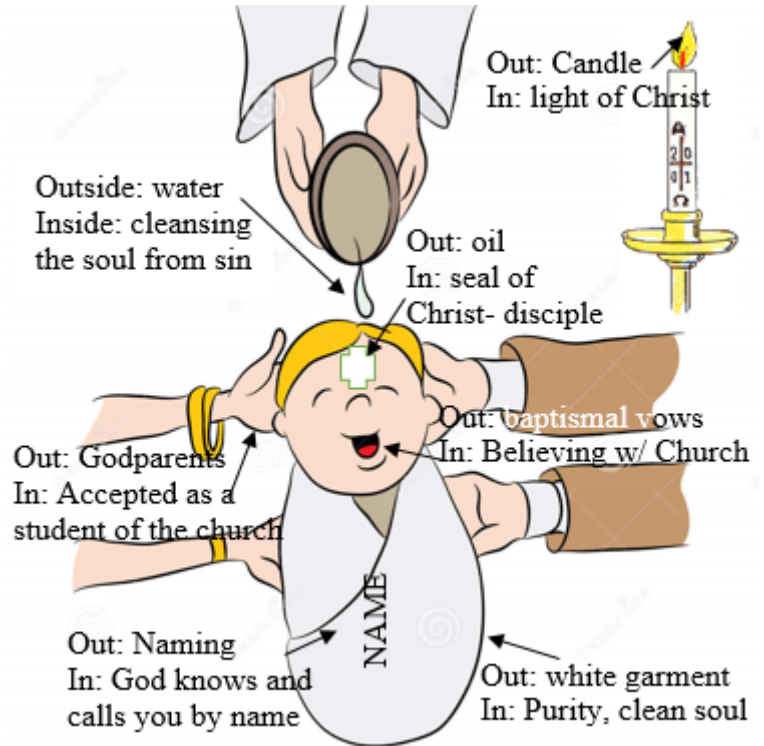
Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer
- Ephesians 1:3-14

Lesson:

- Sponge: What is the purpose of Baptism?
- Review/ Set-up: “This week we celebrate the baptism of our Lord Jesus. Baptism is a very important sacrament that you have all received. Today we are going to talk a little bit about what makes baptism so special and look at some of important symbols involved.”
- Gather the students on the floor the opening prayer and bible reading (practice *Lectio Divina*). What did you notice? Does this passage have anything to do with baptism?
- Ask the kids if any of them have seen a baptism. What does a baptism look like? (Water, anointing, white garment, candle, godparents, etc.). If many of the students have not seen a baptism they remember then show them this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ed6kN6rxsv0>, start it at 1:33 to shorten it.* Write these things on the board in a straight vertical list (they may say things like we are washed from sin, and that is wonderful, recognize it, but don’t write it on the board just yet, you will get back to that). “So these are all things that happen on the outside, so we are going to talk about what happens on the inside. We are physical beings, we have bodies, and we see things and feel things with our bodies, right? What else do we have that you can’t see? (A soul). God knows this about us, so He gives us the great gifts of the sacraments that have things happening physically, on the outside, but these things are symbols that help us to understand what is happening on the inside, to our souls. Isn’t that wonderful! So we are going to explore the outward signs and symbols of baptism and what they represent for our souls.” Create a two column table with the list of physical signs on the left and a space of spiritual changes on the right.

- Hand out the Outside Inside booklets and walk through each outward sign. “The flowing water over the baby’s head is the most recognizable sign of baptism. What are some things we use water for? (Bathing, washing hands). Since water is often used for cleaning, that is what it represents in our souls too. The water represents God cleansing our souls of original sin.” Let the student color the piece you are talking about and then write what the internal, spiritual change is on the inside page. Follow this procedure for every symbol. Some of the symbols may just need to be told to the children if a connection to their lives is not explicit (for example they may not know that white is the color of purity, and they most likely will not know that oil is the sign of sealing something).
- Draw a picture like the children have on the sheets on the board and label it like they will.



Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Have the children share their favorite symbol with a partner and with the whole class.
- Complete Review Page †
- Next class we are going to talk about the sacrament of Confirmation. It is the completion of baptism and the second step in the initiation process, the process of becoming full members of the Church. Talk to your families this week about what they think initiation means. You can also talk to them about the purpose of Confirmation to prepare for next class.

Bring it Home:

- Discuss initiation and Confirmation with families
- Share Review Page with family
- Read saint book and write in saint journal

Notes: * If you do not have access to video playing technology, you can also bring in materials used in baptism (a basin of water, a shell or pitcher, a little jug of oil, a white garment, a candle, etc.) and walk through the process of baptism with a doll. You can have the kids name the doll and ask for two volunteers to pretend to be the dolls godparents. Even if you do have the resources to play the video in the class you may decide that your kids will respond better to this presentation.

Lesson 14: Confirmation

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 2nd Week in Ordinary Time

Church Teaching: “the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For “by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit.” (CCC 1285)

“By its very nature infant Baptism requires a post-baptismal catechumenate. Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth.” (CCC 1231)

Materials:

- Cookie dough (See references for recipes that can stand up to molding and remolding)

Lesson Goals: Students will draw connections between Confirmation and Baptism. They will illustrate the idea of being molded in the image of Christ.

Central Question(s): What is the purpose of Confirmation? What does it mean to be molded in the image of Christ?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer
- Jeremiah 18:1-6

Lesson:

- Sponge: What do you think the purpose of Confirmation is?
- Review/ Set-up: “Last week we talked about Baptism. This week we are going to be talking about a sacrament that is closely linked to baptism, Confirmation. We are going to talk about some of the effects of Confirmation and of initiation in general.”
- Gather the students on the floor for the opening prayer and bible reading. Pass around a chunk of clay as you read.
- Have the students share their sponge answers with a partner and then with the class. These answers can be written on the board. Ask what the children think this bible reading had to do with Confirmation?
- “We talked a little bit last class about the seal of Christ that is put on our souls at baptism. Have any of you seen an old seal? (Show a picture or real seal). It is a symbol put on a letter or important paper that shows who wrote the letter or who the letter belongs to. So some people like to think of this kind of seal on our souls when we are baptized. We have the image of Christ stamped onto our souls which shows that God made us and that we belong to Him, are part of His family. But there is another way to think of it. An old thinker in the Church preferred to image this seal, not so much as a small picture stamped on our souls, but rather our souls being *molded into* the image of Christ. This can be a way to understand Confirmation. At baptism we are marked as part of God’s family and as disciples or students of God with the Oil of Catechumens. At Confirmation we are

anointed again, this time with a different oil that marks our growth, showing how we have been molded and will continue to be molded by God until we are like Christ.”

- Hand out about a tablespoon of cookie dough to each child.* They are not to eat it yet. Give them some time to create an image of themselves in the dough. It doesn't need to be perfect, it could be face or a body (some classes may need more structure, in which case you can tell them to create a figure like a gingerbread man or just a face with features).
- Talk about how God loves them so much and took so much time and care to create them to be just perfect. Have the children think about 3 things they like about themselves, things that they do that makes God happy. Have them write these down on their Being Molded † sheet and share with a partner or with the class.



- Ask them if they have ever heard that Jesus told us to “be perfect – just as your Father in Heaven is perfect.” Are there things we can do better? Always! We are always growing. Think about three areas where we can grow. (They may need examples. Can they pray more often? Can they be nicer to their brothers and sisters or parents? Etc.) Have them write these things down. They can share if they are comfortable, but they shouldn't be forced.
- When they try to do things that please God they are helping God to mold them into the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit, which they received at baptism and which they will receive again, in a deeper way at Confirmation, is such a great help in this journey to be more like Christ. Have a prayer of the Holy Spirit up on the board.** Lead them in prayer in this prayer as they remold their dough into the figure of a cross.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Hand out a copy of the Prayer of the Holy Spirit for the students to glue into their prayer books. Whenever they need strength to make the right decisions they can pray to the Holy Spirit in these words or something similar, and the Holy Spirit will help them.
- Complete Review Page †
- Gather the children for a student led closing prayer and choose a student to lead next class. You may also end by praying again the Prayer of the Holy Spirit.

Bring it Home:

- Pray for the strength of Holy Spirit with their families
- Share Review Page with family
- Read saint book and write in saint journal

Notes: *It may be wise to line the tables with parchment paper for sanitary reasons and make clean-up easier.

** Either the traditional Prayer of the Holy Spirit or this simplified version for children if you think they need it “Come Holy Spirit, I need You. Come Holy Spirit I pray. Come with Your Strength and Your power. Come in Your own special way.”

Lesson 15: Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 3rd Week of Ordinary Time

Church Teaching: “Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear in God’s presence. Guard what you have received. God the Father has marked you with his sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed his pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts.” (CCC 1303)

Materials:

- Gifts of the Holy Spirit Vocabulary Cards †
- Saint Stories †

Lesson Goals: Students will be able to apply an understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the lives and actions of saints and then apply the actions to their own lives.

Central Question(s): How did the saints use the gifts of the Holy Spirit? How can I use them in my own life?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer.
- Isaiah 11: 2-9

Lesson:

- Sponge: What gifts do you get from God?
- Review and Set-up: “Last class we talked about Confirmation. What is Confirmation again? (take a few quick answers). Well something else very special about Confirmation is that you get some special gifts from God and the Holy Spirit. We are going to talk about those today, and look at some saints and how they used these special gifts in their lives.”
- Gather the students for the prayer and bible reading. Tell them to listen closely and see if they can find the gifts that God gives in this passage.
- Ask the students what they think God was giving. Write it on the board. Draw their attention to the gifts of wisdom and knowledge. Reread the first sentence if they need help.
- Have them share their sponge answers. Did anyone think of something like knowledge or wisdom as gifts for God?
- Tell the children that there are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit that are given to them at baptism then strengthened in Confirmation: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord (wonder and awe). Write them on the board and circle the first 4. Those are what you are going to talk about today. The last three you will get to next class.
- Pull out the Gifts of the Holy Spirit Vocabulary Cards and show the first one to the class. Follow the script on the back to lead them in discussion and understanding of the words.

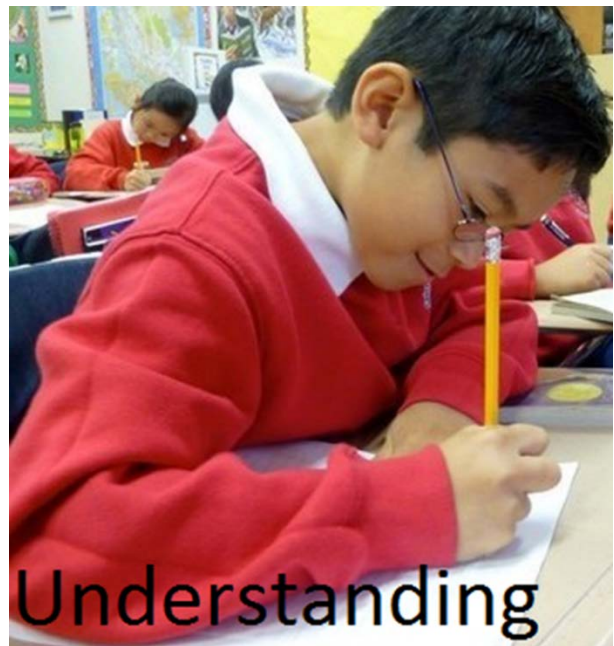
- Set up the four Saint Stories around the room and have the students move through stations, read the saint stories and then act a scenario when they could use the gift as well.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Have each group share their answers and thoughts for the station where they ended.
- Complete Review Page †
- Gather the children for a student led closing prayer and choose a student to lead next class. You may also end by praying again the Prayer of the Holy Spirit.

Bring it Home:

- Using These Gifts at Home † sheet
- Have the students do one activity over the week that exemplifies each gift.
- Read saint book and write in saint journal.



Lesson 16: Gifts of the Holy Spirit Part II

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 4th Week in Ordinary Time

Church Teaching: “Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear in God’s presence. Guard what you have received. God the Father has marked you with his sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed his pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts.” (CCC 1303)

Materials:

- Gifts of the Holy Spirit Vocabulary Cards †
- Saint Stories †

Lesson Goals: Students will be able to apply an understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the lives and actions of saints and then apply the actions to their own lives.

Central Question(s): How did the saints use the gifts of the Holy Spirit? How can I use them in my own life?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer
- Matthew 6: 5-16

Lesson:

- Sponge: Can you recall the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit that we talked about last class?
- Review and Set-up: “So last class we introduced the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit, but we only talked about 4 of them. Can anyone remember any of the gifts we talked about or any of the ones we didn’t?” Have them share their sponges until you have all the gifts they can remember on the board. If they forgot some remind them and write them up on the board. Circle fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord. “We are going to talk about these today.
- Gather the students on the floor to read the bible story. Have them listen carefully for which gift the reading might be talking about. They might not be able to figure it out and that is okay. Have each guess when the reading is over.
- Pull out the Gifts of the Holy Spirit Vocabulary Cards † and show the first one to the class. Follow the script on the back to lead them in discussion and understanding of the words.
- Set up the four Saint Stories † around the room and have the students move through stations, read the saint stories and then act a scenario when they could use the gift as well.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Have each group share their answers and thoughts for the station where they ended.
- Complete Review Page †

- Gather the children for a student led closing prayer and choose a student to lead next class. You may also end by praying again the Prayer of the Holy Spirit.

Bring it Home:

- Using These Gifts at Home † sheet
- Have the students do one activity over the week that exemplifies each gift.
- Read saint book and write in saint journal.



Lesson 17: Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 5th Week of Ordinary Time

Church Teaching: “The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: “charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self- control, chastity.”” (CCC 1832)

Materials:

- Crayons
- Glue/tape
- Tree outline †
- Fruit shaped pieces of paper to put on the tree †

Lesson Goals: Students will name the fruits of the Holy Spirit and apply their use to their own lives.

Central Question(s): What are the fruits of the Holy Spirit? How can we use them in our lives?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer
- Galatians 5: 16-26

Lesson:

- Sponge: What is something you did last week that exemplified one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?
- Review and Set-up: “The last two weeks we have been talking about the Gifts of the Holy Spirit that you received at baptism and that you will receive more deeply in Confirmation. You also should have been talking with your families about ways that you can use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to become more saint-like. Beyond what you guys have written we have a special list of traits that flow from the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are called the Fruits of the Holy Spirit.”
- Gather the students to read the bible story. Have them listen carefully and see if they can find anywhere that the reading talks about the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. Have them guess and write up all the answers.
- When they are finished guessing mark all the correct answers and ask the students if they know what they mean. If they do, work as a class to create a definition that makes sense to them. They also might come up with an example. If they don’t know, tell them in kid-friendly language.
- Discuss why they think they are called Fruits of the Holy Spirit. Possible answers: They are good for you like fruits, they grow on our trees of faith, etc.
- Hand out the tree outlines and the pieces of fruit paper. Explain that they should write one fruit of the spirit on each fruit paper. They should define it in their own words and write an example of what the fruit would look like in their lives on the back. They can

glue or tape one edge of the fruit to the tree outline so they can still flip it over to see the back.*

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- If there is time, the students can have a chance to share their trees and examples with the whole class.
- Complete Review Page †
- Pass out Reminder to Parents † if applicable (if you are inviting parents to see the kid's perform the Reader's Theater next class)

Bring it Home:

- Complete the Fruits of the Spirit at Home † sheet
- Complete the Baptism and Confirmation Review †
- Share Review Page with family
- Read saint book and write in saint journal

Notes: * An alternate activity could be splitting the children up into 12 groups and assign each group one Fruit. Have them come up with an example of how the using the Fruit would look in their lives. Give each group a minute or two to act out a scenario for the class.



Lesson 18: Biblical History the of Eucharist

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 1st Week of Lent

Church Teaching: “The wonderful works of God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God.” (CCC 1067)

Materials:

- Pita or other kind of unleavened bread
- Dixi cups of red juice for each student
- Reader's Theater Script †
- Props listed in script

Lesson Goals: Students will experience and display the way that the Eucharistic feast has been foreshadowed through biblical history.

Central Question(s): What is Jesus offering us in the Eucharist?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer
- Matthew 26: 26-30

Lesson:

- Sponge: What is the most important or most special part of the Mass?
- Review and Set-up: “At the end of this year, you all will receive the sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist. We have talked about Confirmation a little bit, and receiving this sacrament and all its gifts will help to prepare you to receive the most wonderful sacrament of all, the Eucharist! Today we are going to be introduced to what the Eucharist is all about.”



- Gather the students on the floor to say the prayer and read the bible passage. As you read, act out the story with the bread (breaking off pieces for the students) and wine (passing out the dixi cups).
- Have the students share their sponge answers. There are many special and important parts of the mass, but the Eucharist is most important because it is the place where Jesus offers us His own Body and Blood for our salvation.

- Pass out the Reader's Theater script, assign roles and read through it once as a class. Discuss how Jesus came and fulfilled so many promises made by God to the people of the Old Testament. And God loved us so much that he wanted to let us know what His Son would do when He did come, so he gave us hints all through biblical history.



- Split up the students into groups based on scene and let them practice. As they practice, walk around and ask them questions about how they think their scene is connected to the Eucharist. Help them with answers if they don't know.
- If you have invited the parents to come see the little performance gather the students to practice all together one last time before parents come.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Complete the Review Page † with the students.
- Invite the parents to come see the students perform the script. It won't be perfect, but the kids and parents would still enjoy it.
- End in a student led prayer

Bring it Home:

- Talk to parents about why they love the Eucharist
- Share Review Page with family
- Read saint book and write in saint journal

Alternative Ideas for Ambitious Catechist:

- Catechist with ambition and time can skip the Reader's Theater and take the students on a journey instead. You can set the room up with a spot for each moment in biblical history that foreshadows the Eucharist (Abraham and his almost sacrifice of Isaac, the Passover in Egypt, Manna in the dessert, the feeding of the 5,000 Last Supper) and take the kids through each scene with things they can eat and manipulate to help them feel more like part of the scene. Read the bible story or have some volunteers sit at each station to tell the story. This would take much more planning and preparation, but it is something the kids would really enjoy. Use the [Eucharistic Journey Guide †](#) to help you prepare.



Lesson 19: Why Bread and Wine?

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 2nd Week of Lent

Church Teaching: “In the Old Covenant bread and wine were offered in sacrifice among the first fruits of the earth as a sign of grateful acknowledgment to the Creator. But they also received a new significance in the context of the Exodus: the unleavened bread that Israel eats every year at Passover commemorates the haste of the departure that liberated them from Egypt; the remembrance of the manna in the desert will always recall to Israel that it lives by the bread of the Word of God; their daily bread is the fruit of the promised land, the pledge of God’s faithfulness to his promises.” (CCC 1363)

Materials:

- Unleavened Bread Recipe and Ingredients (flour, oil, salt, water)
- Red juice

Lesson Goals: The students will make the connection between a family meal and the Eucharist, to better understand the communal and nurturing nature of the Eucharist.

Central Question(s): Why would Jesus choose bread and wine to symbolize his sacrifice and gift to humanity?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer
- John 6: 47-58

Lesson:

- Sponge: Think about a time when you had a big family meal. How did it feel to share a meal with the people you love?
- Review and Set Up: “So when we see the Eucharist during Mass we just see bread and wine. But is that really what the Eucharist is? (Wait for answers, some students may know that it is actually the body and blood of Jesus). When the priest says the prayers over the bread and wine they actually become the real body and blood of Jesus! But it doesn’t look like body and blood does it? What is special about bread and wine, that Jesus made them the symbol for his great sacrifice and gift to us? That’s what we are going to talk about today.”
- Gather the students for the prayer and gospel reading (Lectio Divina style). Ask the students what they think. What word or phrase stuck out to them while listening? Ask them why they think Jesus wants to be seen as the bread of life and not something like the toy of life or the blanket of life? What is special about bread and wine?
- Have a few share their sponge answers, this may help them make a connection. Bread and wine were the main things eaten in Jesus’s day. They kept people alive and healthy, but they also brought people together to share meals. That is why Eucharist is sometimes called Communion, because we gather as a community to share a meal.

- Go over the recipe and break the students up into groups of four. Each group member should be assigned a job using the recipe † as a guideline.
- As the bread is cooking take time to start conversations about the student's lives, or other casual conversations. Make sure they are feeling the community.
- Everyone should sit on the floor or around a table where everyone can sit to share the bread. Continue the casual conversation. The kids will probably take over, but make sure everyone is included. Parents may be invited to eat as well.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- How does what we did today connect with the Eucharist?
- Fill out Review Page †
- Student led prayer

Bring it Home:

- Share Review Page with family
- Read saint book and write in saint journal



Lesson 20: Magnificat – How to Respond to Eucharist?

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 3rd Week of Lent

Church Teaching: “The Holy Spirit prepared Mary by his grace. It was fitting that the mother of him in whom “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” should herself be “full of grace.” She was, by sheer grace, conceived without sin as the most humble of creatures, the most capable of welcoming the inexpressible gift of the Almighty. It was quite correct for the angel Gabriel to greet her as the “Daughter of Zion”: “Rejoice.” It is the thanksgiving of the whole People of God, and thus of the Church, which Mary in her canticle lifts up to the Father in the Holy Spirit while carrying within her the eternal Son.” (CCC 722)

Materials:

- Unleavened Bread
- Smallish Pretty bowl

Lesson Goals: The students will list and demonstrate ways to respond to the Eucharist.

Central Question(s): What is the Eucharist and how should we respond to it?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer
- Luke 1: 39-56

Lesson:

- Sponge: How do you think people feel when they receive the Eucharist, the body and blood of Jesus?
- Review and Set-up: Start with some review questions about what the Eucharist is. “What is the Eucharist? Is it just bread and wine? What does the Eucharist do for us? (Helps build our community, nourishes our bodies and souls). So does the Eucharist seem pretty important and special? How should we receive the Eucharist then? Should we be bored and sad, or excited and joyful? Today we are going to look at how Mary felt and what she did when she was first with Jesus.”
- Gather the students on the floor for the prayer and for the bible reading. It is a long one so it would be best to take it in small chunks. Use the Sharing the Magnificat † as a guide for when to stop, how to reengage the students, and how to check for understanding.
- Have the students share their answers to the sponge question. Compare their answers to how Mary reacted to receiving Christ.
- Give the students a chance to role play how they should feel when receiving the Eucharist. If they attend Mass on a regular basis they should be familiar with the procedure for receiving Eucharist (standing in line, bowing, responding with “Amen,”



holding out their hand or tongue reverently). Write these steps on the board so the students can follow it.

- You can play the part of the EMHC or you can assign a student to it. Show the students an example of a reverent and joyful reaction to the Eucharist. You can have half the class line up and role play and the other half of the class critique the reactions. The students should be reverent, but also joyful. It is a very special and important part of the Mass.
- If time permits you can talk about how to take the Eucharist and these feelings of wonder and joy outside of church. How are ways that we might show people through our actions that we have Jesus inside of us?

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- You can come up with consensus in the class, a sentence or two that describes, in the student's words, the best way to respond to receiving the Eucharist.
- Fill out Review Page.†
- Student led closing prayer.

Bring it Home:

- How I Can Live the Eucharist at Home † worksheet with families
- Share Review Page with family
- Read saint book and write in saint journal

Lesson 21: Adoration – Being in God’s Presence

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 4th Week of Lent

Church Teaching: “Adoration is the first act of the virtue of religion. To adore God is to acknowledge him as God, as the Creator and Savior, the Lord and Master of everything that exists, as infinite and merciful Love.” (CCC 2096)

Materials:

- Zig Zag Fold papers †
- Crayons
- Card Stock or construction paper
- Glue

Lesson Goals: The students will analyze adoration and its importance. They will artistically depict Christ’s true presence in the Eucharist.

Central Question(s): How does adoration let us be in Jesus’s presence?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer
- Luke 10: 38-42

Lesson:

- Sponge: “Have you ever been to Eucharistic Adoration? If yes, what was it like? If no, what do you think it is?”
- Review and Set-up: Put the words Eucharistic Adoration in big letters up on the board. Ask the students if they know what it means or what it is? Some might have been to Eucharistic Adoration and they will already be thinking about it from the sponge so this would be a good time to have them share. Break down the words. Pull out “Eucharist” they should know what that is, but ask anyway as review. Pull out “Adore” and ask if they know what that means. Show this image:



<http://www.whitehorseblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/ChildrensAdoration.jpg>

and explain that inside the gold “monstrance” is the body of Christ, the bread after it has been blessed by the priest and changed into the body of Christ by the power of God. People like to sit and be with the body of Christ, because it is like sitting at the feet of Jesus.

- Gather the students on the floor for the prayer and bible reading. Have them think about the idea of Eucharistic Adoration that they just talked about as they listen. How might this story help us understand why it is important to help us grow closer to Jesus? Give the students time to answer after the reading. Remind the children it is good to serve Jesus the way Martha did, but it is also really important to just be with Him, because Jesus wants a relationship with us. He wants to sit and talk to us. We need to take time to sit at his feet as well.
- Pass out the materials and read the directions for the zig zag fold Eucharist activity †. See if they can guess what the picture will look like once it’s all folded and glued. Use the rest of the time to complete the craft.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Discuss what the art project shows. Was it anything like they guessed? How can we use this as a reminder and as a help in preparing our souls to receive Jesus in the Eucharist?
- Fill out Review Page. †
- Student led closing prayer.

Bring it Home:

- Share Bleeding Host Stories † with families.
- Participate in Eucharistic Adoration with family.
- Share Review Page with family
- Read saint book and write in saint journal

Notes: It would be ideal to then to bring the class to a special adoration session. It doesn’t need to be long, maybe a half hour at the most. You can have them draw pictures, journal, pray, or just meditate with Jesus. This could be after the class time if parents are agreeable, parents could even be invited to join. Of it can be sometime before the next class session. The closer to this lesson the better, but if all else fails the children could also be given a special adoration session during their day retreat before their sacramental mass.



Lesson 22: Holy Thursday- Feet Washing and Agony in the Garden

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 5th Sunday of Lent

Church Teaching: “The Lord, having loved those who were his own, loved them to the end. Knowing that the hour had come to leave this world and return to the Father, in the course of a meal he washed their feet and gave them the commandment of love.” (CCC 1337)

“The cup of the New Covenant, which Jesus anticipated when he offered himself at the Last Supper, is afterwards accepted by him from his Father’s hands in his agony in the garden at Gethsemani, making himself “obedient unto death.”” (CCC 612)

Materials:

- Basins of water
- Towels

Lesson Goals: The students will list, experience, and analyze the traditions of the Holy Thursday mass and how they help us to understand the importance of the Eucharist.

Central Question(s): How can we follow Jesus’s command to “wash each other’s feet”?
How does Jesus’s agony in the garden help us to understand the great gift us the Eucharist?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer
- John 13: 1-17
- Matthew 26: 36-46

Lesson:


- Sponge: Have any of you been to a Holy Thursday Mass (with the washing of the feet?)
- Review and Set-up: “We are coming up on a very important time in the liturgical season.



Does anyone know what is coming up in the next few weeks? (Give the students time to answer, they may say Easter, and ask them if they know what happens in the three days just before Easter, some students may know). Easter is so special! It is the day we celebrate how Jesus rose from the dead! But the three days before are really special too, they are called The Holy Triduum (write this up on the board) it means the Holy three days. We have Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday (write this on the board). They are very important days when it comes to talking about the Eucharist. Today we are going to talk about Holy Thursday.” Take a poll of how many students have attended a Holy Thursday Mass before.

- Gather the students on the floor the bible readings. There are two readings and it should be told as a story of what happened on Holy Thursday. The Last Supper happens in

between the two bible stories listed. The children should already know this story from previous classes. You can have the children work together to retell the story of the Last Supper after the reading from John and before the reading from Matthew. While reading invite the children to imagine what it would be like to be in these scenes with Jesus. They will be experiencing a feet washing and sitting with Jesus in the garden later.

- Give the children an opportunity to share with their neighbor how they felt, what they saw, smelled, heard, etc.
- The classroom can be either set up with a space signifying the garden and a place for washing feet or you can bring those things out now (it would be simpler to have it already set up, but you might distract kids asking about it). Go to both stations and tell the students what they will be doing at each one. They should be broken up into groups of two or four (depending on how many washing basins you have).
- At the feet washing station they will be doing as Jesus commanded, washing each other's feet. When they are finished they should have some Feet Washing Discussion Questions † to talk about in their group.
- The other station should be set up with pillows of kneelers and a picture of Jesus in the garden. I like this picture  <http://period4paschalmysteryproject.weebly.com/uploads/2/5/4/3/25439623/182644227.png>, but any picture of this scene will do. The children should sit with Jesus and pray with Him, just like the disciples were asked to. They should have some In the Garden Thoughts and Questions † to think about and answer.
- Have half the class at each station at a time. Give them time to think, discuss, pray, and complete the activities then ask them to switch.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Gather the class back together and have each share one thing they thought about or one interesting thing they learned.
- Complete the Review Page. †
- Student led closing prayer.

Bring it Home:

- Washing the World's Feet † worksheet.
- Share Review Page with family
- Read saint book and write in saint journal

Lesson 23: The Stations of the Cross

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: Palm Sunday

Church Teaching: “In the Eucharist the Church is as it were at the foot of the cross with Mary, united with the offering and intercession of Christ” (CCC 1317)

Materials:

- Prayer booklets for each child †
- A light wooden cross (but big enough for every child to put a Band-Aid on it as well)
- At least one Band-Aid for each child.

Lesson Goals: The students will connect the sacrifice on the Cross to the Eucharist and Jesus’s great love for us expressed in the gift of His Body and Blood.

Central Question(s): How can Christ’s Passion help us to appreciate the Eucharist?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer
- Luke 23: 13-34

Lesson:

- Sponge: What happened to Jesus after the Last Supper and after He prayed in the garden?
- Review and Set-up: “This Sunday we hear the story of Jesus’s “Passion.” Does anyone know what we mean when we talk about His “Passion?” His Passion is the story of how He carried the cross and died for us. This story is so important because it is the biggest act of love ever given. God loves us so much that He came down to earth as Jesus and died for us! He would have done the same thing even if you were the only person on earth; that is how much He loves you. That is why it’s called His Passion, because He chose to suffer so much to show His great love for us. Jesus gave us the Eucharist to help us remember His death, His great sacrifice, and His love. So it is important to know the story that we are going to tell today, because it is the story we remember every Sunday when we come together to receive Jesus’s body and blood in the Eucharist.”
- Bring out the cross and the give each child a Band-Aid. You can have each child write their name, a prayer, or a sin on the Band-Aid and stick it to the cross. Pick one thing for the children to write. If you choose to have them write their names tell them it is because Jesus is thinking of each one of us when he carries His cross, and that we are called to walk with Him and carry our own crosses. If you have them write a prayer you can say that we should bring all our prayers to the foot of the cross. Because we can remember how much God loves us and know that He will give us what we need. If you have them write a sin, tell them it is because Jesus died for our sins. He carried all our sins with Him on His cross. It made it very heavy, but He did it because He loves us, and He wanted to free us from our sins so we could be with Him forever in heaven.

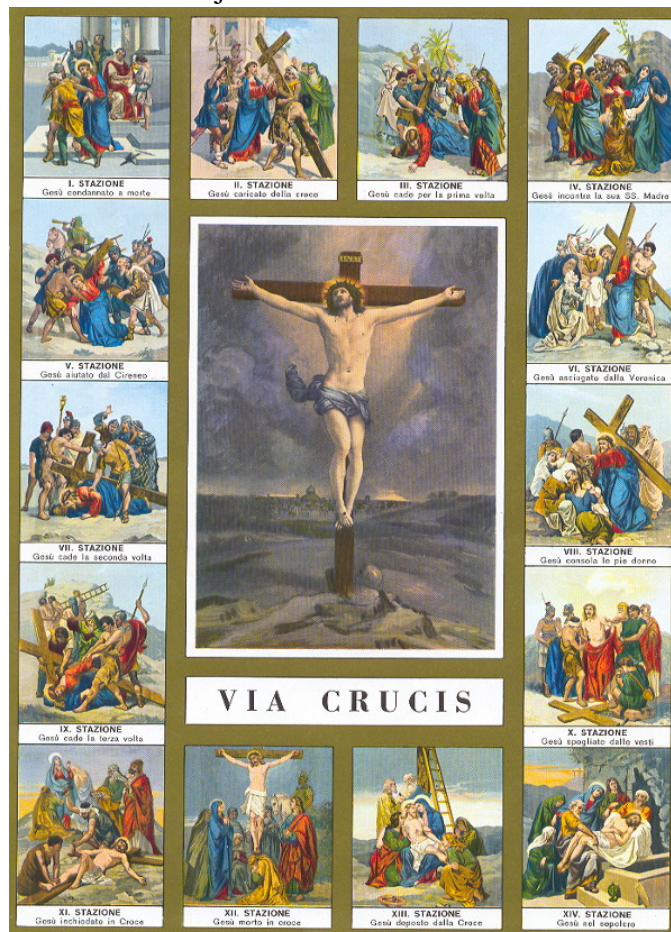
- When all the Band-Aids have been put on the cross, pass out the prayer booklets. Take the children and cross up to the sanctuary. Use the prayer booklets to guide the students through the Stations of the Cross inviting a different student to carry the cross from each station to the next.

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Take the students back to the classroom. If there is time invite each of them to share the station that touched them the most.
- Complete the Review Page. †
- Student led concluding prayer.

Bring it Home:

- Give the students instructions on how to make the File Folder Stations Matching Game † to make and play at home. If funds are available you could also give the students all the material needed as well.
- Invite the children to participate in a Stations of the Cross walk with their families as well.
- Complete Eucharist Review † in preparation for review games next class
- Share Review Page with family
- Read saint book and write in saint journal



Lesson 24: Review Games

Grade: 3rd

Liturgical Week: 3rd Sunday of Easter

Church Teaching: “CATECHESIS: An education of children, young people, and adults in the faith of the Church through the teaching of Christian doctrine in an organic and systematic way to make them disciples of Jesus Christ.” (CCC 869)

Materials:

- Fish snack (Gold Fish, Swedish Fish, etc.)
- Optional: Prizes for some of the games (little religious trinkets, holy medals, rosaries, prayer rocks, etc.)

Lesson Goals: Students will be able to test their knowledge through fun and engaging games.

Central Question(s): What have you learned this year?

Opening Prayer and Bible Passage:

- Student led prayer
- Matthew 4: 18-22

Lesson:

- Sponge: “What is the most interesting thing you have learned this year?”
- Gather the students on the floor for the prayer and reading. Pass around a bowl of some fish snack as you read. Tell the students that Jesus is calling each of them as well to be “fishers of men.” What do the children think that means? How can they use what they have learned this year to bring people to Christ?
- Review and Set-up- “We have learned so much this year together! You have all grown closer to God and I know that He is so happy to have spent this time with you. He is also so happy about all the time you will spend with Him in the future. Today we are going to take a look at all the things we learned and play some games to test your knowledge.”
- Have the students find a partner to work with or assign partners. Walk the students through each of the games and give them directions on how to play. Let them know that the directions will be at each station as well in case they forget. Assign each group a game. They will play at that station for 5 minutes, then they will rotate (make sure to specify clockwise or counter clockwise) and play another game. Specify a noise level so that you can remind them of it when they are getting a little loud.
- Send them off to play the games! Circulate around to help the children remember what they have learned and maybe play a game or two. Watch the clock to make sure they rotate every 5 minutes or so.
 - o Gifts of the Holy Spirit Matching Game
 - o Fruits of the Holy Spirit Concentration
 - o Stations of the Cross Ordering
 - o Eucharist Vocabulary Word Scramble

- Baptism Symbol Sort
- “Come Holy Spirit” Prayer Fill in the Blanks
- Our Father Fill in the Blanks

Reflection and Closing Prayer:

- Gather the students back together. Ask them to list all the things they have learned and done this year. Make the list on the board.
- Complement them again on how much they have learned.
- Remind them that Confirmation and First Eucharist are not the end, but rather the beginning of a deeper and stronger relationship with God. God loves them so much and wants them to keep growing closer to Him.
- Remind the children of the retreat, exit interviews (if applicable), the sacramental mass, rehearsal, and any other important events coming up.
- Fill out the last Review Page† and hand out any reminders for parents as well.
- Close in prayer. “Father, thank you for this wonderful year. We learned so much about your deep love and have grown closer to you in the process. Please help us to keep praying and reading your word so that we can continue to grow closer to you. Help us to prepare our souls to receive the strengthening of your Holy Spirit at Confirmation and the very Body and Blood of your Son Jesus in our First Eucharist. Thank you for blessing us with the great gift of community and friendship. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.” Or something similar.

Bring it Home:

- Share the Review Page with families

Appendix B

Worksheets

Catechists can find all the worksheets for every lesson in this appendix. All references made to a worksheet in the lesson plans are followed by a small cross symbol like this: “Review Page†.” The worksheets are organized by lesson number. For each lesson, you can find a short table of contents that tells you the order in which the worksheets are provided. Sometimes the table contents will also contain a link. In these cases, the worksheet can be found by clicking the link or typing the link into a web browser.

Lesson 1: Getting to Know You

Worksheets Contents

- Interview Sheet (Student-Student): find at this link
<http://www.teachingheart.net/ccdinterviewclassmate.pdf>
- Homework L1: Interview Sheet (Student-Parent)
- Review Page 1: Getting to Know you
- Saint Book Bag parent letter
- Saint Journal Response Templates

Parent Student Interview

Name: _____ Who you Interviewed: _____

Directions: Interview your parent or guardian. Write his or her answers on the blank lines.

1.) What is your favorite ice cream flavor?

2.) What is your favorite bible story?

Why is this story special to you?

3.) What is your favorite religious symbol (Bible, Crucifix, Saint's Statue, Rosary, Cross, Candle)?

4.) What is one word you would use to describe God?

5.) What is your favorite liturgical season (ordinary time, lent, advent, Christmas, Easter)?

6.) What do you remember from when you received Eucharist and Confirmation?

Name _____

Date _____

Review Page 1: Getting To Know You

How much does God love you?

Why does God want us to know and love each other?

What did we hear from the Bible reading today?

Draw a picture in the space below of one thing you learned today.

Saint Book Bags

Dear Parents,

Every week you're student will be bringing home this bag with a picture book that tells about the life a saint. You and your child are encouraged to read them together. The student should read the story and respond to the story in their Saint Journal. The book and journal should be put in the bag and returned each class so that your student can bring a new story home.

These books will be extremely helpful for your student when they are thinking about a patron saint to choose for their Confirmation. These stories should also inspire you and your student to live as the saints did. Every good Christian has the responsibility to be as saintly as possible, and these stories should help you and your student along the path to sainthood.

The only requirement is reading the books and responding in the journal every week. But if parents wanted to extend the activity they could read the book multiple times during the week and include intercessions to the saint in daily prayer. They could also use the internet, library or other resources to learn even more about the saint and what they did. The most important thing is to help you student enjoy and fall in love with these saints so they can call upon their help and emulate them in their own lives.

Happy Reading!

Saint Journal

Saint's Name _____

What was your favorite part of this saint's story?

Saint _____, pray for us!

Saint's Name _____

What is one thing you have in common with the saint you read about?

Saint _____, pray for us!

Saint's Name _____

What is one thing the saint did for God that you can do too?

Saint _____, pray for us!

Saint's Name _____

Why do you think this person become a saint?

Saint _____, pray for us!

Saint's Name _____

How can this saint help you on your path to becoming a saint?

Saint _____, pray for us!

Saint's Name _____

Draw a picture of the saint doing something special for God.

Saint _____, pray for us!

Lesson 2: Church Community

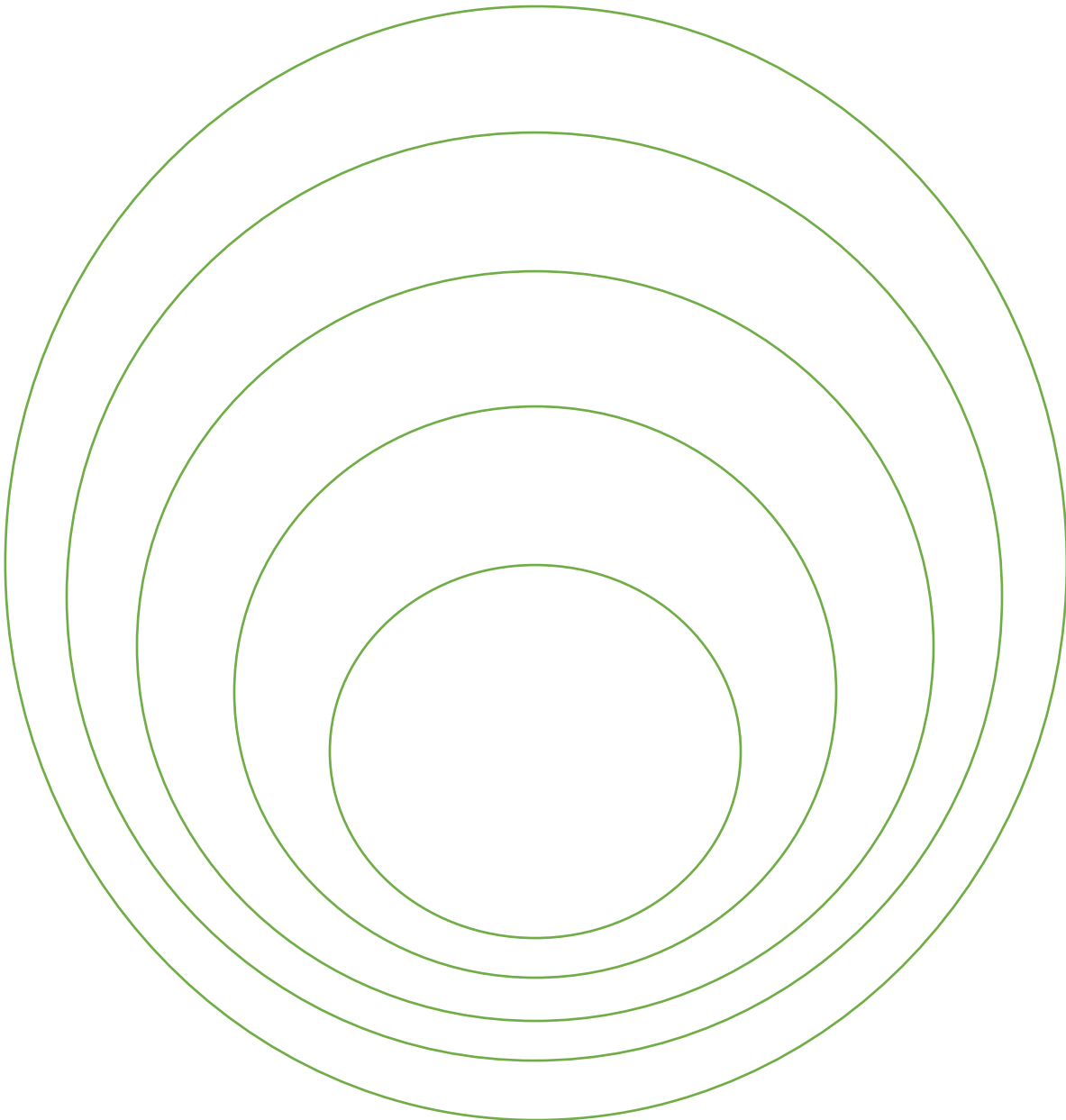
Worksheets Contents

- Circles of the Church Note Catcher
- Shoelace Community Activity Directions
- Review Page 2: Church Community
- Homework L2: Action Plan

Lesson 2 Note Catcher

When church is spelled with a lower case “c” it means

When church is spelled with an upper case “C” it means



Shoelace Community Activity Directions

- Hand out extra laces to students who don't have shoes with laces on. Help them attach the laces to their shoes but keep them untied. Sit in a circle with your feet placed in front of you with toes touching the students next to you. You are going to tie yourself together with the shoe laces.
- Let each student suggest a way to show or cultivate love for God and the Church community. With each suggestion of service or time spent together tie a piece of your shoelace to another student's laces.
 - Some ideas for what could be suggested:
 - Attend Mass every week
 - Volunteer with charity work
 - Listen to your mom and dad
 - Be kind to your brothers, sisters, friends, and even strangers
- Next, give some role play suggestions to the students that will help them to realize that when a community is tied together with love and service that it is a protection to them from the dangers of the world.
 - For example: "[child's name] is tempted to skip school and go skateboarding with his friends at the skate park." Tell brother to get up and leave the circle. He will soon discover that it is really hard to leave when he is tied so well to his siblings and parents.
 - "[child's name] decides to hide her homework assignment from her parents because she is too tired to finish it." Tell Sister to sneak into her bedroom to hide her homework under her bed. Alas! She can't leave the group because she is stuck to her loving community instead.
- You can keep going until all of the kids get a chance to experience the feeling of being tied to the community. Explain how being part of a community keeps them safe. It gives them the chance to serve and be served as well. When we are tied together it provides an anchor that keeps us safe from bad decisions and temptations that might be dangerous or harmful.
- Optional Snack: Twizzlers Pull-n-Peel licorice. Practice tying knots before eating them.

Name _____

Review Page 2: Church Community

Why is community so important?

How are priests important for building Church community?

How are Bishops important for building Church community?

How is the Pope important for building Church community?

Draw a picture of something interesting you learned today?

Name _____

Action Plan!

Directions: Brainstorm with your family ways that you can help to build up the Church community and make it stronger. Also brainstorm actions you should avoid.

What are things I can do to strengthen the Church community?

What are some actions I should avoid?

Lesson 3: Power of Prayer

Worksheet Contents

- Story of St. Benedict: <https://churchpop.com/2015/07/11/miracles-performed-by-the-great-st-benedict/> a few different stories can be found at this link. The best ones to share would be the ones when he brought the child back to life through prayer and how he moved the large rock with prayer.
- Our Father Formula Guide
- Review Page 3: Power of Prayer
- Homework L3: Times and Ways I Pray

Our Father Formula Guide

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name,

Here Jesus is telling God that He loves Him and asking for the grace to love him more. In those days calling God Father was unheard of, so it was a sign of great love and affection of Jesus to tell people to call God Father. When Jesus says “hallowed be Thy Name” He is asking God to help us love and honor God’s name.

Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,

Jesus is again honoring God and asking Him that everything that God wants to happen should happen, because we know that God loves us and wants only what is good and best for us.

Give us this day, our daily bread,

Jesus is now asking God to provide us with what we need. These days many of us don’t have to worry about where we will get our next meal, but many of the poor people Jesus was talking did. Jesus is telling us that we should pray to God to provide for us.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,

Jesus is telling us to ask God to forgive our sins. We should also ask God to help us to forgive others who have sinned against us, or done something bad to us.

And lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil.

The last thing Jesus does is ask for strength to not sin anymore. We are all tempted to sin, to do things we shouldn’t do, but with God’s help we can fight against temptation and become more saint-like.

Name _____

Review Page 3: Power of Prayer

Why is praying important? _____

What 3 elements should I use when I am praying?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

How can I use the prayer book I made today at home?

Draw a picture of one thing you learned today?

Name _____

Times and Ways I Pray

Directions: Keep track of the all the different ways you pray over the next week. (For example: you may pray before meals, before bed, in the morning, etc. You also might pray when you are playing or doing your chores.) Keep a log here.

Sunday:

Monday:

Tuesday

Wednesday:

Thursday:

Friday:

Saturday:

Note to Catechists: Depending on when your classes are held, it might be a good idea to change the arrangement of the days on this log. It would make most sense to put the days in order, starting from the day after the class meets and going right up until the next day the class meets.

Lesson 4: Different Ways to Pray

Worksheet Contents

- Ways I Pray Circle <https://craftingthewordofgod.com/2013/04/13/i-can-pray/> Directions, templates and pictures can be found at this website.
- Review Page 4: Different Way to Pray
- Prayer Journal Templates?
- Homework L4: Meditative Prayer Starter Sheet

Name _____

Review Page 4: Different Ways to Pray

How can I use the bible to help me spend time with Jesus?

How can I use my own stories and thoughts to spend time with Jesus?

Name some times in my day when I can spend time and talk with Jesus?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

How to Participate in Meditative Prayer

Directions: In meditative prayer you and/or your child should be in quite space and able to close your eyes (before bedtime is a great time because then the children can drift off to sleep and dream of being with Jesus). You can use scripture or come up with a story of your own. Below is a story we used in class to help the children get started on spending a day with Jesus when he was their age. Read this to your child to help get them started and give them plenty of time to spend with Jesus however they want. Let their imaginations take them from here.

- “Picture you’re walking down a street in Nazareth, and you come to a little house with a blue door. You knock at the door, and when it opens, there is the most beautiful lady in the world. The Blessed Mother! And she says, ‘Why, hello! I was just thinking of you. Do come in, and have a glass of milk and some cookies, and we’ll have a good talk.’ You go into the house, can you smell the fresh baked cookies? The Blessed Mother gives you a plate and a glass of milk and says “Tell me all about your day. All the things that bothered you and all the things that were fun. And afterward, you may go out to the carpenter shop in the back. Jesus and Joseph are out there making me a birthday present, but they won’t tell me what it is. Maybe they will tell you, and let you help. Then maybe you can help Jesus set the table and after dinner maybe you can do some homework together. What will you tell her? What are Jesus and Joseph making in the shop. Spend some time with them and find out”

Lesson 5: Planting a Seed

Worksheet Contents

- Planting the Seed Script?
- Review Page 5: Planting a Seed
- Reminder for Parents
- Caring for the Seed of Faith

Name _____

Review Page 5: Planting a Seed

What are the four things that plants need to grow and thrive?

What are the four things our souls need to grow and thrive in faith?

Draw a picture of one thing you learned today.

Parent Reminder!

Dear Parents,

I would like to remind you that next class the students will be working on a Reader's Theater play to the story of the Sower and the Seeds. We would love for you to come and see an informal performance of the story just before pick-up for next week's class. If you would like to join us, please come about 15 minutes before the end of class to watch our performance.

I hope to see all of you there!

Caring for the Seed of Faith

What should I do to make sure that the seed of faith that was planted in my soul at baptism can grow and thrive?

1. Suck up Grace!

- a. Pray! Praying will help me recognize God's grace all around me and will help to prepare my soul to suck it all up.

2. Receive Eucharist as much as possible!

- a. Eucharist is like food for my soul! If I don't eat good food, then my body won't be able to grow and be healthy, it is the same with my soul. I need to feed it the good food that Jesus offers in the Eucharist, every Sunday Mass if I can!

3. Go to Reconciliation often!

- a. When I sin it makes it harder for me to recognize God's grace and suck it up. Without this grace my soul will not be very healthy. I need to get rid of the sins, big and small, as soon as possible so I can get back to sucking up all of God's wonderful and delicious grace!

4. Receive Confirmation!

- a. When I receive the sacrament of Confirmation this year my soul will be given so many wonderful graces and it will allow my faith to grow more and more every day!

Lesson 6: Good Ground Worksheets Contents

- Reader's Theater Script
 - o http://www.edgren.com/skits/cgi-bin/skit_details.cgi?skit_title=Sower%20and%20the%20Seed
 - o <http://www.allageworshipresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/DRA010-Dramatised-parable-of-the-sower.pdf>
 - o [file:///C:/Users/Jessie/Downloads/The%20Sower%20and%20the%20Seed13%20\(4\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Jessie/Downloads/The%20Sower%20and%20the%20Seed13%20(4).pdf)
 - o None are perfect, but they are good places to start. I will write my own using these as a guide.
- Review Page 6: Good Ground

Name _____

Review Page 6: Good Ground

What does the parable of the Sower and Seed tell us about how we should prepare our souls to grow in faith?

How can I use the lessons from the parable in my own life?

Draw a picture about one thing you learned today.

Lesson 7: Finding God in All Things

Worksheets Contents

- Guide to Lectio Divina
 - o <http://www.stalphonsuscho.org/pdf/RE/Dees1.pdf>
 - o This link includes an explanation of the elements of the Lectio Divina. It also offers from handouts that catechists might find useful in making the Lectio Divina process more tangible and inviting clearer thinking from the children.
- Review Page 7: Finding God in All Things
- Homework L7: Where Do I Find God?

Name _____

Review Page 7: Finding God in All Things

Where can I find God?

When I was out in nature today, what was one thing I saw that helped me to think of God?

Draw a picture of one thing I found in nature today?

Name _____

Where Do I Find God?

Directions: God can be found everywhere, in everything! Take sometime this week to really look for the God in the things we see every day. Write down what you saw, how it made you think of God, and then thank God for it and everything else in creation.

What did I find this week that reminded me of God?

Ex. My sister

How did it make me think of God?

Ex. She gave me a hug and showed me that she love me, just like God loves me

Lesson 8: The Effects of Sin

Worksheet Contents

- Review Page 8: The Effects of Sin
- Homework L8: Examination of Conscience

Name _____

Review Page 8: Effects of Sin

Does everyone sin?

Yes

No

Does that make it okay?

Yes

No

What happens to our relationship with God when we sin?

What can we do to fix our relationship with God after we have sinned?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

An Examination of Conscience for Children

Using the 10 Commandments

Directions: Gather as a family and say a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking for help remembering your sins. It may be helpful for each child to have a piece of paper or notecard. Go through and ask each question out loud. Give the children time to think about each question and write down a sin if it comes to mind. Take the notecard or paper to confession so that the children can remember to tell all their sins, so that all their sins can be forgiven.

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.

- a. Have I wanted more things, making things or money more important than God? Have I made an idol of sports or entertainment figures?

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

- a. Do I use God's name carelessly? Do I use God's name in anger?

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

- a. Did I attend Mass on Sunday? Did my behavior make it difficult or impossible for my parents to get to church on time? Have I remembered to pray daily?

4. Honor your father and your mother.

- a. Do I obey my parents? Have I done my chores without complaining? Do I do my chores without being reminded? Have I been disrespectful to teachers, coaches or others in authority?

5. You shall not kill.

- a. Do I keep my patience or do I lose my temper? Do I hold grudges and try to get even with others? Have I been unfair to others, especially those who are different than I am?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

- a. Do I show respect for my body? Do I respect the bodies of others? Do I avoid harmful things like drugs, tobacco and alcohol?

7. You shall not steal.

- a. Have I taken something that belongs to someone else? Have I “forgotten” to return something that I borrowed? Have I used money responsibly?

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- a. Do I play fairly or do I ever cheat at school or games? Have I been honest or have I lied? Have I hurt someone by what I have said or done? Have I copied someone else’s homework?

9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

- a. Have I been jealous of the friends that someone else has? Have I tried to be kind to others?

10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

- a. Have I been jealous of the things that my friends have? Have I nagged my parents into buying things because my friends have them? Have I helped others when they needed help?

Lesson 9: Following the Saints

Worksheets Contents

- Stairway to Heaven
- Nothing Sheet 9: Following the Saints

Name _____

Stairway to Heaven

Heaven!

Step 5:

Step 4:

Step 3:

Step 2:

Step 1:

Name _____

Nothing 9: Following the Saints

Who is in Heaven?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What do you think it will feel like to be in Heaven?

How can the saints help us get to Heaven?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

Lesson 10: Choosing a Patron Saint

Worksheet Contents

- Litany of Saints Sheet
- Review Page 10: Choosing a Patron Saint

A Litany of Saints For



Saint _____, pray for us.

Saint _____, pray for us.

Saint _____, pray for us.

Saint _____, pray for us.

Saint _____, pray for us.

All you Saints and Angels, pray for us!

Name _____

Review Page 10: Choosing a Patron Saint

What is a Patron Saint? What can he/she do for you?

What are some saints whom you might want as a patron?

Why do these saints jump out to you as good patrons?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

Lesson 11: Serving Christ

Worksheet Contents

- Scenario Examples?
- Review Page 11: Serving Christ
- Homework L11: Secret Service
 - o <http://befickle.blogspot.com/2010/03/secret-service-activity-days-activity.html>
 - o Worksheet can be found here. Catechist might want to expand the 7 day challenge into an advent challenge by just printing multiple weeks for each student.

Name _____

Review Page 11: Serving Christ

How do Jesus want us to serve Him?

What are some things that I can do to serve Christ by serving other people?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

Lesson 12: Jesus and the Children

Worksheet Contents

- “Be Like Children” Poster Assignment
- Review Page 12: Jesus and the Children

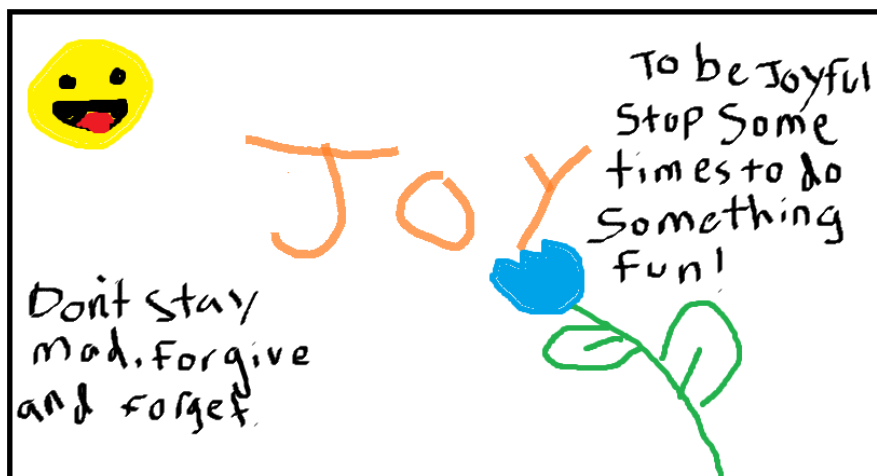
Name _____

“Be Like Children” Poster

Jesus tells his followers that they should be like little children. What are some qualities that you think Jesus liked about children? (copy down the class list)

Working in groups of 4, chose one of the qualities above (Circle it on your list now) and create a poster that will help adults to know how they should follow Jesus’s instruction and be like little children.

Example: If I wanted to create a poster about how children are joyful I might create a poster like this. Be Creative!



Name _____

Review Page 12: Jesus and the Children

Why do you think Jesus wants his followers to be like children?

How can children help adults to follow Jesus's command?

What are some ways that I can be more like the child Jesus wants me to be?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

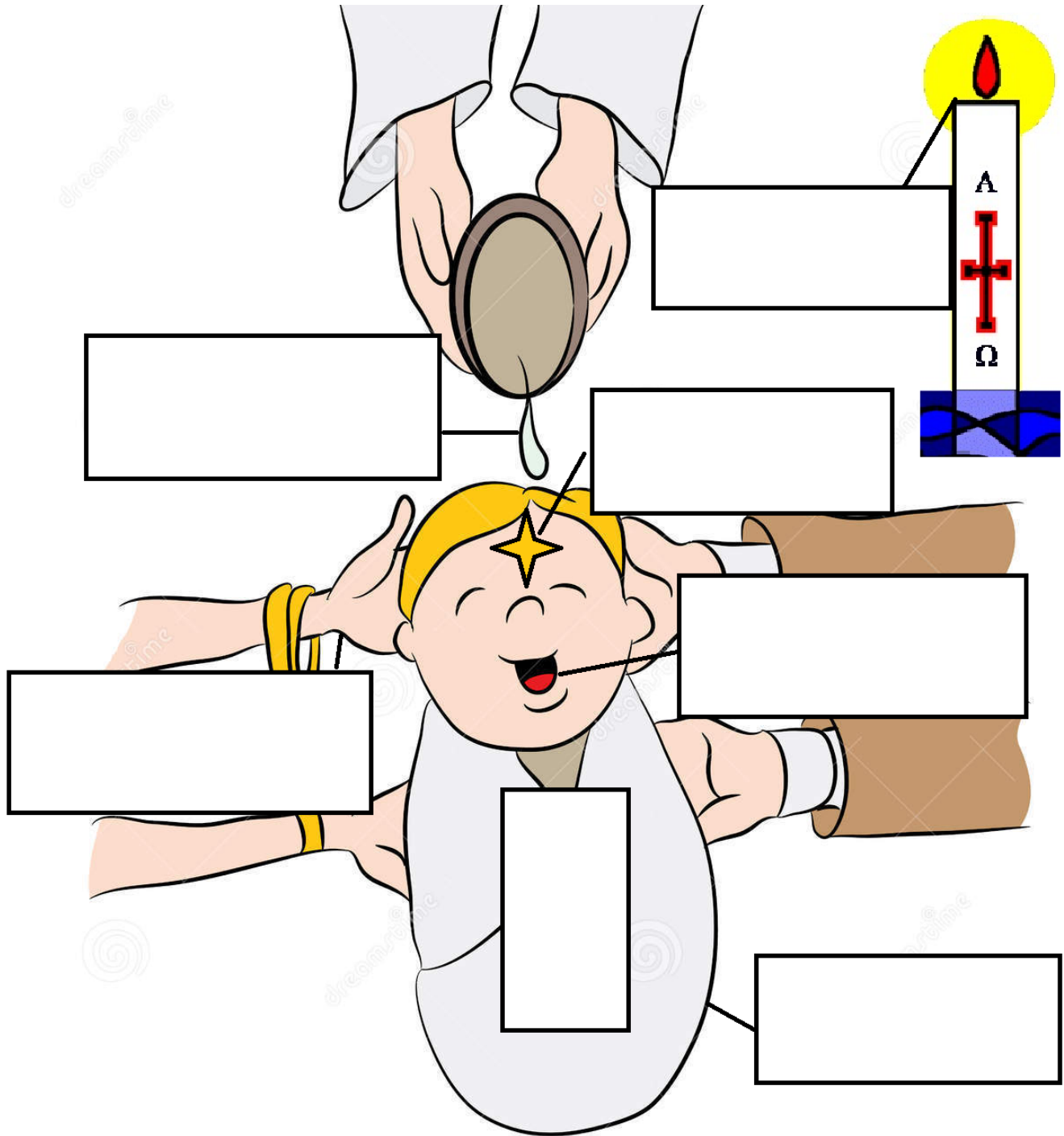
Lesson 13: Recalling Baptism

Worksheet Contents

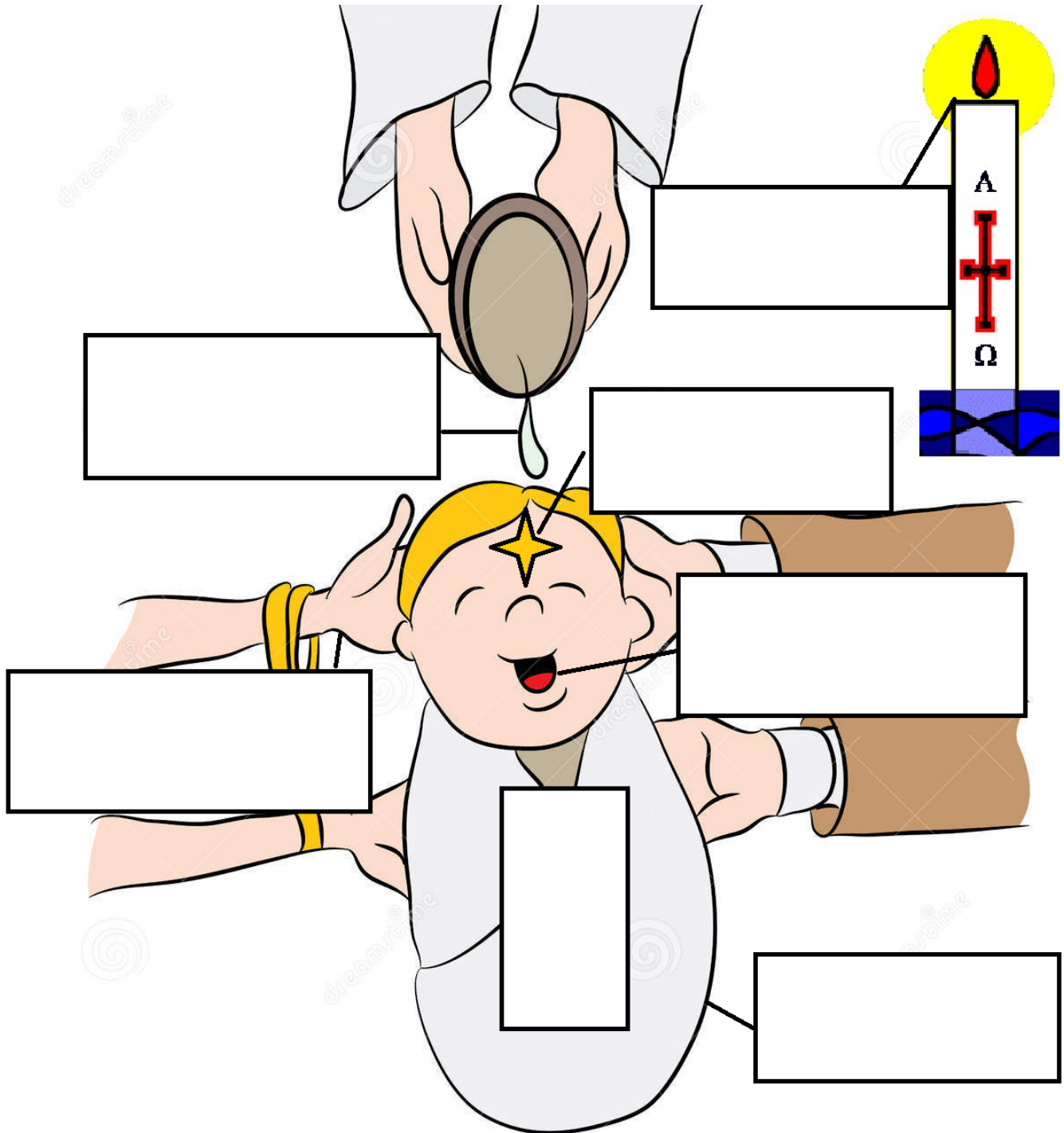
- Outside Inside Booklet
- Review Page 13: Recalling Baptism

Name _____

Baptism on the Outside



Baptism on the Inside



Name _____

Review Page 13: Recalling Baptism

What happened to your body at Baptism?

What happened to your soul at Baptism?

What is your favorite baptism symbol?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

Lesson 14: Confirmation

Worksheet Contents

- Being Molded
- Review Page 14: Confirmation

Name _____

Being Molded

Things I do that Make God Happy	Areas Where I Can Improve

Name _____

Review Page 14: Confirmation

How does working with clay help us to understand Confirmation?

How are Baptism and Confirmation connected?

What are some things I can do to help become perfect like God is perfect?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

Lesson 15: Gifts of the Holy Spirit Part I

Worksheet Contents

- Gifts of the Holy Spirit Vocabulary Cards
- Saint Stories
- Review Page 15: Gifts of the Holy Spirit Part I
- Homework L15: Using These Gifts at Home



Define: This is wisdom. Does anyone know what wisdom means? Wisdom can mean many things, but in the Church, wisdom is the ability to love God and love the things that God teaches us and wants us to do.

Example: This little girl loves reading the bible, because God wants her to and because she knows it makes God happy when she learns more about him. Maybe she chooses to read the bible instead of another book that isn't about God.

Ask: Turn and talk to a neighbor about how you use wisdom to love God and the things that He teaches us?



Define: Understanding allows us to grasp, to know about and be able to explain, the important teachings of the Catholic Church.

Example: Maybe this boy is taking a test about the teachings of the Church. When he comes across a question that asks “Is the Holy Trinity three different Gods” the gift of understanding will help him know and be able to explain the Holy Trinity so he can answer the question correctly.

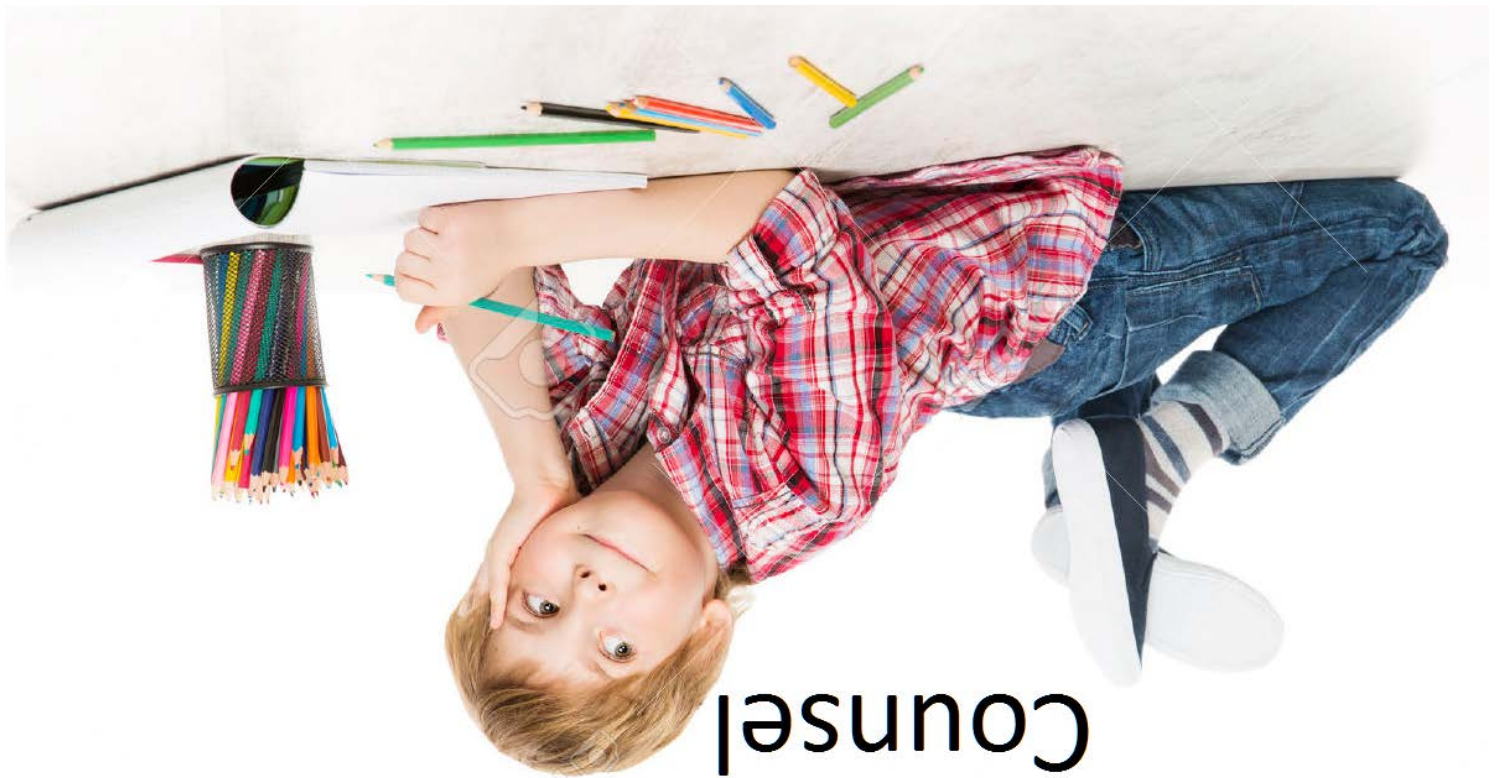
Ask: Turn and talk to a neighbor about when you needed understanding and how you gained it. Talk about how understanding is different from wisdom.



Define: The gift of knowledge helps us to see the world closer to way the God sees the world. We can use this gift to figure out what God wants us to do with our lives.

Example: These kids are donating food to people who are hungry. They saw some homeless people on the street and thought that they must be hungry. They thought and prayed about how they could help and decided to donate food to the food bank. They noticed the hungry people on the street the way God would and used their gift their knowledge to decide how God wanted them to help.

Ask: Think about a time that you saw the world more like God sees it, noticing people in need and wanting to help. Tell a partner the story.



Define: This is counsel. Does anyone know what counsel means? Counsel is when the Holy Spirit helps you to make the best decision.

Example: Like this little boy. Maybe he just got some birthday money and he is using the gift of counsel to decide how he will use the money. What decision might the Holy Spirit help him to make?

Ask: Turn and tell you neighbor about a time that you needed help to make a decision. Who did you ask for help? Did you use counsel by praying and asking God and the Holy Spirit to help you?

Saint Stories Stations

Station 1: Wisdom

Saint Story: St. Teresa of Calcutta loved God so much that she decided to dedicate her life to him as a nun in India. She knew that Jesus wanted her to care for the poor people there. It would have been easier for her to live in comfort and safety, but she used her wisdom to decide to live with the poor even though it wasn't as comfortable and safe. She was very happy because she knew that she was loving God by serving the poor. How does this story show wisdom?

Scenario: It is a Friday in Lent. You have made a commitment to not eating meat on Fridays so you can love God through your sacrifice. Your friend offers you a piece of your favorite pepperoni pizza. It looks so much better than the peanut butter sandwich you made this morning. What do you do? What do you tell your friend? How can the gift of wisdom help you make the best choice?

Station 2: Understanding

Saint Story: St. Augustine lived a long time ago, back when the Catholic Church was still pretty new. The leaders of the Church were still trying to figure everything out. Augustine prayed a lot and studied the bible and writings of Church leaders. He used the gift of understanding to write about and explain the beliefs of the Church to people who didn't understand as much. He really helped to make the Church more clear on many of her teachings.

Scenario: Because you love God and know He loves you too, you want to know everything about Him so you can be a good friend. You know that you are learning about God in your Religious Education class. But your best friend is also in the class and sometimes you like to talk more than listen. When your friend tries to talk to you while your teacher is trying to teach you about God what should you do? What should you say to your friend? How can the gift of understanding help you make the best choice?

Station 3: Knowledge

Saint Story: When St. Nicolas was young his parents died leaving him with a lot of money. But he was taken care of by his uncle and soon became a priest so he didn't really need the money for himself. He wanted to give it away. One day he heard about a poor man who had three daughters who he was planning to sell into slavery because he was so poor. So one night, Nicolas threw a bag of gold coins into the house through an open window. He did this three nights in a row, one bag of gold for each daughter. They weren't poor anymore and didn't need to be sold into slavery. They all got married and lived long and happy lives. How did St. Nicolas use the gift of knowledge?

Scenario: You know God wants you to be kind of everyone, especially your younger sister, but she just really gets on your nerves sometimes. You also know that she needs help sometimes, because she is littler. You are playing a video game with her and she keeps messing up, it is ruining the whole game! What should you do? What should you say to your sister? How can the gift of knowledge help you make the best choice?

Station 4: Counsel

Saint Story: There once was a saint in Spain named Ignatius Loyola. He has used to be a soldier, but read the story of Jesus and the saints when he was sitting in the hospital after being wounded. He decided to give up his life of soldier for Spain and become a soldier for Christ. He was riding a donkey on the road when he met a man of another faith. They talked about religion and obviously disagreed on some things. The man said some insulting things about the Virgin Mary and left. Ignatius thought it was his duty as a soldier for Christ to defend his Lady by killing the other man. He used the gift of counsel and let the Lord guide his donkey to help him decide. They were coming to a crossroads and if the donkey went the way that the other man went then he would kill him, but if the donkey went the other way then he would let the other man go. The donkey chose the other way. How does this story show counsel?

Scenario: You are not sure what you should do for your birthday party. You know that there is a great new movie coming out, but you also know that some of your friends might not be able to come then, because their parents don't let them watch PG13 movies. Should you pray about it? What might you say or ask God in your prayer? How would praying help you use the gift of counsel?

Name _____

Review Page 15: Gifts of the Holy Spirit Part I

What are the four gifts of the Holy Spirit that we talked about today?

What do they mean?

Which is your favorite?

Draw a picture of something you learned today?

Name _____

Using These Gifts at Home

Directions: With your parents' help think of some ways that you can use these gifts at home.

1. Wisdom: the ability to love God, love the things God teaches us, and want to do what makes God happy.

i. _____

2. Understanding: being able to example the important teachings of Jesus and the Church.

ii. _____

3. Knowledge: being able to see the world more like how God see it, and respond to people's needs, helps us figure out what God wants us to do in our lives.

iii. _____

4. Counsel: when the Holy Spirit helps you make the best decision.

iv. _____

Lesson 16: Gifts of the Holy Spirit Part II

Worksheet Contents

- Gifts of the Holy Spirit Vocabulary Cards
- Saint Stories
- Review Page 16: Gifts of the Holy Spirit Part II
- Homework 16: Using These Gifts at Home



Define: Piety means that you don't just feel like you need to worship God, but you really want to.

Example: These girls were playing outside when they saw this beautiful sunset. They were so filled with love and wonder for God that they wanted to throw up their arms and thank Him for all the beauty in the world. They didn't feel like they had to, but they wanted to.

Ask: Have you ever done something for you parents that they didn't ask, just because you love them so much? Have you ever done something for God just because you love Him so much?



Define: Fortitude means strength or courage. Doing what God wants us to do is not always easy, but this gift will give us the spiritual strength to do what God wants us to do.

Example: This little boy is having his blood drawn to see if he can donate bone marrow to his brother who is sick. He doesn't like having the needle in his arm, it hurts, but he knows that he could really help his brother. He knows this is what God would want him to do, and he uses the gift of fortitude to be brave and endure the pain.

Ask: Tell a partner about a time when you were brave and did something that was important and good even though it might have been hard.

Fear of the Lord



Define: When we say Fear of the Lord we do not mean that you should be afraid of Him because He isn't nice or does bad things to you. This gift helps us to not want to offend God by doing bad things. Because we love the Lord, we only want to do things that make Him happy and we pray for the grace to do good things and not offend Him.

Example: This little boy has lied to his mom. He knows that is a sin and that sins make God sad. So he praying to God to forgive him and help him to not offend him in the future.

Ask: Is it right to not do bad things just because you might get in trouble? Think about a time that you chose to do something good because you didn't want to make more work for you parents or because you didn't want to offend them.

Saint Story Stations

Station 1: Piety

Saint Story: St. Teresa of Avila was very dedicated to her prayer life. She loved praying so much that sometime God would give her special gifts in her prayer, like visions of Him, or the feeling of his great, loving, and calming presence. A few times she even physically lifted off the floor and levitated in mid-air. As much as she loved feeling so close to God in his visions, she did not feel like she was special enough to receive such gifts from God. Sometimes she would ask the other nuns to come sit on her if she felt like she was going to levitate and she asked God not to give her any of these gift is public. She didn't want anyone to think that she only prayed to get these wonderful experiences. She really only prayed because she loved God so much and wanted to worship Him and talk to Him. How did St. Teresa show the gift of piety?

Scenario: You love God and really love going to Mass on Sunday so that you can be with Him and worship Him. Your friend asks you why you spend every Sunday at church. What might you tell your friend? Do your feelings reflect piety? How can you explain piety to your friend?

Station 2: Fear of the Lord

Saint Story: St. Joseph was engaged to the Virgin Mary when she became pregnant with Jesus. Joseph knew that he was not the father, and that the child was God's Son. He was afraid at first and did not want to take on the responsibility of helping to raise God's Son. But he loved God very much and knew that God had called him to do this. He did not want to something that was against God and decided to take Mary as his wife and raise Jesus as his own son. Joseph had many fears when he was thinking about marrying Mary and raising the Son of God, but he was more afraid to offend God because he loved God so much. So in the end, he decided to do what God wanted him to do with the help of the gift of Fear of the Lord.

Scenario: Your friend is saying mean things about another kid in school. You know that God wants you to be nice, not spread gossip, or say mean things. What should you say to your friend? How can the gift of fear of the Lord help you to do the best thing?

Station 3: Fortitude

Saint Story: Saint Tarcisus was a young boy who lived in Rome in the time when being a Christian was still illegal. The Christians had to meet in secret and Eucharist had to be taken secretly to the Christians who had been arrested for their faith. One day young Tarcisus volunteered to take the Blessed Sacrament to the prisoners. On his way he was met by some of his friends who wanted him to join their game. He said no, but this made his friends angry and they noticed that he appeared to be hiding something. They beat Tarcisus so he would show them, but Tarcisus was more concerned about keeping the body of his Lord safe. Because he was a small boy, he could not survive the beatings, but he was able to keep the Blessed Sacrament safe and pass it on another Christian before he died. How did Tarcisus show fortitude?

Scenario: Your family is going on a mission trip to help build houses for people far away. You are scared to go because you have never been there and it will be very different and a lot of hard work. Your parents ask you how you feel about going on the trip. What should you say? How can you use the gift of fortitude to help you feel better?

Name _____

Review Page 16: Gifts of the Holy Spirit Part II

What are the three gifts of the Holy Spirit that we talked about today?

What do they mean?

Which is your favorite?

Draw a picture of something you learned today?

Name _____

Using These Gifts at Home

Directions: With your parents' help think of some ways that you can use these gifts at home.

1. Piety: wanting to serve and worship God out of love and not duty.

1. _____

2. Fortitude: gives spiritual strength to do what God wants us to even if it's not easy.

2. _____

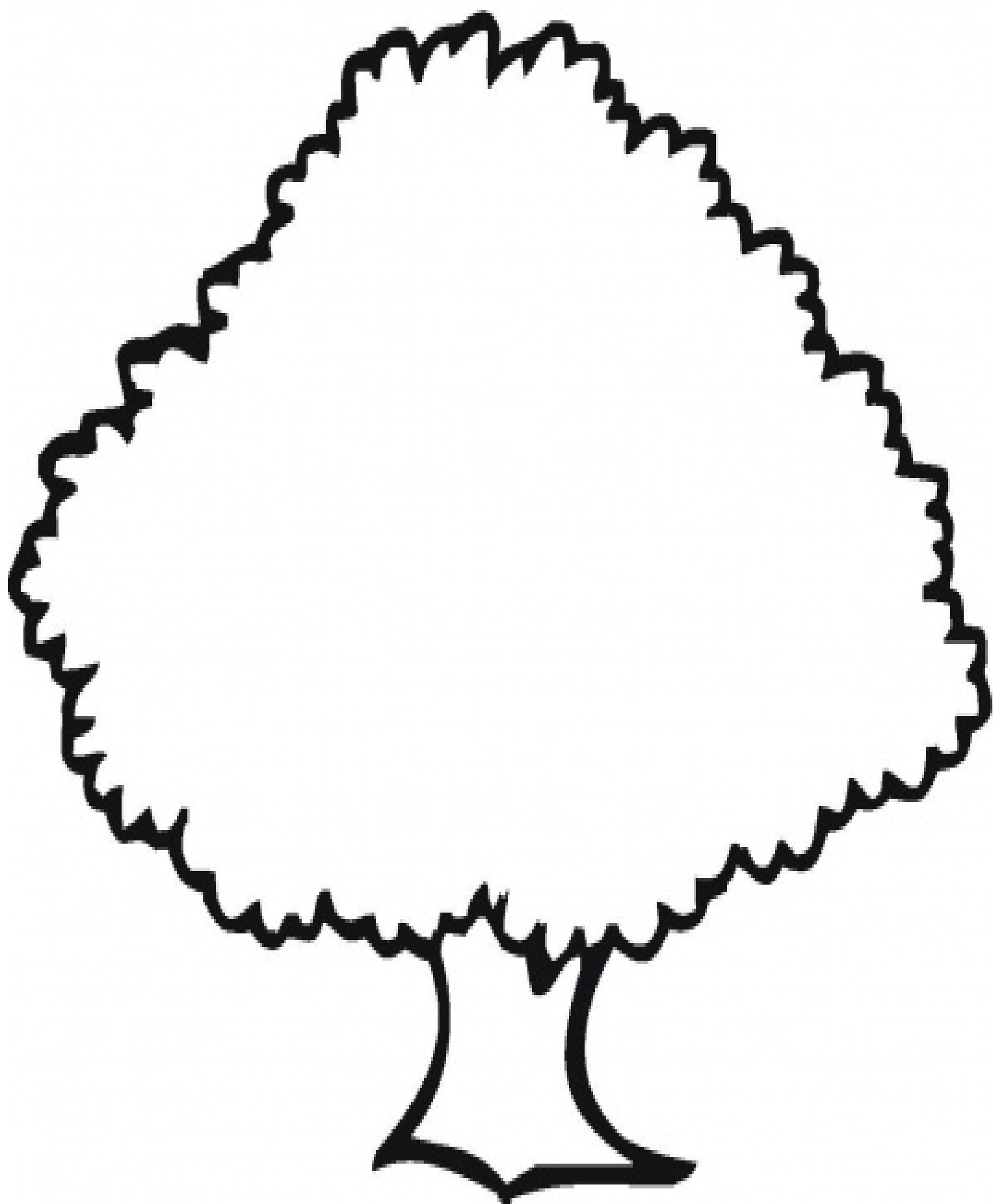
1. Fear of the Lord: not being afraid of God punishing you, but rather being afraid to offend Him because of your great love for Him.

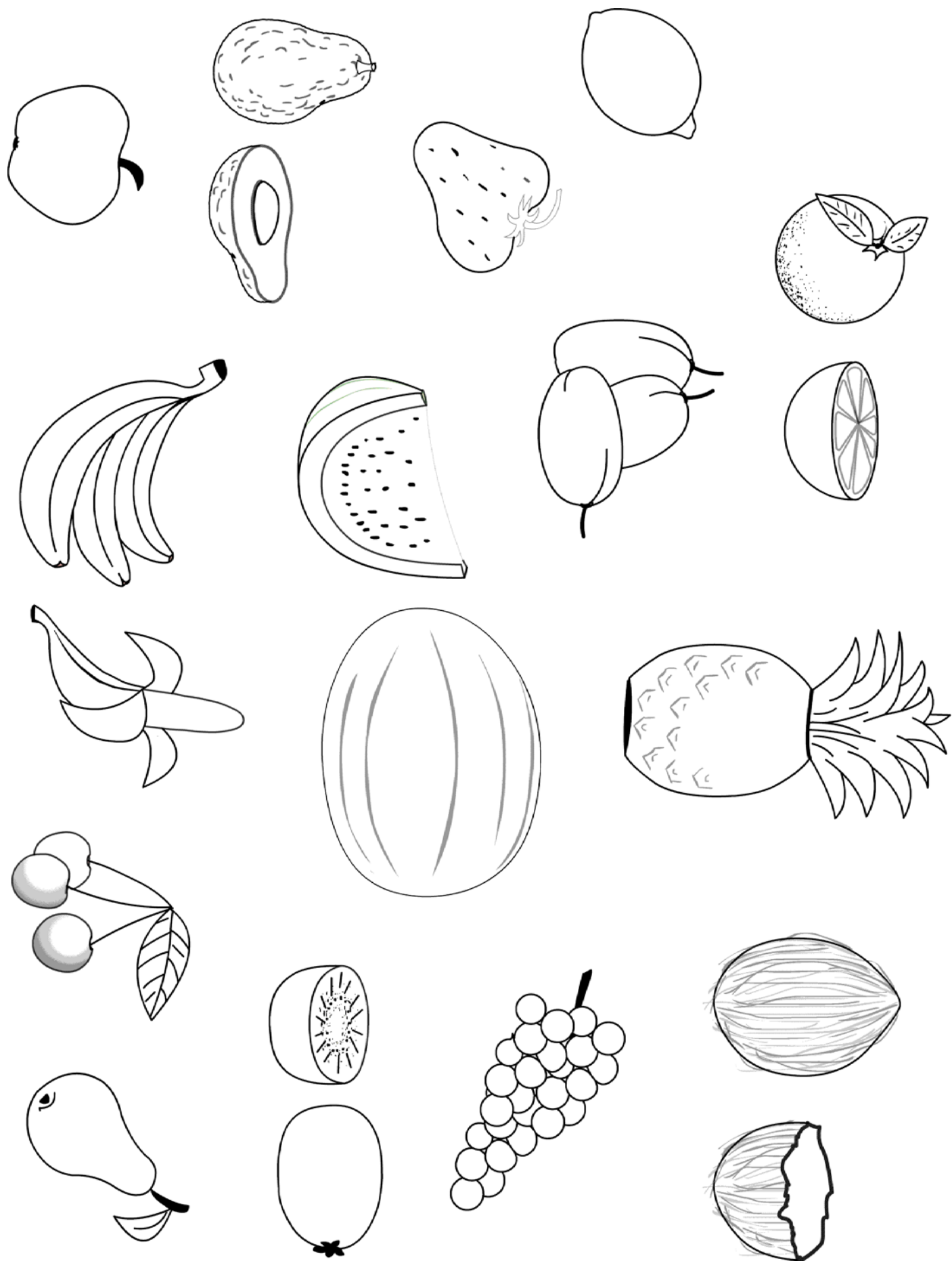
3. _____

Lesson 17: Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Worksheet Contents

- Tree Outline
- Fruit Shapes
- Review Page 17: Fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Fruits of the Spirit at Home
- Reminder to Parents
- Baptism and Confirmation Review





Name _____

Review Page 17: Fruits of the Holy Spirit

How are the fruits of the Holy Spirit like the fruits we eat?

What is your favorite fruit of the Holy Spirit?

How can you make bear this fruit at home?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

Name _____

Fruits of the Spirit at Home

Directions: With your parents' help come up with some ways that you can use each of these fruits at home. Write these ideas in the space provided.

1. Love

i. _____

2. Joy

ii. _____

3. Patience

iii. _____

4. Kindness

iv. _____

5. Goodness

v. _____

6. Faithfulness

vi. _____

7. Gentleness

vii. _____

8. Self-control

viii. _____

Parent Reminder!

Dear Parents,

I would like to remind you that next class the students will be working on a Reader's Theater play to show the biblical history of the Eucharist. We would love for you to come and see an informal performance of the story just before pick-up for next week's class. If you would like to join us, please come about 15 minutes before the end of class to watch our performance.

I hope to see all of you there!

Name _____

Baptism and Confirmation Review

Directions: Use the knowledge you have gained over the past few weeks of classes to answer the following questions about Baptism and Confirmation.

1. What happens to your soul at baptism?

2. Why is getting baptized important?

3. What are the main symbols in the Baptism celebration?

4. What happens to your soul at Confirmation?

5. Why is getting Confirmed important? (you may need to remember about our little plant)

6. How are Baptism and Confirmation connected?

7. What are the 7 Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

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8. What are the 8 Fruits of the Holy Spirit?

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<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

9. How can you use these gifts and bear these fruits in your daily life?

Lesson 18: Biblical History of the Eucharist

Worksheet Contents

- Reader's Theater Script
- Review Page 18: Biblical History of the Eucharist
- Eucharistic Journey Guide(?)

Reader's Theater Script

Scenes:

Abraham Sacrifices Isaac

The Passover

Manna in the Desert

Feeding of the 5,000

Last Supper (optional)

Characters:

Narrator

Abraham

Isaac

Servant (optional)

Moses

Pharaoh

Aaron

Mariam

Angel of Death (optional)

Moses

Israelite 1, 2, and 3

Jesus

Disciple 1 and 2

Boy with loaves and fishes

Crowd person 1 and 2

Jesus

12 disciples (only three will speak)

Name _____

Review Page 18: Biblical History of the Eucharist

In what stories do we see God giving us clues to the Eucharist?

Why do you think God wanted to prepare us to receive the Eucharist with these stories?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

Lesson 19: Why Bread and Wine

Worksheet Contents

- Unleavened Bread – Group Recipie
- Review Page 19: Why Bread and Wine?

Unleavened Bread Recipe

Directions: Each person in the group will have a part in making this bread. Follow the steps closely and carefully using the words and pictures to help you.

Step 1: Assign each person in your group a number: 1, 2, 3, or 4. Each group member should have a different number.



Step 2: Person 1 – Gather bowl.

Person 2 – Gather mixing spoon. Person 3 – Gather measuring cups and spoons. Person 4 – Gather parchment paper.

Step 3: Person 1- get 1 cup of flour and bring it back to the table. Person 2 – get $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of oil and bring it back to the table. Person 3- get $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt and bring it back to the table. Person 4: get $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of water and bring it back to the table.

Step 4: All group members should pour their ingredients into the bowl. Each group member should have turn to stir; watch the clock for 30 seconds and then switch.

Step 5: All members should work together to spread out the parchment paper and create 2 equal sized balls of dough each. Place these balls on the parchment paper and gently press them into disks.

Step 6: Ask the teacher or another adult to help your transfer the parchment paper onto a baking sheet and put it in the oven.

Step 7: Wait 8-10 minutes for the bread to cook. Let it cool for a few minutes then eat and enjoy with juice with family and classmates.

Name _____

Review Page 19: Why Bread and Wine?

The Eucharist looks like bread and wine, but what is it really?

Why do you think Jesus chose to leave us his body and blood in the form of bread and wine?

How can we help to build community when we cook and eat together?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

Lesson 20: Magnificat – How to Respond to Eucharist

Worksheet Contents

- Sharing the Magnificat
- Review Page 20: Magnificat – How to Respond to Eucharist
- Homework L20: How I Can Live the Eucharist at Home

Sharing the Magnificat

Our story begins when Mary was visited by the angel Gabriel who told her that she would become pregnant and give birth to the Lord Jesus, God's own son. Mary was so overjoyed to have the Lord with her, inside her body, in her womb, that she ran to tell her cousin Elizabeth! The bible tells us,⁴⁰ She went into Zechariah's home, where she greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, her baby moved within her.

Can you picture, a baby in the womb jumping for joy? That is what Elizabeth's baby did when she heard Mary's greeting. Because the baby also knew that the Lord was now in their presence since Mary was pregnant with Jesus.

The Holy Spirit came upon Elizabeth. ⁴² Then in a loud voice she said to Mary:

God has blessed you more than any other woman! He has also blessed the child you will have. ⁴³ Why should the mother of my Lord come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as I heard your greeting, my baby became happy and moved within me. ⁴⁵ The Lord has blessed you because you believed that he will keep his promise.

Elizabeth was also overjoyed to be in the presence of Jesus and she shouts her happiness to Mary. Have you ever been so happy that you just wanted to shout and jump for joy?

⁴⁶ Mary said:

Now listen closely and with your hearts. The bible says that "Mary said," but some scholars think she actually sang these words. She was so happy she just had to sing! This is her song.

With all my heart
I praise the Lord,
⁴⁷ and I am glad
because of God my Savior.
⁴⁸ He cares for me,
his humble servant.
From now on,
all people will say
God has blessed me.
⁴⁹ God All-Powerful has done
great things for me,

and his name is holy.
⁵⁰ He always shows mercy
to everyone
who worships him.
⁵¹ The Lord has used
his powerful arm
to scatter those
who are proud.
⁵² He drags strong rulers
from their thrones
and puts humble people
in places of power.
⁵³ God gives the hungry
good things to eat,
and sends the rich away
with nothing.
⁵⁴ He helps his servant Israel
and is always merciful
to his people.
⁵⁵ The Lord made this promise
to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his family
forever!

Isn't that amazing? Mary was so happy to have Jesus with her that she just had to sing praises to God. Did you hear what she was saying? She was saying that God has done great things for her, has cared for her, shown mercy to her, given her good things to eat, and kept all His promises. She was so happy that she just couldn't hold all these praises in. She had to sing them out.

Name _____

Review Page 20: Magnificat – How to Respond to Eucharist

How did Mary respond when she was told that she would have the Lord Jesus with her in her womb?

How can we use Mary as a model to show us how we should respond when we receive the Eucharist, the true body and blood of Jesus?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

Name _____

How I Can Live the Eucharist at Home

Directions: Jesus wants us to be happy and to love God the Father and each other as much as we can. With your family's help talk about how this might look in your lives at home. How can we use the strength and joy that Jesus gives us at the Eucharist and carry it all through the week?

How does Jesus expect you to act at home with your family?

Does the Eucharist give you strength to the best choices in how you act?

Yes

No

Does the Eucharist give us joy to want to do God's Will and make Him happy?

Yes

No

What is some way that we can remind ourselves of the Eucharist during the week, remember that Jesus is inside us?

Lesson 21: Adoration – Being in God’s Presence

Worksheet Contents

- Zig Zag Fold Eucharist Craft
 - o Directions and printables for this craft can be found at this link
[http://www.catholicicing.com/true-presence-in-the-eucharist-printable-craft-for-catholic-kids/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed:+CatholicIcing+\(Catholic+Icing\)](http://www.catholicicing.com/true-presence-in-the-eucharist-printable-craft-for-catholic-kids/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed:+CatholicIcing+(Catholic+Icing))
- Review Page 21: Adoration – Being in God’s Presence
- Homework L21: Bleeding Host Stories

Name _____

Review Page 21: Adoration – Being in God’s Presence

Is Jesus’ body and blood truly present in the Eucharist?

Yes

No

What is one way that we can spend time with Jesus in the Eucharist outside of Sunday Mass?

What is the golden container used for adoration called?

How do you think it feels to be able to sit and be with Jesus?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

Name _____

Bleeding Hosts

Directions: Read these stories with your family. Enjoy them and think about them. Answer and discuss the questions at the end.

1) Miracle of Lanciano – 8th century

In the 8th century, a priest in Lanciano, Italy was experiencing doubts about the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. In the middle of saying Mass, he said the words of consecration (“This is my body,” “This is my blood”) and saw the bread and wine transform into real human flesh and blood. The blood coagulated into five globules (later believed to be representative of the five wounds of Christ). Word of the miracle quickly spread, the local archbishop launched an investigation, and the Church approved the miracle.

The flesh is still preserved to this day. Professor of anatomy Odoardo Linoli conducted a scientific analysis of the flesh in 1971 and concluded that the flesh was cardiac tissue, the blood appeared to be fresh blood (as opposed to blood that was 1200 years old), and there was no trace of preservatives.

You can visit the miraculous flesh and blood in the Church of San Francesco in Lanciano, Italy.

2) The Miracle of Chirattakonam, India – 21st century

On April 28th, 2001, there was Eucharistic adoration at St. Mary's parish in Chirattakonam, India, when suddenly [three red stains materialized on the host](#).

The priest didn't know what to do and placed the host back into the tabernacle.

A few days later he retrieved the host to examine it again, and the red stains had arranged themselves to look like the face of a man (Jesus?). He quickly found a photographer and had pictures taken of the host.

Discussion Questions

Do these stories help to prove that the Eucharist contains the true Body and Blood of Christ?

Yes

No

How do you think differently about the Eucharist after reading/hearing these stories? _____

What was your favorite part of the stories?

Lesson 22: Holy Thursday – Feet Washing and Agony in the Garden

Worksheet Contents

- Feet Washing Discussion Questions
- In the Garden Thoughts and Questions
- Review Page 22: Holy Thursday – Feet Washing and Agony in the Garden
- Washing the World's Feet

Feet Washing Directions and Questions

Directions: At the Last Supper Jesus commanded us to wash each other's feet. We are going to do just that. Follow the steps and then discuss the questions together.

1. Both partners should remove their shoes and socks.
2. Decide who is partner one and who is partner two. Partner one will wash partner two's feet first.
3. Put some water in the basin and have partner two put his/her feet in the basin.
4. Pour some more water over your partner's feet.
5. Ask your partner to remove their feet from the basin and gently dry their feet with the towel provided.
6. Switch partners and partner two should follow steps 3-5.
7. Put your shoes back on and discuss the questions together. Write answers down in your prayer journals.

Discussion Questions:

1. How did it feel to have your feet washed by a classmate?
2. How did it feel to wash someone else's feet?
3. Why do you think Jesus wanted us to wash each other's feet?
4. What are some other ways we can serve and show our love for each other?

Agony in the Garden Directions and Questions

Directions: Before Jesus carried His cross and died for us, he spent a night praying in the Garden Gethsemane. He asked his disciples to stay up and pray with Him. Every Holy Thursday we move the consecrated Host, the Body and Blood of Christ, to a side chapel to represent the Garden of Gethsemane. People are encouraged to sit and pray with Jesus, some even stay all night! Follow the steps and then think about the questions and write the answers in your prayer journal.

1. Find a pillow or place to sit or kneel.
2. Re-read the story of Jesus's Agony in the Garden Matthew 26: 36-46.
3. Image you are in the garden with Jesus, praying with Him.
4. Spend some time with Jesus.

Thought Questions:

1. How did it feel sitting with Jesus while he was suffering?
2. Did you image that He said anything to you?
3. Did you say anything to Him?
4. Why is it good to remember Jesus's Agony in the Garden?
5. Why is it good to sit and pray with Him.

Name _____

Review Page 22: Holy Thursday – Feet Washing and Agony in the Garden

What are the three days before Easter called?

What do we celebrate on Holy Thursday?

How did it feel to wash a classmates feet and have your feet washed by a

classmate? _____

How did it feel to sit with Jesus in the garden?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

Name _____

Washing the World's Feet

Directions: Talk with your family these questions and come up with some ways that you all can follow Jesus's command to wash each other's feet.

1. Why did Jesus command us to wash each other's feet?

2. What are some ways that you can follow Jesus's command within your family?

3. How can you "wash the world's feet" or show love and service to others even outside of your family?

Worksheet Contents

- Prayer Booklets
 - o <http://www.loyolapress.com/~media/Images/Loyola%20Press/ocf-articles/Lent/lent-assets/stations-of-the-cross-for-children.ashx>
- Review Page: The Stations of the Cross
- File Folder Stations Matching Game
 - o Directions, printables, and material list at this link
<http://www.loyolapress.com/~media/Images/Loyola%20Press/ocf-articles/Lent/lent-assets/stations-of-the-cross-for-children.ashx>
- Eucharist Review

Name _____

Review Page 23: The Stations of the Cross

How did it feel to carry the cross and walk through the Passion of the Cross with Jesus? _____

Why should we remember the way Jesus walked with His cross? Why is it important? _____

What station touched you the most?

Draw a picture of something you learned today.

Name _____

Eucharist Review

Directions: Use the knowledge you have gained over the past few weeks of classes to answer the following questions about the Eucharist.

1. Why is the Eucharist in the form of bread and wine?

2. Even though it looks like bread and wine it is turned into something else.

What does it become? _____

3. How does the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ?

4. The Eucharist means “thanksgiving” in Greek, why should we be thankful for the Eucharist? _____

5. Another word for Eucharist is Communion (like community), why do we use this word too? _____

6. What are two ways that we can visit Jesus in the Eucharist?

7. What stories from in the bible give us clues to the Eucharist?

8. What is the best way to approach the Eucharist and keep it in our hearts all week long? _____

9. Every Eucharist, Jesus is sacrificing Himself again for us. This year we experienced Jesus's Last Supper, His agony in the garden, and his Passion. Take some time to meditate on these things. Then say a prayer to Jesus thanking Him for His sacrifice and great love for us. Let Him know that you love Him too!

Lesson 24: Review Games

Worksheet Contents

- Gifts of the Holy Spirit Matching/ Concentration (page 101 – 103)
- Stations of the Cross Board Game
 - o Game Board <http://www.orgsites.com/md/church-crafts-and-activities/StationsGameBoard.pdf>
 - o Spinner <http://www.orgsites.com/md/church-crafts-and-activities/StationsoftheCrossSpinner.pdf>
 - o Directions and question Cards found on page 104 - 112 below
- Eucharist Vocabulary Word Scramble (page 113)
- Baptism Symbol Sort (page 114 – 116)
- “Come Holy Spirit” Prayer Fill in the Blanks
- “Our Father” Fill in the Blanks
 - o <http://www.biblestoryprintables.com/Pages/FileFolderGames/LordsPrayer.html#.WMWfpvnyu00>
- Saints Guess Who Game
 - o <http://equippingcatholicfamilies.com/2011/02/guess-who-of-saints/>

Gifts of the Holy Spirit Matching/ Concentration

Directions: Cut out the pictures and the boxes with definitions. There are two variations to this game. The children can see all the pictures and definitions facing up and try to match them correctly as quickly as possible. The faster partner wins. The second variation is a concentration/memory type game where the cards are laid out face down in a grid. The children then take turns turning two card over at a time to see if they match. If the picture is turned over with the correct definition card then the child who flipped those cards can take them both. The partners continue to take turns until all the cards have been matched and taken. The partner with the most matches wins.



The strength to what is
right and pleasing to
God even if it is hard.



A deep desire and
longing to praise and
worship God.

Counsel



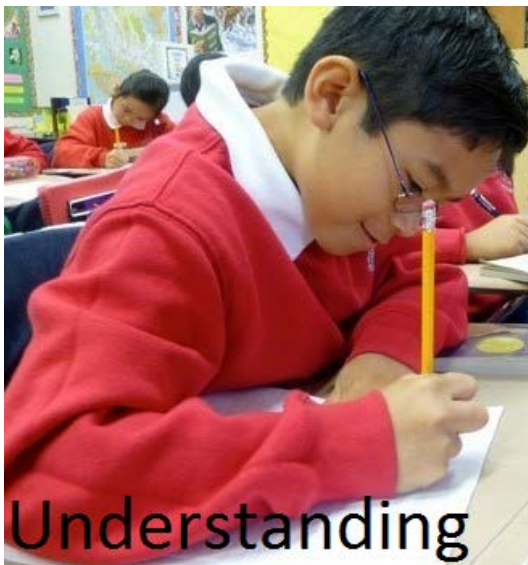
Praying to the Holy

Spirit to help you make
the best choice.

Knowledge



Seeing the world more
like God sees the world
so we can know what
God wants us to do
with our lives.



Understanding

Being able to

understand and explain
the important teachings
of Jesus and the
Church.



The ability to love God, the things that God teaches, and the things that God wants us to do.



Not wanting to offend God by doing bad things, because you love Him so much and don't want Him to be angry or sad.

Stations of the Cross Board Game



What happened
to Jesus?



Who condemns
Jesus to die?



What did the
soldiers put on
Jesus' head?



When Pilate asked
the people "What
shall I do with
Jesus?" What did
the people say?



What happened
to Jesus before
He had to carry
His cross?



What happens to
Jesus?



What does Jesus
take or accept?



What do the
guards give
Jesus to carry?

III

What happens to Jesus?

III

Why does Jesus fall?

III

Who was pushing Jesus?

III

Why were they rushing Jesus?

IV

What happened to Jesus?

IV

Who does Jesus meet?

IV

Does Jesus speak to His Mother?

IV

Does Mary speak to Jesus?

IV

Jesus did not say a word, but what did He do?

V

What happens to Jesus?



Who helps Jesus
carry the cross?



Why did the
soldiers make
Simon carry the
cross for Jesus?



A soldier made a
man carry the
cross for Jesus.
Who was this
man?



What happens to
Jesus?



Who offers her
veil to Jesus?



What is done
with the veil?



What is left on
the veil?



What happens to
Jesus?



Why does He
fall?



What did the
soldiers do to
Jesus when He
fell?



What does Jesus do?



Who does Jesus console?



What were the women doing?



What does Jesus say to the women?



What happens to Jesus?



What did the soldiers do to Jesus when he falls?



Jesus rises and makes His way to His final destination, which is where?



What happens to Jesus?



What do the soldiers take from Jesus?



What did the soldiers do with Jesus's clothes?



What happened
to Jesus?



What is Jesus
nailed to?



What did the
soldiers nail to
the cross?



What happened
to Jesus?



What did the
sign say above
Jesus's head?



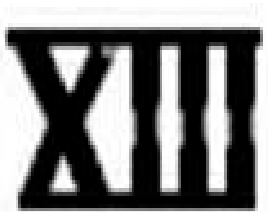
Who was Jesus
placed between?



Who did Jesus
ask to take care
for Mary, His
mother?



What happened
as soon as Jesus
died?



What happened
to Jesus?



To make sure
Jesus was dead,
what did the
soldiers do?

XIV

Who took Jesus from the cross?

XIV

Whose arms did they place Jesus in?

XIV

Jesus's body was wrapped in what?

XIV

What happened to Jesus?

XIV

Where did they take Jesus's body?

XIV

Who donated the tomb?

XIV

Who asked Pontius Pilate to put guards at the tomb?

XIV

Why were soldiers put at the tomb to guard it?

Answer Key

I

What happens to Jesus? Jesus is condemned to death.

Who condemns Jesus to die? Pontius Pilot

What did the soldiers put on Jesus's head? A crown of thrones

Pontius Pilate asked the people "What shall I do with Jesus?" And what did the people say? Crucify him, crucify him!

What happened to Jesus before he was put to death? He was whipped, dressed in purple and made to wear a crown of thrones.

II

What happens to Jesus? Jesus takes up His cross.

What does Jesus take or accept? His cross

What do the guards give to Jesus to carry? A huge wooden cross.

III

What happens to Jesus? He falls for the first time.

Why did Jesus fall? He was tired and weak from the beatings.

Who was pushing Jesus? The soldiers.

Why were they rushing Jesus? They had to finish as soon as possible.

IV

What happens to Jesus? He meets His mother.

Who does Jesus meet? His blessed mother.

Does Jesus speak to his mother? No

Does Mary speak to Him? No

Jesus did not say a word, but what did he do? Looked into the eyes of his mother.

V

What happens to Jesus? Simon helps Jesus carry the cross.

Who helps Jesus carry the cross? Simon

A soldier made a man carry the cross for Jesus. Who was this man? Simon

Why did the soldiers make Simon carry the cross for Jesus? Because it did not look like Jesus was going to make it.

VI

What happens to Jesus? Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.

Who offers her veil to Jesus? Veronica

What is done with the veil? His face is wiped with it.

What was left on the veil? The imprint of his face.

VII

What happens to Jesus? He falls for the second time.

Why did he fall? They were going uphill and he was weak.

What did the soldiers do to Jesus when he fell? They whipped and mocked him.

Jesus couldn't get up so who helped him? A soldier.

VIII

What does Jesus do? He consoles the women of Jerusalem.

Who does Jesus console? The women of Jerusalem.

What were the women doing? They were crying.
What did Jesus say to them? "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:27-31).

IX

What happens to Jesus? He falls for the third time.
What do they do to Jesus when he falls? They laugh and mock him. The soldiers push him.
Jesus rises and makes his way to his final destination which is where? The Place of the Skull - Golgotha

X

What happens to Jesus? Jesus is stripped of his garments.
What did the executioners take from Jesus? They strip him of his garments.
The soldiers cast lots for what? Jesus' clothes.

XI

What happens to Jesus? Jesus is nailed to the cross.
What is Jesus nailed to? A huge wooden cross.
What did they nail to the cross? Jesus' hands and feet.

XII

What happens to Jesus? Jesus dies on the cross.
What did the sign above Jesus' head say? Jesus of Nazareth. King of the Jews.
Who were on the other crosses? Two thieves.
Who did Jesus ask to take care of Mary, his mother? John
What happened as soon as Jesus died? The ground shook and the curtain in the Temple ripped from top to bottom.

XIII

What happens to Jesus? Jesus is taken down from the cross.
To make sure Jesus was dead, what did a soldier do? He thrust a spear into Jesus' side.
Who took Jesus down from the cross? Joseph and Nicodemus.
Whose arms did they place Jesus in? His mother.
Jesus' body was wrapped in spices and what else? Linen cloth.

XIV

What happens to Jesus? Jesus is laid in the tomb.
Where did they take Jesus body? To a tomb.
Who donated the tomb? Joseph from Arimathea.
Who asked Pontius Pilate to put guards on the tomb? Jewish leaders. (The members of the Sanhedrin.)
Why were soldiers put at the tomb to guard it? They were afraid that someone might try to steal the body and claim that Jesus had come alive again.

Stations of the Cross Board Game

Directions for Catechist: Set up the student directions game board, game cards, the spinner, and 2-4 playing pieces on a table. The cards can be printed and should be folded so that the question is on one side and the number of the station is on the other side. The answer key should also be on the table, facedown. The children can look at the answer key to check their answers to the questions.

Directions for Students: Choose a game piece and decide who will go first. The person chosen spins the spinner. They then move their game piece that number of spaces. If they land on a space with directions (such as “move back 2 spaces” or “move ahead to the next station”) follow the instructions. The player must stop at EVERY station. Even if the spinner tells you to move further than the square with the station picture and number, the player must stop on the square with the station number and picture. When a player lands on the station square they must answer a question for the station. The questions can be found on the cards and they are labeled and separated by station number. Answer only one question from the station card that matches the number station you are one. Once the player has moved, followed the direction on the space (if there are any) or answered a question if they landed on a station square, their turn is over, and the next player spins.

Eucharist Vocabulary Word Scramble

Directions: Look at the words below. They are words that have to do with the Eucharist, but the letters are all scrambled. Rearrange the letters to their real meaning. Then see if you can remember what the word means. You can race your partner, work together to figure it out, or do it yourself.

Sample:

EHITURACS = EUCCHARIST and it means ... When we receive Jesus's body and blood in a sacrament

Now you try:

ATODRNIAO = _____ and it means _____

OHTS = _____ and it means _____

REBDA = _____ and it means _____

NWIE = _____ and it means _____

CIMONUMON = _____ and it means _____

Bonus!

TRAABNISOUSTATITN = _____ and it means _____

Baptism Symbol Sort

Directions: These cards have the symbols of Baptism on them. Some cards list symbols as you see them on the outside and other cards say what the symbol shows is happening on the inside. Create two groups with the “Inside” “Outside” headers and sort the rest of the cards.

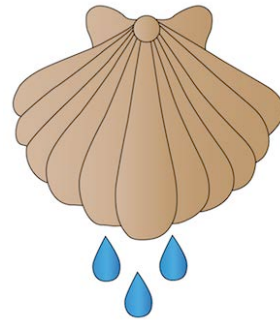
OUTSIDE

INSIDE

WATER



**CLEANSING THE
SOUL FROM SIN**



OIL



SEAL OF CHRIST



GODPARENTS



**ACCEPTANCE
INTO THE CHURCH**



WHITE GARMENT



CLEAN SOUL



NAME



GOD CALLS YOU BY NAME



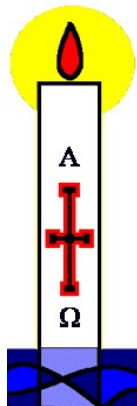
BAPTISMAL VOWS



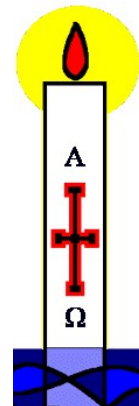
BELIEVING WITH THE CHURCH



CANDLE



LIGHT OF CHRIST



Appendix C

Preparing and Supporting Catechists

Catechists have one of the most important jobs in the Church: teaching the youth about the faith. Unlike teachers in a school setting, however, catechists receive very little practical training on how to teach children. Catechists are also often volunteers, so they should not be required to complete extensive courses on educational theories and strategies. Parishes do have an obligation to prepare their catechists and to give them as much support as possible. This appendix will contain some suggestions for best practices for catechists to learn and know, a few suggested outlines for catechist meetings and trainings, and additional resources that parishes and catechists can use to further their knowledge, both for good teaching practices and for religious content knowledge.

Best Practices

The number one thing to keep in mind when working with children is to treat them like the special individuals they are. Catechists must never forget that the children they teach are gifts and children of God. It is also important to remember that, while all children are precious angels from above, they don't always act that way. Catechists must learn to show the children that they love and value them, especially when there is a child they don't particularly like. This section will offer practical advice and tips for making each child in the classroom feel valued, for avoiding behavior issues, and for dealing with issues gently when they arise. If catechists can keep the God-given value of each child in mind, these things shouldn't be too hard to implement in the Religious Education classroom.

Children who feel valued and respected in the classroom are much more likely to be engaged, to learn the content, and to display good behavior. Catechists can do quite a few things to help to foster these feelings in their students. The easiest place to start is in learning the kids' names and calling them by their names as much as possible. Catechists can greet the children by name (maybe throw in a handshake or high five as well) at the beginning of every class. This will help the children to feel at home in the classroom.

Catechists should also not be afraid to engage in small talk with the students at the beginning or end of class, or even in the middle if it doesn't become too much of a tangent. Student voice and opinion should be highly respected. The curriculum is designed to give students a lot of opportunity to talk and express their thoughts and ideas, but catechists should not be afraid to give students even more voice in the classroom. This voice can be expressed through choice of with whom to work when the students are engaged in group work, or even small choices such as whether to work with crayons, markers, or colored pencils when creating an art project. There should even be some choice surrounding where they sit during the prayer and scripture reading time (table and/or desk seats should be assigned because this offers children a sense of security and comfort, especially for the children who feel like they don't have any friends in the classroom). If children feel like they have a level of freedom to choose, and if their voices are respected, they will be much better behaved and more likely to listen and learn the content.

Catechists should also be very aware of keeping the children engaged in a developmentally appropriate way. Children should not be expected to sit and listen to a lecture for long periods of time. The curriculum has been written with this in mind, but there are still some spots during which the catechist will need to be leading the class in content learning. When

this is the case, catechists should be sure that they are asking questions of students and having the students discuss answers amongst themselves. Catechists should be aware when questioning the students to use higher order thinking questions. Parishes should provide catechists with this PDF¹ with Blooms Taxonomy of questioning. This PDF has sentence starters for each level of questioning so that teaching can be sure to ask questions that require not only recall and memorization but also explanation, application, organization of ideas, valuing, and ways to integrate learning in their lives for the children to discuss when they see their attention failing. Signs that children are losing attention include increased wiggling, noise, and blank daydreaming faces. Catechists should be taught to look for these signs and to start a new activity or get the students talking when they see these signs.

Another great way to reengage if you have lost the students' attention is to get the students up and moving. If the students are extra wiggly, noisy, or daydreaming, catechists can have everyone stand up and do ten jumping jacks or dance and sing a song. The class can play a quick game of "Simon Says," or you can pass a ball around and ask the students questions about what they have learned that day, that year, or even things they should know from previous years. These "brain breaks" as they are called in the education world should really be no longer than five minutes, or else the students can get too riled up and catechists will have a hard time getting them settled back down to listen. But catechists should not be afraid to utilize "brain breaks" to help reengage the students' focus when they see it waning.

Making sure that the students feel respected and keeping the students engaged are two great ways to avoid behavior problems and ensure that students are learning. This doesn't mean,

¹ <http://facultycenter.ischool.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Revised-Blooms-Questions-Starter.pdf>

however, that there will be no behavior problems. Every classroom should have a set of rules and guidelines that the students help to create. These rules and guidelines should be prominently displayed in the classroom for the catechist and the students to see. The class and the catechist should also agree on consequences for misbehavior, and these should be posted with the rule list. Some example consequences might be sitting in the “calm down” corner if a child is getting rambunctious or angry. They might also include being moved seats or having to write a note that their parents will need to sign explaining why they got in trouble. The students should know these consequences, and they should be warned at least once before the consequences are doled out. Catechists should be sure to enforce all the rules and guidelines equally. This will give students a sense of security and will also make for a smoother-running classroom. If catechists are too lenient, then the students will take advantage of this lenience, and the classroom will fall into chaos.

Supporting Catechists

It is the job of the parish, the diocese, and the local Catholic community to support catechists in their work of forming the faith of our children. Parishes are responsible for offering training to catechists before classes begin and answering questions and giving feedback when the class is in progress. This support will often be given by the priests and parish staff, but other parishioners have a responsibility to the catechists as well. Parishes are full of many different people, from many different walks of life, with many different talents and connections, who may be willing to offer help and services to catechists who need it. Catechists should be able to network with these parishioners in some way.

One way to get catechists and helpful parishioners together is through a parish dinner. Catechists, parents of children in the Religious Education programs, and any other parishioners

who would be willing to offer any help or services should be invited to attend. Here, catechists can talk with people who are willing to support them in their work, and they can get a better idea of the possible services available to them. A dinner like this would be a highly useful way of getting parishioners and catechists connected and making catechists feel like they have support in their important work.

Fellow parishioners are not the only people who can provide support to catechists. There are Catholic book stores, catechetical offices for the diocese, and other community organizations who may have services to offer to catechists as well. These organizations can be invited to a parish dinner as well, but perhaps a better way to get these people and places in touch with catechists is to have a diocese-wide catechist resource fair. When catechists know just how much support they have, not only in their individual parishes but in the diocese and community at large, they will feel much more confident and will be able to do their job better.

One last great way to support catechists is through mentorship. There are many different ways to set up a mentorship program with catechists. More experienced catechists could be linked to newer catechists to give advice and help. It could also just be a random pairing of two different catechists, or based on some profile filled out by catechists (for ambitious parishes and dioceses). This could all be done on a parish level or a diocesan level. Mentorship on a parish level would be easier to organize, but mentorship on a diocesan level has many great opportunities for being more useful to catechists. Catechists from different places have different perspectives and ideas to bring to the table. A catechist from a small parish with little support could greatly benefit from networking with a catechist from a larger parish who might have suggestions for where to find support. Likewise, a catechist from a larger parish could benefit

from the creativity that a catechist from a smaller parish needs to show to teach their classes with fewer resources.

Catechists have a huge and important job, but often they are unaware of the many strategies and resources available to them. It is the job of the parish and the diocese to make sure that their catechists are well trained, not only on the content of faith and how to use the curriculum, but also on the best strategies to use in their classrooms to enhance learning. Parishes, the dioceses, and the community at large should be put into contact with catechists if they have support and resources they are willing to offer. Any teacher will tell you that the community that is available to offer support is huge and invaluable. Teachers have parents, other teachers, third party education organizations, and other outside companies all very willing to offer their help. There is a similar community surrounding religious education, and catechists just need to be able to find it. Once they are trained on strategies and best practices and are put into contact with the many people willing to help them, they will feel much more capable of doing their jobs. This feeling of capability will trickle down to the students so that great learning and spiritual growth can occur.

Appendix D

Educating Parents, Guardians, and Sponsors

Parents and the Church are allies in the faith formation of children. The communication between parents and the Church does not always display this alliance however. For this reason, I have written this appendix to outline the importance of parent education and give some of the best practices for parent communication. It will also provide sample agendas for two parent-meetings: one before classes start and one to debrief at the end of the year.

Importance of Educating Parents

Parent involvement is crucial for the faith formation of children at any age. Confirmation classes for students in middle and high school often will include meetings to help the parents understand what their children will be doing. Parent participation and education is even more important given the changes brought on by the Restored Order. Parents of third graders have so much more influence in their children's lives (as opposed to parents of adolescents), because younger children still seek to please their parents and are more willing to take their suggestions and advice. These parents will also likely have many questions and misconceptions about the change in sacramental preparation. It is vitally important that parents clear up any misconceptions surrounding Confirmation before they put their kids in sacramental preparation classes. Not only is there the danger that uneducated parents might not bring their children to receive the sacraments, but parents also play a key role in forming the faith and sacramental preparation of their children. It is common knowledge among the Church that "the family is the primary school in which saints are formed" (Aquila 2015). Parents should be aware of what their children will be learning so they can help their kids at home. But parishes also need to think beyond what the parents can do to help them in the formation of children; parishes need to think about what they owe the parents. Parents deserve to know the rationale behind making this

change in the sacraments. They deserve to have their questions answered and their concerns addressed. Because it is so important for parents to be informed, parent meetings are necessary to the success of any sacramental preparation class for children.

Best Practices for Parent Meetings

Parents are often busy people. Parishes must take this into account when they are planning for parent meetings. Considering the importance of providing parents with necessary information, we want to make sure that our meetings are set up in a way that will allow the biggest majority of parents to attend. Therefore, parent meetings should be held in the evenings to avoid conflicts with the work schedules. Child care should be provided so parents don't need to arrange babysitters. Food should be available for parents and children. Language differences should be considered, and translators should be accessible if a significant number of parents do not speak fluent English. Lastly, all of this information should be advertised, along with the date, time, and place of the meeting. Parents should be given oral reminders during Mass announcements as well as print reminders in the form of emails or bulletin blurbs. These elements will not guarantee 100% attendance, but they will put the least amount of stress on parents and make it easier for a vast majority to attend these important meetings.

It is important that parents know that they can bring young children to these meetings. Parishes must keep in mind that all the parents who attend these meetings have at least one young child (the child they intend to enroll in classes). Many parents do not want to leave their children at home with a babysitter, either because they don't have the money or because they don't have a family support system in the area to care for their children. Therefore, it is very important that parents know that they can bring their children and that the children will be taken

care of. The child care can be approached in a few different ways. The meeting presiders can set up a safe space for the children to play in the same room as the parents. They should have activities prepared to keep the children busy (toys, balls, paper and crayons, etc.) so that the adults can focus on the meeting (Grassi and Barker 2010). The other option would be to gather volunteers to entertain the children in another room. This may be preferred because this set-up provides even less distraction for the parents. However, it also may be harder for the parish to organize. Whatever method of child care works best for the individual parish is not important. The important thing is that parents know that their children are invited. This removes one big obstacle that may keep parents from attending.

Food is also a very important element for increasing attendance and showing respect to families. If the meeting is held in the evening (as they should be to avoid conflicts with work schedules), there is a chance that it will be held during families' eating or dinner preparation times. Hungry children will become crabby distractions for parents, and hungry parents will find it harder to listen even if they don't have crabby children asking them for a snack. The parish need not provide a full-scale dinner for the families, but there should be a nice spread of snack food available at least. This food can be bought by the parish if there is a budget for it, or it can be provided through donations from parishioners. It is important to have no matter how it is provided, because it will show even more respect for the families' time and will increase attentiveness during the meeting.

Frequent reminders and reminders in various forms are also important for increasing attendance. For parents who attend Mass regularly, this is easy. The meetings can be announced during the church announcements, and they can be printed in the bulletin that is handed out each week. Archbishop Aquila writes in his letter *Saints Among Us* about seeing the faith of children

transform the faith of parents. He tells the story of one father who “learned from his son’s faith and fell more in love with the Holy Spirit and Jesus” through his son’s invitation to pray with him (Aquila, 2015, p. 13). Therefore, it is extremely important to get as many children involved in these new sacramental preparation classes as possible, not just for the sake of the children, but also for the sake of the parents. The only people who can sign these children up and bring them to the classes are their parents.

Parishes must be mindful of attracting parents who might not attend Mass on a regular basis. It may require some creativity to think about how parishes will inform parents of meetings, registration dates, and the restored order change in general. They must also keep in mind that many parents who are not necessarily active in the Church may still want their children to receive the sacraments. But these parents may be unaware of the changes taking place in sacramental preparation. They may not have Confirmation on their radar until their children are already entering their teenage years. Parishes must find new ways to target parents of third grade children, inform them of the change, and invite them to these informational meetings.

Many of these types of announcements are made during Mass or in the weekly bulletin that is handed out at the end of Mass. But announcements of this kind will not reach parents who do not regularly attend Mass. Luckily, second grade (the year in which children previously have received First Reconciliation and First Eucharist) is still a sacramental preparation year. Parishes can use the information from parents who had enrolled their children in second grade sacramental preparation to send out emails, paper mail, or even orally inform parents (over the phone, or in a meeting at the end of the second grade year) of the change coming in third grade. The parish could also use their church registration information to find families of upcoming third graders to send them letters or emails inviting them to attend the meeting to find out more about

the third grade sacramental preparation classes. Of course, all of these announcements, letters, emails, and oral reminders must be provided in a language the parents can understand (Grassi and Barker 2010).

Another clever idea to increase awareness and attendance of these meetings would be to involve friends and grandparents. Make it clear that the meeting does not require any sort of commitment, and encourage parishioners to invite friends who may have children in third grade as well. The invitation from a friend may be more likely accepted than an invitation from the church. Grandparents too can be a force to be reckoned with. The senior population of the parish are often more frequent Mass attendees and will often fight fiercely to form the faith of the grandchildren. Grandparents should be encouraged to invite their children and grandchildren to the meetings as well. An army faithful grandmas and grandpas on a mission to save the souls of their grandchildren (and children) could bring more parents to the meeting than an email blast or bulletin blurb ever could.

Parents are incredibly important players in their children's preparation for the sacraments. If they are informed and understand the rationale behind the Restored Order changes, they are much more likely to sign their children up for the classes. If they understand what their children will be learning and are given tools and resources to help, they can help to continue and further the children's spiritual development at home. Because parents are so important, parishes should do all that they can to make sure that parents have all the information and resources they need. This starts with making parent meetings accessible to all parents. This can be achieved by being aware of parents who work and holding meetings outside of the normal working hours; providing child care, food, and translators (if needed); and making sure the parents get reminders and encouragement to attend the meetings in a way that makes sense to them. Well-designed parent

meetings will increase the number of children enrolled in the sacramental preparation classes. Because parents learn from their children nearly as much as their children learn from them, this will not only help to save the souls of so many children, but may also bring many a parent closer to God as well.

The Meetings

To offer further assistance to parishes in reaching parents, I have designed some suggestions for two parents meetings, one at the beginning of the year before classes start, and another at the end of the year to help parents know what to do next. Parishes may also want to have a meeting around the middle of the year to inform and assist sponsors in their duties as well as to get feedback from parents about how things are going at home. This feedback from parents can also be acquired through informal questions at drop-off and pick-up.

Meeting I: Starting Off Strong

Approx. 1-1.5 hours

Setting:

- This meeting should take place before the sacramental preparation classes begin and before the deadline for class registration.
- Seating should be arranged around tables of 4-6 chairs each. This will create natural groups in which parents can discuss the questions provided.
- The food should be set up on one side of the room, somewhat out of the way of the main meeting space.
- There should also be a Question Box in a prominent location (maybe by the food) so that parents can write down questions and concerns they have about the Restored Order or what their children will be learning over the course of the year. This box could also have been put out in the narthex of the sanctuary for a few weeks prior to the meeting so that parents can write down questions when they arrive for or leave Mass. If the box is left out during the weeks before, the purpose for the box should be clearly outlined for all to see so that questions and concerns all surround the topic of the Restored Order and third grade sacramental preparation.
- If children are being kept in the same room as parents, their space should be set up and clearly marked. It should look exciting and inviting enough for children to want to stay there.

Welcome: Give parents time to settle their children into activities (if they are being kept in the same room), to get food, and to find a seat. Give them a few minutes to converse with other parents.

Opening Prayer (approx. 5 min): Thank the parents for coming, and open with prayer.

Invitation (approx. 5 min):

- It is extremely important to start by thanking the parents for being active and engaged in the spiritual development of their children. By making sure they are educated in the faith and by bringing them to receive Confirmation and First Eucharist, they are giving their children a wonderful gift. They are giving the gift of a life-long relationship with God and Jesus, the strength of the Holy Spirit that will help them through the tough times that they may face in the future, and the knowledge and tools that they need to accomplish everything that God has planned for them.
- Tell the parents that they are fulfilling the baptismal promises that they made when they had their children baptized and the promises that their parents made for them when they themselves were baptized. Tell them you are sure that it makes God very happy to see them here (Hanning 2015).
- Quickly go over the agenda. Display or pass out the [Agenda Hand Out](#) if necessary.

Purpose of Confirmation (approx. 30 min):

- Discussion Question: Have the parents discuss the answer to this question in their table groups. Give them between 5-10 minutes to come to a consensus at their table. “What is the purpose of Confirmation?”

- Collect answers from the groups. Present the Catechism's definition: "[B]y the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed." (CCC 125)
- Use the Frequently Asked Questions page from the Archdiocese of Denver website and chapter one of *Restoring Order to Catechesis* to help address the misconceptions that the parents have about Confirmation. Use the discussion question answers as a starting point. For example, if a table group named mature choice as a central element of Confirmation, tell parents that it is not necessary for children to be mature before they are confirmed, but rather maturity is a product of Confirmation (Archdiocese of Denver 2016).

Expectations and Logistics (approx. 30 min):

- The purpose of the sacramental preparation class is to prepare students to have a deeper and more loving relationship with God and so better prepare them to receive the sacraments at the end of year. But the catechists cannot do all of that alone; the home is the "domestic Church," and parents are even more important when it comes to forming the faith of children.
- Have the parents discuss this question: "What are some things you are already doing at home to form the faith of your children?" Going to church and praying are obvious ones and very important, but remind them to think outside the box of "religious things" and include things like modeling good and caring behavior and how they help their children know right from wrong.
- Have groups share out. Write their answers up on a board or large paper on an easel. This may be a good opportunity for parents to share and receive good ideas from other parents to use in their own home.
- We know family life is so busy these days, but if nothing else the families should be attending Mass and bringing their children to the weekly class meeting. Tell parents that directly after the meeting there will be a small gathering (in a specified area of the room like the back corner) to talk about carpooling to help ease scheduling conflicts surrounding Mass or class times. (It may be best to put a very involved parent in charge of taking care of this group. It will take some of the responsibility off of the presenter.)
- Prayer is also very important. Praying before meals and bed are pretty easy habits to get into. The students will also be making and bringing home tools to help them memorize prayers and incorporate prayer into their daily lives. Parents should look for those and use those resources if they can.
- Moral development is also extremely important and probably something that many parents already do. A good way to increase their relationship with God is to bring Him into the discussions around moral development. When you are talking to your child about something they did wrong, ask if they think it made God very happy to see them do that. Also catch them doing good things, and bring God into those situations as well by saying things like "I can almost see God smiling at how much fun you are having, or at how helpful you are being."
- There will not be much homework given over the course of the year, but there will be two consistent things that should come home at the end of every class. The student will be

bringing home books with saints' stories. These are meant to be read with the family to help the student start to think about who they might want to choose as a patron, as well as to help them see how saints lived and how they might become saints too. There will also be a "Review Page," which will explain what they learned in class that day and offer extension activities to engage in at home if you desire. This can also be used to start discussion and/or review topics learned.

- Leave time aside for questions afterward.

Closure (approx. 10 min):

- Inform parents that the Catechists and parish staff are there to help them in any way possible. If they ever have any questions, they just need to ask. Provide the email address of the person in charge of faith formation at the parish. They can direct questions there or to the catechist(s) before or after classes.
- Also provide them with the [List of Religious Resources](#) that they can use at home. There should be no expectation that they need to use these things, but rather that these things are just one more resource to use if they desire.
- Quickly remind parents of important dates (registration deadlines, first class, next meeting, etc.) and of the carpool group that will meet in the back (or other specified location)
- Close with prayer.

Meeting II: Where to Go from Here

Approx. 1 hour

Setting:

- This meeting should take place after the reception of the sacraments and before the registration deadlines for the next year's classes.
- Seating should be arranged around tables of 4-6 chairs each. This will create natural groups in which parents can discuss the questions provided.
- The food should be set up on one side of the room somewhat out of the way of the main meeting space.
- If children are being kept in the same room as parents, their space should be set up and clearly marked. It should look exciting and inviting enough for children to want to say there.

Welcome: Give parents time to settle their children into activities (if they are being kept in the same room), to get food, and to find a seat. Give them a few minutes to converse with other parents.

Opening Prayer (approx. 5 min): Thank the parents for coming and open with prayer.

Invitation (approx. 15 min):

- Complement the parents on how much their children have grown over the course of the year. Thank them for their participation in the process.
- Discussion questions: Have you noticed changes in your children over the year? Have your children helped you to grow deeper in your faith? (Give parents about five minutes to discuss with their table groups)
- Collect answers from each group and share stories.
- Discussion question: Where would you like to see your children go from here? (Give another few minutes for discussion and then collect answers)

Mystagogical Catechesis (approx. 10 min):

- Explain the meaning of mystagogical catechesis (going deeper into the mystery, usually through the explanation and exploration of symbols). Children will explore how their faith has changed since receiving the sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist. They will also explore how their role in the Church and the world is different after becoming a fully initiated member of the Church.
- This will be the type of catechesis that will encompass the next two years of the children's religious education. Explain that the students will be engaging in deeper and different kinds of prayer, planning and executing service projects, participating in Sunday Masses, and engaging in deep discussion about the faith. These two years of mystagogical catechesis will then feed right into middle school youth group programs.
- Parents should not be alarmed that this mystagogical catechesis sounds like so much more work. The schedule for classes will look very similar to the sacramental preparation classes, so busy parents should not see an increase in responsibility where the classes are concerned.

What Parents Should Do at Home (approx. 10 min):

- Home life and parents are still instrumental to the growth of the children in faith, however. Parents can do many things to help their children grow in faith, unlock the gifts of Holy Spirit bestowed on them in Confirmation, and dive deeper into the Mystery of faith.
 - o Pray together as a family, using formal and spontaneous prayer
 - o Read the scripture together. A great tool is USCCB.org. This site has the daily readings, and you can also have the opportunity to look ahead to Sunday's readings and meditate on them during the week. They also offer email reminders and podcast options. You could even listen to the daily readings while making dinner!
 - o Participate during the mass, either in a ministry or by singing and following along with the readings from within the congregation.
 - o Serve in the community. Help your children realize that there is a wider world that they can serve. Programs that offer one-to-one sponsorship of needy children around the world (Compassion.com or Unbound.org, for example) can be extremely valuable for teaching children. If you have the means, you can support a child in need with only a small monthly gift, but the best part is that you and your children can write letters to the child. You can learn about their life and tell them about yours.
 - o Encourage your children to make a weekly offering to the Church. If the children have a source of income (an allowance or something similar) they can give a tithe. If they do not have monetary income, they can also offer a good deed to the Church. (If possible, provide a stack of offertory envelopes for children to each parent, or at least give them access to the following website link. Envelopes in bulk or in periodic mailing can be found at this website <http://www.osvoffertory.com/Products/OfferingEnvelopeServices/ChildrenTeenEnvelopes.aspx>)

Make and Take (optional approx. 15 min)

- You can invite the parents to make a [Using the Gifts of the Holy Spirit Question Board](#).
- Materials:
 - o Poster board, questions packet, glue, scissors, and markers (optional)
- Directions:
 - o Cut out the title of the board or write your own and paste it at the top or in the middle of the poster board.
 - o Cut out each question bubble and glue it onto the board.
 - o Decorate the rest of the board however you like.
- How to use at home:
 - o This poster can be put in the child's room or any other place where conversations happen near the end of the day (in the nightly prayer space, or where the family eats dinner, etc.)
 - o Ask your child one or more questions daily to help them think about how they used the gifts of the Holy Spirit throughout their day, or where they could have used them when they didn't.

Closure (approx. 5 min):

- Hand out the [Resources for Mystagogy](#) sheet, and remind the parents that the church leaders are always there to help them with any questions or concerns.
- Remind the parents of dates when mystagogical classes begin and other important dates (registration deadlines, retreats, talks, etc.)
- Close with prayer.

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