

Are you ready to reawaken a culture of life in your domestic church?

The Pelican Project's mission field is within the walls of the home – *the domestic church!* It is here, gathered around the family table children first grow in faith and knowledge of God's design for life and love.

Our resources are designed to accompany parents as they teach their children the "why" behind what Christ's Church teaches about the dignity of human life, starting with His command *to love*. Our life-affirming tools help parents develop in their children a cohesive moral vision that honors the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.

Pray, Grow, and Serve Weekly Devotional Series

Our Pray, Grow, and Serve Weekly Devotional Series follows the rhythm of the liturgical cycle, uses age-appropriate verbiage, honors parents as their child's primary educator, and encourages honest, life-affirming, Christ-centered dialogue.

HOW PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE WORKS:

Encourages families to: Pray by taking Christ's hand and letting Him lead. Grow, by developing a better understanding of God's love and the Church's teaching of the sanctity of human life. Serve, by putting our faith in action with life-affirming acts of service.

WHAT PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE COVERS:

Following the flow of the liturgical cycle, we will call special attention to Advent, Lent, Holy Days of Obligation, and various feast days of Saints.

We accompany you as you discuss complex issues and the difficult topics that deny the dignity of the human person, aka *the hard stuff*. Topics include: Suffering, protection of the unborn, marriage, and gender.

HOW TO USE PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE:

Make it a priority! Commit to sit with your child each week and read the devotional together. *Along with your faith, the most important thing you can share with your child is your time and steady presence.* Be sure to follow through each week with prayers and service to your family and community. We recommend printing the devotional and hanging it on the refrigerator or family bulletin board to serve as a reminder for all members of the family.

Plants Seeds | Grow Deep Roots | Form Disciples | Celebrate LIFE

For in Christ Jesus, only faith working through love counts for anything. Galatians 5:6



Catholic
LIFE happens here.

RE.AWAKENING A CULTURE OF LIFE IN THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

1st Sunday of Advent | the Jesse Tree

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

what is Advent?

Advent is a season within the Church that we prepare our hearts to remember and celebrate the gift of the Incarnation. The **Incarnation** is when God the Father sent God the Son into the world through His mother, Mary. During the **Annunciation**, the Angel Gabriel told Mary that God wanted her to be the mother of His divine Son, Jesus. Mary said, "Let it be done to me according to your word!" This is called her "fiat" or "yes!" to God.

Jesus came into this world so that we may have new life within us and that we may have it abundantly! Throughout the four weeks of Advent, we must prepare to welcome Jesus into our hearts with great joy. Like Mary, God asks each of us for our fiat, or "yes," to receive Jesus into our lives and trust in His goodness!



a child is born

God chose first to give the world His Son, Jesus as an unborn child.

Like you, Jesus grew in His mother's womb for nine months. Throughout the four weeks of Advent, we must always remember that the life of every unborn child is the intentional and loving work of God.

God chose to give the world His Son, Jesus, through a family.

From the time Jesus was born, Mary and her husband, Joseph (Jesus's foster father) raised Jesus. Within their family home, they shared meals, laughter, sorrow, care, celebration and most importantly, love.

how do we prepare for Jesus?

This Advent, we prepare for Jesus's coming by praying, growing, and serving with our families, and our church community.

pray

Prepare to receive Jesus in your heart this Advent through prayer. A powerful and fun way to pray is to close your eyes and travel back in time, picturing yourself sitting with Mary and Joseph as you recount the events of the Gospel. What do you see? Smell? Hear? How do you feel? What is God sharing with you? What are the words they are speaking into your heart?

grow

A meaningful way to prepare for Jesus's birth is to learn the story of **Salvation History**. This is the story of God preparing His people to receive His Son, Jesus. A fun way to understand God's plan is through **The Jesse Tree**, a family tree that introduces us to 27 men and women throughout the ages who shared in God's plan to send us Jesus so that He may offer us the gift of salvation.

Did you know that the Story of Salvation is your family story too, and it is not over yet?! Just like the men and women before us, God has a special mission for YOU to share in His holy work. Always remember that you are made in the image and likeness of God, and your identity within this family is sacred.

serve

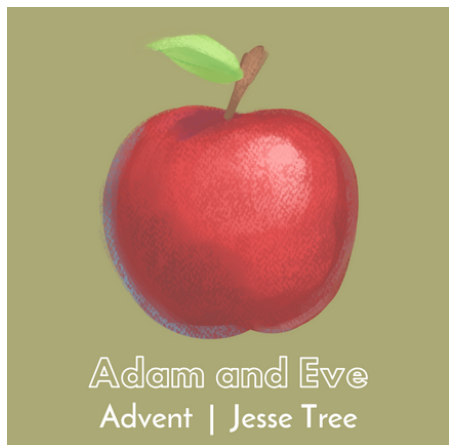
Jesus could have stepped into humanity and immediately sat upon a golden throne with servants and fanfare, but He chose not to. The Savior of the world was born in Bethlehem, surrounded by His loving mother and foster father, animals, and shepherds. With a manger of hay as His throne, in the silence of a cool night, He came to serve, not to be served.

During Advent, let us prepare our hearts by remembering Jesus's perfect humility. Follow His example by humbly serving your family. Take up a new chore, choose the lesser seat, and let your siblings go first. By living like Jesus we open our hearts to His love.

2nd Sunday of Advent | the Jesse Tree

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

About the Jesse Tree



When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6)

ADAM AND EVE: Our story begins with the oldest members of our family tree, Adam and Eve! God created them in His image and likeness and placed them in a beautiful garden called Eden. In His love for them, God gave them everything within the garden to enjoy—with one exception, they were not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve lived in perfect harmony with creation and shared in God's divine life until one day the devil tricked Eve. The devil planted a lie in Eve's heart—he tempted her to believe that God was holding back something very good from her and Adam.

This lie took root in Eve's heart, and she soon began to doubt God's perfect love for them. She actually believed that God didn't desire the absolute best for her! When she doubted God, the temptation to sin became stronger. Before long (like 5 minutes), she was eating the fruit of the tree and sharing it with Adam!

God's heart ached over Adam and Eve's decision to sin; in disobeying, they turned their back on God. As a just consequence, they had to leave the Garden of Eden. They no longer lived in perfect harmony with creation and no longer shared in the divine life of God. As their decedents, all of us are born with Adam and Eve's sin, this is called "original sin." Immediately, out of God's perfect love and mercy for our family, He opened a path to reconciliation so one day we could share in God's divine life again! It would take a long time for "The Way" to be fully understood. The Jesse tree is a walk along this path, often called "Salvation History."

Adam and Eve's story reminds us that God always wants the absolute best for us. God's way is always the best....Just follow His path, He knows "The Way!" (John 14:6)

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The Story of Salvation is OUR family story, and it isn't over yet! This story is a reminder that God has a special mission for YOU to share in His holy work and that you are made in the image and likeness of God, *your identity within this family is sacred!*

Pray, Grow, and Serve by visiting these family members in Sacred Scripture, praising God for His providence, and saying "yes" to His plan for YOU!

For the FULL 27 members of our Jesse Tree visit www.PelicanProjectMinistry.org/jessetree



And Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. (Genesis 22:6)

ISAAC was Abraham and Sarah's son, and he loved God as much as his parents. One day, God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice Isaac. A sacrifice is a ritual done to worship God. Often it meant giving back or "sacrificing" something of great value. In ancient times animals that offered food, milk, or hide were considered very valuable to a family and would be killed as a sacrifice to God. In the case of Abraham's test, God asked Abraham to give back a valuable piece of His heart to the Lord—the precious son he had long prayed for.

Isaac wasn't a baby; he was at least old enough to carry the heavy firewood up the mountain. This means that Isaac willingly agreed to what God was asking of Abraham! Once God saw the faithfulness of this father and son, He provided a ram in place of Isaac for the sacrifice. Phew!

Abraham and Sarah received Isaac as a gift from the Lord. God creates each of us in His image and likeness and places us into the arms of a family. Your parents are asked by God to love you with His heart and prepare you for eternal life in heaven with Him. Isaac's story reminds us that children are a gift to be treasured.

3rd Sunday of Advent | the Jesse Tree

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

About the Jesse Tree



“Joseph then hurried out, for he was deeply stirred over his brother, and he looked for a place to weep; so he entered his chamber and wept there.” (Genesis 43:30)

JOSPEH was the 11th son of Jacob and was deeply loved by his father. Joseph’s older brothers were jealous of him because they felt he was favored by their father. One day, Jacob gave Joseph a coat made of beautiful colors. From here, things took a dramatic turn—Most of Joseph’s brothers plotted to kill him! In the end, they didn’t kill him, but they did sell him into slavery for 20 shekels of silver. The very naughty brothers returned with Joseph’s coat of many colors stained with blood from a goat to trick their father. They told Jacob that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast!

From here, Joseph was taken to Egypt. After a very interesting series of events, Joseph became a close and valuable advisor to the Pharaoh. He prepared Egypt to survive a period of famine.

Back in Canaan, Joseph’s brothers and father were starving because of the famine. After hearing Egypt had food, the brothers traveled there to buy grain. They had no idea that Joseph had risen to great power! The brothers were brought before Joseph at the Pharaoh’s palace, the boys didn’t recognize him, but Joseph recognized them! While giving them grain, Joseph tested the brothers to see if they were sorry for what they had done. After a time, when all his brothers stood before him, Joseph looked upon them with overwhelming love and forgiveness. He stepped away with tears of joy pouring from his heart. He then fed his brothers a luxurious banquet and soon revealed himself as the brother they had once left for dead.

Family life can sometimes be messy. Siblings don’t always get along, and sometimes bad choices are made that hurt one another. Joseph’s story reminds us of God’s unending mercy, the power of forgiveness, and the gift of family reconciliation

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For the FULL 27 members of our Jesse Tree visit www.PelicanProjectMinistry.org/jesstree



“Then God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ‘You shall have no other gods before Me.’” (Exodus 20:1-3)

MOSES: If you're following along on our website, you will remember that we talked about Moses. Well, Moses had a stutter that he was self-conscious about. God thought that he was the perfect person to lead His people from slavery—but Moses wasn’t so sure. He felt nervous about his stutter and believed that he wasn’t going to be the best communicator to the Pharaoh.

God knew Moses had a stutter and still chose him because he was the best man for the job! But, because God loved Moses very much, he told him that his brother Aaron could tag along to free the Israelites.

Moses did an awesome job carrying out the big job God had asked of Him. His bravery and faithfulness allowed our family tree to keep growing!

God creates each of us differently. From our head to our toes we were made in all shapes, sizes, colors, and abilities! God creates each one of us with a great purpose. Moses’s story reminds us that what makes us different is precisely what God uses to bless others.

4th Sunday of Advent | the Jesse Tree

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

About the Jesse Tree



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So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives, and placed them outside the camp of Israel. (Joshua 6:23)

RAHAB's story is brief—but her place within salvation history is mighty! Rahab is one of four women mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (a fancy word for sharing a person's family tree, like we are doing here!) This is very important because long ago when Matthew wrote his Gospel, only men were listed on a family tree! Matthew and God recognized the very important role of women in the story of Israel and our salvation.

Remember when the Israelites were wandering through the desert for an exhausting 40 years?! They searched for "The Promised Land," where the promises (or covenant) God made to Abraham would be fulfilled. Well, making their way into the Promised Land (Canaan) was no easy task—wandering in the desert and fighting in battles was a part of the deal. Rahab was a pivotal figure in one battle...The fall of Jericho, a city of the land of Canaan!

Rahab was a courageous woman who helped the Israelites defeat the city of Jericho by hiding Israeli spies inside the city walls. She did this because, in her heart, she knew the God of the Israelites was the God of heaven and earth. She struck a deal with the Israeli messengers—if she helped them, her family's lives would be spared. She was instructed by the men to place a scarlet cord from her window and gather inside with her family. When the soldiers returned in three days, they would see the cord and spare everyone in her room.

Rahab was the wife of Salmon and the mother of Boaz...Boaz was a descendant of Jesus!

Her story reminds us when we find ourselves on the side of an event or situation where we are surrounded by those who deny God, we must be brave and stand up for God's truth—even if we feel like we are standing alone. When we are brave for God, He will always stand before us with a hedge of protection over our hearts!



When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit...(Luke 1:41)

ELIZABETH was married to Zechariah. The two of them had waited for a long time to have a baby. When she became pregnant, they were filled with joy. While Elizabeth was pregnant, she was greeted by her cousin Mary—who was pregnant with Jesus. Even though her baby John was still wrapped within Elizabeth's womb, he jumped for joy when his mother neared Jesus's presence! Elizabeth and Mary then spent the next three months together with Mary helping Elizabeth through her pregnancy.

Can you imagine the two women praying and pondering the future as they baked bread together? One bore a great prophet and the other, the Son of God!

Elizabeth's story reminds us that you are never too old to be used in a mighty way by God!

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

our Savior is born!

We have been preparing this Advent for the birth of Christ. Through our Jesse Tree, we have met many men and women who were chosen to be a part of God's plan to send us His Son, Jesus. This Christmas we must open our hearts to receive the life and love of Christ within us. Christ came to give us life, and to give it to us abundantly! (John 10:10)

prophecy fulfilled!

GROW: On Christmas eve, we pray over the final few hours of Mary's pregnancy when Jesus was still an unborn baby. While Mary had not seen Jesus's face, she knew Him in a very special way. While all moms know the kicks and pokes of their unborn baby, Mary also knew Jesus because she had prayed for His coming her entire life. She prayed over the psalms of David and the prophecies of Isaiah, she listened to the stories of Noah and Abraham, she knew of the rises and falls of her people, the Israelites. God had been preparing them for a Savior, and this unborn Child whom she was to hold in her womb for just a few more hours was Him!

Jesus performed many miracles during His life, healing people from sickness, restoring sight to the blind, and raising the dead back to life! He taught Divine Truth through stories called "parables" and traveled from place to place, sharing His perfect love, healing, and mercy.

During His life, Jesus instituted our beautiful Catholic Church, gave us the Sacraments, and gave us His own mother as ours to love. In dying on the cross, Jesus paid the debt for our sins giving us the gift of eternal life. Through Jesus, God fulfilled His promise to His people; the path for His children to once again share in His divine life was complete. Jesus is our path, He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life! (John 14:6)

PRAY: In prayer, thank Jesus for His love. Ask Jesus to guide you in all things according to His truth. Ask Jesus to bless your family by healing them of all wounds and strengthening their faith. Ask Jesus to reveal to you His will for your life and for the courage to follow where He leads you!

"If we celebrate with such solemnity the birth of Jesus, it is to bear witness that every human being is somebody unique and unrepeatable...somebody thought of and chosen from eternity, someone called and identified by his own name."

Pope St John Paul II

salvation history continues

The final character in our story of salvation is YOU! Salvation history continues because the goal of our life is to make our way to heaven where we can spend forever with God in perfect happiness. First, we become adopted sons and daughters of God through the Sacrament of Baptism, then we must live the Gospel. To do this, we must love God and love our neighbor by filling our thoughts, words, and deeds with His love.

SERVE: The most important way we can lead our thoughts, words, and deeds with love is by always being mindful of the dignity of every human person. God sent us His Son because He loved each of us with His whole heart. When we honor the dignity of another we remind ourselves to love what God loves!

As we enter into this Christmas Season, serve your family by being an example. Write on a sticky note this reminder: "Joyfully love with God's heart!" Place it beside your bed or on your bathroom mirror—somewhere you will see it each day.

Just like the characters we have learned about this Advent, God is asking you to love with His heart and to have the courage to do it with a holy boldness!



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. (Luke 2:19)

Mary, Holy Mother of God

Theotokos

GROW: As we learned at the beginning of Advent, the Incarnation is when God the Son, Jesus, took on human nature. God chose Mary to be His mother. Our all-powerful, almighty, and all-knowing God allowed Himself to become small and enter the world as an unborn baby. During Advent, we prepare for the birth of Jesus and celebrate His birthday on Christmas!

Jesus is one person with two natures, human and divine. This means that Jesus is fully human and fully God. Because of this, Mary is the **Theotokos**, the Greek term for "Mother of God." Theotokos is not simply a title we have chosen for Mary—it is the role God chose for her!

On the Cross, Jesus asked His apostle John to receive Mary as His mother on behalf of the entire Church. This means that Mary is our mother too! As our Mother, Mary desires to take each of us by the hand and lead us to her Son, Jesus.

Mary's mantle

God's design for the family is so important that He chose to give the world Jesus through the motherhood of Mary. Together, Mary and Joseph (Jesus's foster Father) gave Jesus a loving home. Mary wrapped Jesus in the cloth of her mantle as a baby, gently swaddling Him in her protecting arms. Mary does the same for us, gathering us under the protection of her mantle through her prayerful intercession!

the "Hail Mary" prayer

PRAY: We do not worship Mary. "Worship" is for God only, but we do honor Mary because of the role God has chosen for her. St. Maximilian Kolbe joyfully reminds us to "never be afraid of loving the Blessed Virgin too much. You can never love her more than Jesus did."

The Hail Mary is a common Catholic prayer. We receive the words of this prayer from Scripture! We read in Luke 1:28 that when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, he said, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you." In Luke 1:42, we read the words that Mary's cousin, Elizabeth, spoke to her, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb..."

We then ask Mary to pray for us. Who is a better prayer partner than the Mother of God!? James 5:16 reminds us to pray for one another, saying, "the fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful." Born without sin, Mary is the most righteous person in all of creation.

SERVE: We can serve our family and friends well through prayer! Do you have a rosary? If you do, ask if you can carry it with you to school. Allow it to be a reminder of Mary's love for you and her desire to lead you closer to her Son. Pray the rosary throughout the day allowing each prayer to be lifted for each person in your class. Pray they feel God's love all around them.



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the Child with His mother. (Matthew 2:10-11)

Epiphany of the Lord, a journey to find Jesus

good & beautiful "stars"

Pray: Today, we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord. This is the day we call to mind, among other things, the Magi, (known as the Three Wise Men), who traveled a long way to adore the baby Jesus by following a brightly burning star in the sky.

Like the star that led the Magi to Jesus's manger, God also places good and beautiful things in our life to lead us closer to His Son, Jesus. Spend time in prayer, ask Jesus to help you recognize which beautiful things in your day-to-day life are the "stars" that point your heart to His love.

seeking Jesus

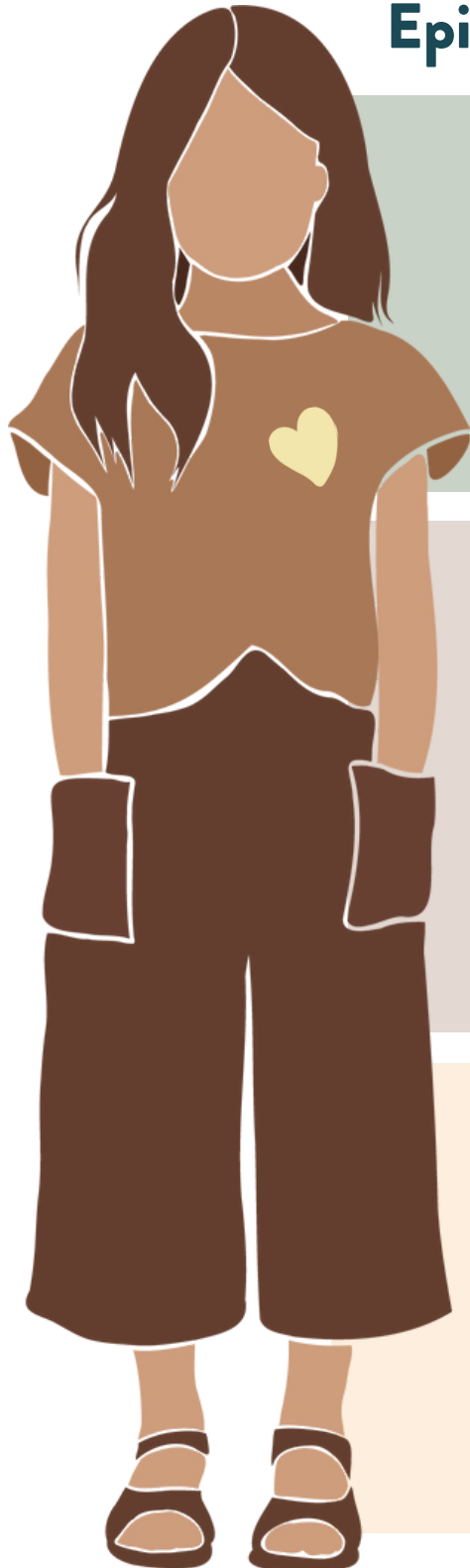
Grow: As we learned, the Incarnation is evidence that God desires us to know Him in a special way. Like the Magi, we must have the faith to seek Jesus. The Magi were willing to let their day-to-day life be "interrupted" by their journey. We do not know precisely what each of these men had going on at home, but we could imagine they were busy men leading busy lives with family, work, and responsibilities. When the star appeared, the Spirit of God pulled at their hearts; they knew they had to step out of the comfort of their lives and embark on a journey.

Their journey probably felt uncertain, and they may have been fearful at times, but their hearts were filled with hope! The Magi stepped out in faith, they were open to God's invitation to encounter Him. Imagine the great moment these men arrived at Jesus's manger! They fell to their knees in joy-filled praise and worship!

made for greatness

SERVE: Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI once said, 'The world offers you comfort. But you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness.' You were made to encounter the living God. You are called to step out in faith—even when it feels uncertain or when the journey feels long.

Sometimes, it is hard to step out in faith, especially when the journey ahead feels unknown. When we feel like this, we must pray and ask God for the courage to continue on. Today, serve your family by praying for them. Pray that each member of your family recognizes the "stars" God places in their lives and has the courage to step out in faith towards Him—even when the journey feels uncertain!



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. (John 1:29)

Jesus's unconditional, sacrificial, saving love

"those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:17)

PRAY: Sometimes God is called the "Divine Physician." This is a beautiful way of saying He can perfectly heal us from every wound. Here we are not talking about a skinned knee—we are talking about the hurt caused by sin. Every time you choose to disobey God, you hurt your soul. Jesus came to heal you from this pain and strengthen you to lead a life free from sin. In prayer, talk with Jesus this week about the places in your heart that need healing. Ask Him to give you the strength to stay close to His heart when you feel tempted to sin.

mer.cy [noun]

Serve: This week, we've learned that God loves with agape love, and because of His perfect love, He sent His Son, Jesus, to heal those wounded by sin—this includes you and me!

Jesus's love heals us because it is *merciful*. **Mercy** is putting compassion into action by extending the gift of forgiveness and reconciliation. Where there is no mercy, there is no love.

This week, talk with Jesus. Ask Him to show you how He is calling you to love more mercifully.

"He who knows how to forgive prepares for himself many graces from God. As often as I look upon the cross, so often will I forgive with all my heart."

St. Faustina

agape = sacrificial love

GROW: *Agape* is a Greek word that means sacrificial love. This type of love isn't a feeling—it's a *choice*! Loving sacrificially means unselfishly wanting the very best for someone else. Because God wanted the very best for us, He sent us His Son, Jesus. Jesus is the perfect example of agape love. He sacrificed Himself on the cross to redeem us from our sin and give us the gift of eternal life with Him. When we look at a crucifix we are reminded of Jesus's *unconditional, sacrificial, saving* love.

YOU are called to love with agape love. When you love like Jesus, you grow closer to His heart and experience a peace and joy that can only come from God. When you love with the heart of Jesus you show reverence for the dignity of those you encounter.

This week read more about agape love in our "Created for Love" LIFE Focus guide!



The PELICAN
PROJECT

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once, they left their nets and followed Him. (Matthew 4:19-20)

disciples, fishers of men

PRAY: Jesus was an excellent teacher. He taught His disciples many things using parables (short stories with a lesson) and compared the mission of Christian life to things that were already familiar to them. For example, Jesus told His apostles that He would make them "fishers of men."

A common and humble job during the time of Jesus was that of a fisherman. When Jesus used this language, the apostles understood that they were being called to follow Jesus and to invite others to do the same by casting their nets wide and gathering people (rather than fish!) to share in His life and love.

YOU are called!

GROW: Just as Jesus calls the apostles to be "fishers of men" He calls us to do the same! You may ask yourself, what does this mean? It means we must always be ready to share the love of God with those around us. A fisherman needs to prepare for his task by maintaining a sturdy boat and net. He must cast his net wide, hopeful to catch each fish no matter how big or small. He must be willing to labor—early mornings and heavy nets are all a part of a successful day's work in the water.

As disciples, we are called to prepare our hearts to share God's love by maintaining our relationship with Him through prayer and the sacraments. We must be willing to cast our nets wide, sharing Jesus with all we encounter, no matter how big or small. And, we must be willing to labor—to give our all as we share the joy of the Gospel by being Christ's hands and feet to those around us.

sharing the joy of the Gospel

SERVICE: Often, it is easy to share God's love with those who are feeling joyful. We can rejoice alongside them for God's many good and beautiful gifts! Sharing God's love with someone feeling scared, angry, or hurt is just as important!

This week write down three ways to share the joy of the Gospel with those struggling. (Example, I can help my brother with his chores when he isn't feeling well. I can pray with/for my dad when he has had a long day of work. And, when my friend feels uncertain, we can pray together for God's help.)



"God did not tell us to follow Him because He needed our help, but because He knew that loving Him would make us whole."

St. Irenaeus

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 5:10)

the gift of human life

PRAY: During the early Church, because of their hardness of heart, some people didn't understand that Jesus was God. They questioned the miracles He performed and the wisdom He shared. Scripture tells us that people ridiculed Jesus saying He was "out of His mind." (Mark 3:21) Before Jesus died, He told His disciples they would sometimes be treated the same way.

You are a disciple. Christ has asked YOU to follow Him in this life so you can be with Him forever in the next. A part of discipleship is standing up for the right to life He creates. This means you understand that life is a gift from God and every human life, from the moment God places them within their mother's womb, must be loved and protected!

It is hard to explain why some people disagree that all human life deserves protection. Some may even say you are "out of your mind" for saying so. This week, pray for courage to love with the heart of God—even when some don't understand.

freedom & law

GROW: Did you know that our freedom is found within God's law? It may seem strange that "freedom" depends on a "law," but it's true! Consider the natural laws that govern your body. Your body needs oxygen, which means to live you must breathe! Imagine you want to sit on the pool floor for 45 mins without coming up for air. Can you do it? Nope! Natural law requires you to breathe after just a minute or two of holding your breath. You could argue that "natural law" was limiting your freedom to sit on the pool floor for 45 mins, but that would just be silly! For the freedom to live and flourish we must follow certain laws!

It is the same with God's law. Just like our body needs oxygen to live, our soul needs Divine Life to have eternal life in heaven. This means there are divine laws we *must follow*. These laws can be summed up in Christ's command to love. Love is choosing to will the good of another. Willing the good of an unborn baby means we pray for his/her protection and good health and also praying for his/her parents!

faith in action

SERVE: Let's put what we learned this week into action! Sometimes families don't have all they need when their new baby arrives, but you can love them well by helping! Donate an item this week to a pregnancy resource center. Diapers or baby wipes would be very helpful! Remember to earn money for this donation by doing extra chores around the house!



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

...your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Heavenly Father. (Matthew 5:16)

modesty honors beauty

"I say to you, arise!" (Mark 5:41)

PRAY: Can you describe beauty? It's hard to put into words, isn't it?! Beauty makes us *feel* a certain way. It sometimes brings us joy, peace, or excitement and always invites our hearts to try to know where such beauty comes from. True beauty comes from God! Beauty is His light that shines forth!

In Scripture, we read about Jesus bringing a young girl back to life. He says to her *Talitha Koum*, "Little girl, I say to you arise." This story reminds us that it is the power of God that brings our body to LIFE! When we see true beauty, we get a peek of the power of God that dwells within! Write a list of the things around you that are beautiful. Don't forget to put yourself on the list because the life of God dwells within you too!

mod.es.ty [virtue!]

GROW: Did you know you are a marvelous creation of God? God gave you a unique body and soul, unlike any other person who has or will ever live. Because no one is exactly like you, you can share the beauty of God that dwells within you in a way that no one else can. What a gift!

The virtue of modesty protects this gift. Modesty is a spiritual "muscle" that guards and honors *who* you were created to be and the life and love of Christ that dwells within you. By dressing and behaving in a way that honors your great purpose as a marvelous Temple of God, you are practicing the virtue of modesty.

chalice veil

SERVE: Have you ever been at Mass and seen a veil covering the Chalice? The Chalice is a vessel created for a great purpose—to hold and share our Lord with others. *Sound familiar?*

Just like the chalice veil, we practice modesty because of the Divine that dwells within us. Modesty honors who we are—body *and* spirit, created with great purpose and dignity. Ask a parent to show you an image of a chalice veil this week. As a family talk about how each of you chooses to practice modesty?



How beautiful then is modesty and what a gem among virtues it is.

St. Bernard of Clairvoux

PRAY, GROW, SERVE

Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19)

we can never justify sin

...when we justify evil, we defile ourselves. (Mark 7:21-23)

PRAY: Consider this scenario: Lee has a project in science class due Monday, but Saturday night is the big basketball game. If his project isn't complete, his parents won't let him go to the game. Lee decides to ask John, a quiet classmate—who is super smart in science class and his neighbor—to help him with his project. John spends all Friday night explaining the material. Because of John's help, Lee's project is done Saturday morning! John then asks Lee if he'd like to walk to the basketball game as new friends that night. Lee says, "No." ... He doesn't want anyone to think he's friends with John since he isn't good at basketball.

Has Lee done anything wrong? *The answer is YES.*

John offered the gift of help and friendship, but Lee didn't offer the gift of friendship in return. Lee used John in a hurtful way. When we use someone, we objectify them. This means we treat them like an object—something we can use for our purpose and then forget about them. Human beings aren't objects. We cannot use people and must always encounter one another with a heart that wills their good.

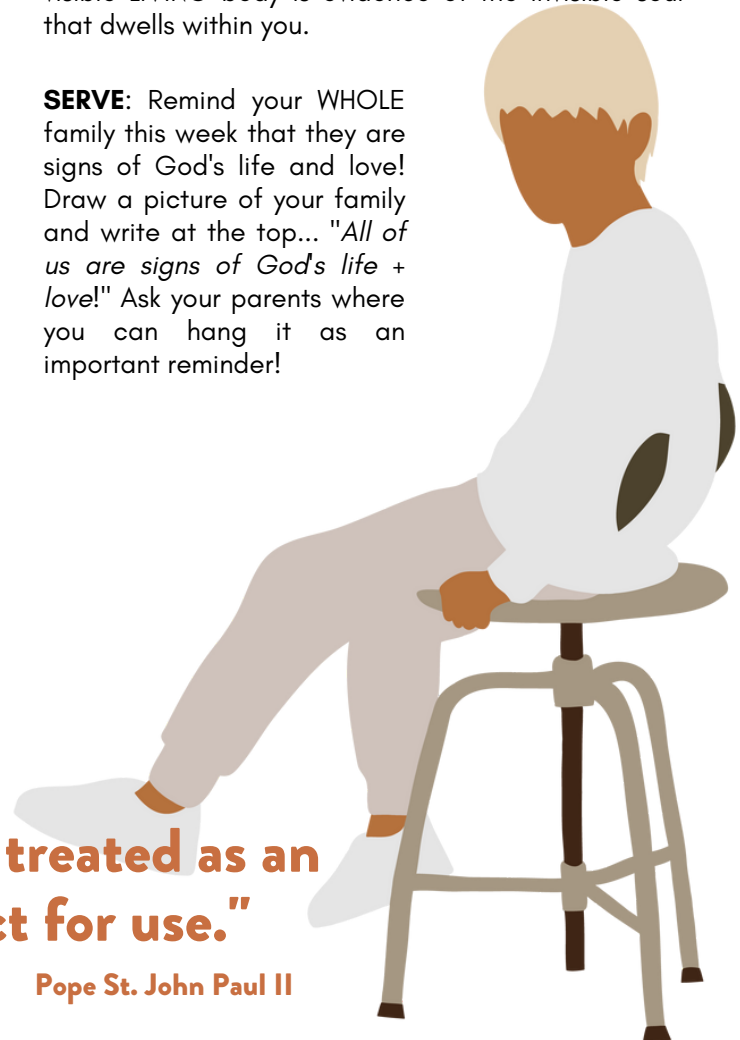
Scripture tells us that when we justify evil, we defile ourselves. This means that any time we choose not to love another, we disobey God—we sin. When we tell ourselves, "it's okay, they'll get over it." Or, "It's okay, it isn't a big deal." We are hurting ourselves. We can't become comfortable with not doing the right thing!

you are a sign of God's life + love!

GROW: Did you know that you are a living sign of God?!

Take a look in the mirror — can you see yourself? If you can, this means that you're alive! Your body came to LIFE when God, out of love, breathed into your flesh a SOUL! While you can't see your soul, your visible LIVING body is evidence of the invisible soul that dwells within you.

SERVE: Remind your WHOLE family this week that they are signs of God's life and love! Draw a picture of your family and write at the top... "*All of us are signs of God's life + love!*" Ask your parents where you can hang it as an important reminder!



"A person's rightful due is to be treated as an object of love, not as an object for use."

Pope St. John Paul II

WHAT IS LENT? | unvarnished canvas.

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

what is lent?

Lent is the season within the Church that we prepare our hearts to remember Jesus's agonizing **Passion** and glorious **Resurrection**. What does this mean?

Jesus came to save us from the slavery of sin and death. The **Passion** refers to His terrible suffering and death on the cross. He offered His suffering to God as the perfect sacrifice to satisfy the debt of our sin.

Three days after His death, Jesus rose from the dead—this is called His glorious **Resurrection!** Through His Resurrection, Jesus opened the gates of heaven and invites us to spend eternity with Him there. We call Jesus's life, death, Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven the **Paschal Mystery**.



how long is lent?

Lent lasts for 40 days. It begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at sundown on Holy Thursday.

Why is it 40 days?

We read in the Bible that after Jesus's baptism He went into the quiet of the desert for 40 days so He could concentrate on the hearing the voice of His Heavenly Father in His heart.

This was a hard time for Jesus because the devil tempted Him in every way! Like Jesus, during Lent we intentionally work on hearing the voice of God the Father in our hearts.

how do we hear God's voice?

We hear the voice of God in our hearts when we turn down the distractions in our life.

How do we do this?

The Church invites us to **pray, grow, and serve** through daily prayer, fasting, and giving alms. When we stick to these spiritual habits we have an easier time hearing God's voice in our hearts, loving with His heart, and knowing the will He has for our lives.

pray.

Prayer is a conversation with God. A conversation goes two ways—talking and listening. We can talk to God about anything! He loves you more than you could ever imagine and wants to be invited into every detail of your life. There are prayers of intention (when we ask for something), thanksgiving (when we thank Him), contrition (when we say we are sorry), and adoration (when we tell him how much we love Him).

fast.

Fasting is when we are mindful of the gift of food. During Lent we choose to fast from the "extras" like sweets, this means we don't eat them. Offering this small sacrifice in thanks to God has a beautiful sweetness that He loves.

almsgiving.

Almsgiving is giving what we have to others. This can include giving our time, treasure (money), or talents (things we are good at).

Almsgiving reminds us that *everything* we have is a gift from God. Lent is a time to make the good habit of loving others well by sharing with them the many gifts we have.

1st Sunday of Lent | unvarnished canvas.

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

pray

(Psalm 51:10)

"A clean heart, create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me."

Our Catholic faith is so much more than a Sunday obligation to attend Mass. Our faith is a relationship with God that changes everything about our life.

Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans that as we grow in faith, our hearts grow closer to Jesus, which changes the way we speak, think, and act! Our life begins to radiate the beauty of His love!

grow

Re.demp.tion (His work—our gift)

During Lent, we build the good habit of remembering Jesus's gift of Redemption. What is Redemption? Redemption is the saving work of Jesus's life, death, and Resurrection that rescued us from slavery to sin and allowed us to, once again, be adopted sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father.

Before Jesus died, He instituted the Catholic Church on earth. Within the Church, we have the Sacrament of Baptism. When you received your Baptism, you accepted the gift of Redemption—you were cleansed of Original Sin and became a son or daughter of God and a member of His Church!

serve

How do we build the good habit of remembering Jesus's gift of Redemption?

Sometimes life can be really busy. School, friends, homework, and chores can often take up much of our day. No matter how busy we get, we must always remember the most important and necessary part of our day is talking to God (prayer) and spending time in quiet so that we can hear His voice when He talks back to us!

This week ask your parents to help you take time each day to pray. Maybe you can set your morning alarm 10 minutes earlier and spend some time with Jesus before you get ready for school. Perhaps you can invite your family to pray with you for 10-15 minutes after dinner each night.

When you pray, thank Jesus for the gift of Redemption. Help your younger siblings understand how much God loves them by praying with them too!



2nd Sunday of Lent | unvarnished canvas.

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

pray

(Matthew 3:17)

"This is my Son, with whom I am well pleased, listen to Him!"

This Sunday, we read about the Transfiguration. This was when Jesus's human body appeared for a few moments as a dazzling, beautiful, glowing white light radiating His Divine glory! The Apostles Peter, James, and John witnessed this event. God the Father spoke from the heavens, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to Him!"

When we allow God to make a masterpiece of our life, we reveal God's dazzling light to those around us. God the Father tells us that we must listen to Jesus if we want Him to transform the canvas of our hearts!

serve

sharing your heart on paper.

God the Father chose Joseph to be Mary's husband and Jesus's foster father here on earth. We do not know much about Joseph from Sacred Scripture. We know that he was a carpenter and loved and cared for Mary and Jesus. There are no recorded words from Joseph in the whole bible!

In honor of the Solemnity of St. Joseph this month (March 19th), take some time with your family and think about St. Joseph. Even though Scripture doesn't tell us much about Him, we know that God chose Him for the VERY big job of being Mary and Jesus's loving husband and father. What qualities do you think God was looking for in a father for Jesus? What qualities do you think God was looking for in a husband for Mary? Write five ideas for each. Talk about them with your family.

grow

God the Father & Mary our mother

God designed the family to be the place we first learn to love. As children, we learn about God's love through the loving words and care of our mom and dad. The job of a mother and father is a very important job. Most of the time, moms and dads show their love really well, but because of sin, sometimes they don't. You may have experienced your mom or dad raising their voice or losing patience.

God the Father is our perfect parent. And, in His wisdom, He gave us the gift of our perfect mother, Mary. Pray to your heavenly Father. Thank Him for the gift of your parents' love, ask God to strengthen their faith, and pray for God's peace over your home. As we kneel and pray, know that your Blessed Mother, Mary kneels beside you. Her prayer is always that your entire family grows closer to the heart of her Son, Jesus.



3rd Sunday of Lent | unvarnished PRAY + GROW + SERVE canvas.

pray

(John 4:6)

"Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon."

Reading about Jesus in the Gospels helps us to understand how to love with the beautiful Heart of God. We must follow Jesus's example in praying, speaking, and acting. This Sunday, we read about Jesus meeting the woman at the well. She worked hard at avoiding her neighbors because they did not treat her well. Today, we would call them bullies.

Pray today over Jesus's choice to be a friend to this woman when no one else was nice. He spoke with her gently and invited her into His life in a very special way.

Pray today for the courage to follow Jesus and always speak kindly and gently, especially to those being bullied by others.



grow

lifting our gaze to heaven!

St. Therese of Lisieux once said, "Thy world is thy ship and not thy home." This is a lovely way of saying that we were made for heaven. As children of God, we look forward to spending eternity with God in the perfect happiness of heaven.

Keeping our "gaze on heaven" reminds us that we cannot become distracted by the chaos of this world. We must keep focus on our goal of heaven. This reminds us that we must "listen to Jesus," obey His commands for our life and follow His example of how to love with the heart of God.

Heaven is a gallery of God's most exquisite masterpieces. You are a beautiful work of art that God desires to delight in forever!

serve

glorify Him in others.

Open up your Bible and read Matthew 25:31-46. In this passage, Jesus tells us that when we care for *others* we also care for Him!

This week, show God how much you love Him by serving the needs of others. What are some good ways you can care for others in your domestic church (home) this week?

Here are a few ideas to get you started: Help a younger sibling get dressed in the morning, care for your common home by keeping your room clean, set the table for a family meal, pray for your family.

4th Sunday of Lent | unvarnished canvas.

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

pray

(John 9:35)

"Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

This Sunday, we read about Jesus healing a blind man. The Pharisees (a group within Judaism) did not want to believe this miracle. They had a hard time believing that Jesus was the Messiah and they did not believe that God would come and perform miracles for sinners.

Jesus asks the blind man if he believes that He is God. After answering, "Yes, Lord, I believe!" the blind man worshipped Him.

Sometimes we can be blind to the miracles God is working in our life. Every day God moves in your life. Do you have the eyes to see Him? Do you have the heart to believe? Pray over John 9:35 this week. Pray for the eyes to see and a heart that believes.

grow

You are, because you are wanted by God.

God is perfect. He is almighty, all-knowing, and all-powerful. There is nothing we can give to him that He needs. God created you into being not because He needed you—but because He wanted you. You are His work of art, and He delights in what He has created in you.

God invites you to be "all in" as His son or daughter. He wants to be a part of your every thought, word, and deed. He wants to shower you with the gift of His grace, care for you in your suffering, laugh with you in your joy, and longs for you to spend eternity with Him in heaven.

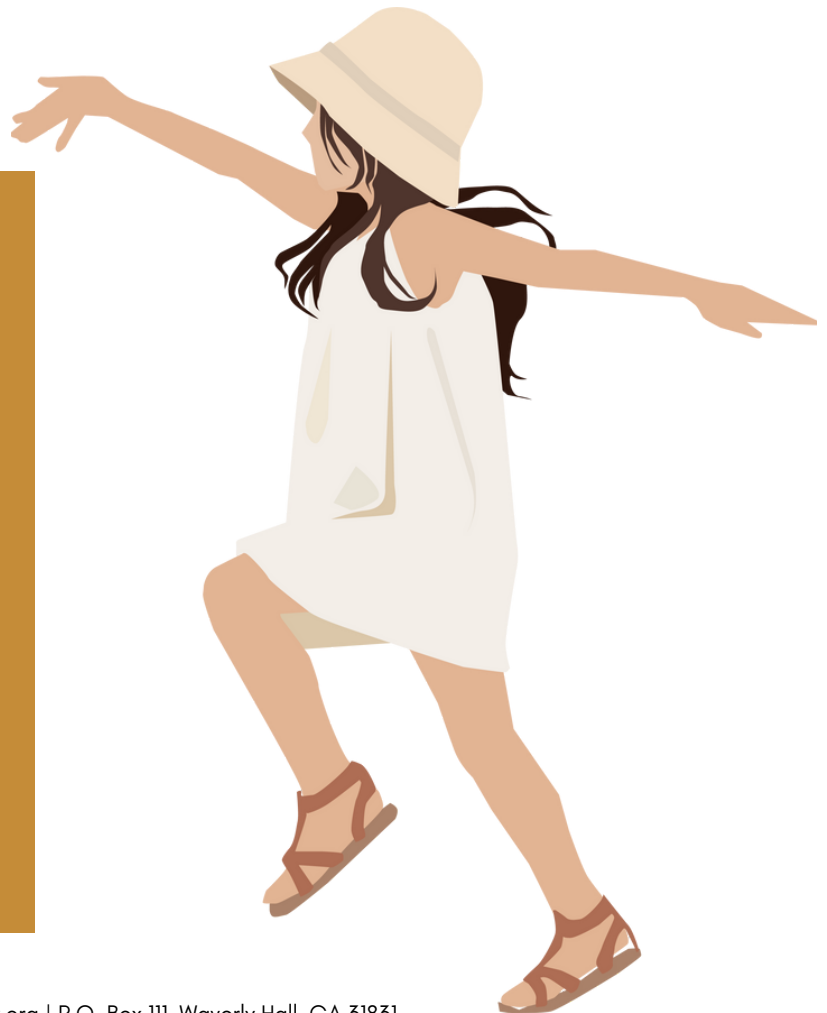
serve

growing in discipleship

Have you ever been around a group looking up to the sky? Did you look up too? Did you search for what they were looking at?

Last week we talked about "lifting our gaze to heaven." When you live life with your heart set on heaven, people will follow you. They will begin to search for what you are looking at—their hearts will desire heaven too! When we lead others to Jesus, we are living as **disciples**.

This week, commit to growing in discipleship. Everywhere you go—school, sports, and at home keep your gaze on heaven by loving with the heart of Christ.



5th Sunday of Lent | unvarnished canvas.

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

pray

(John 11:25-26)

"I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live."

This Sunday, we read about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. What an extraordinary miracle!

This Lent, we prepare our hearts to remember Jesus's agonizing Passion and glorious Resurrection—when Christ raised Himself from the dead! Through His resurrection, Jesus invites each of us to share in His victory over death. Just like Lazarus, we are given the miracle of new life!

God gives us the dignity of accepting or rejecting God's miraculous gift of new life. We can accept this gift by following Christ's command to love or turn our back on this gift through sin.

grow

natural law & moral law

At the Transfiguration, God the Father told us to "listen" to Jesus. God commands you and me to listen (obey) God's law! God wove into the created world around us something called natural law. The natural law allows the entire universe to exist from one moment to the next. For example, you and I know we must breathe, eat, and drink water to live! When we break this law, the consequence is that we hurt our bodies.

God also created moral law. This law governs how to love with our hearts set on heaven. God's moral law requires that we love others with both God's mercy and justice. Sometimes this is hard. Sometimes our feelings want to be in charge. For example, sometimes, we don't want to pray for the good of someone unkind to us, especially if we are angry or frustrated.

We know that love is a choice, not a feeling. Knowing God's law keeps us from making choices that oppose His perfect love. Following the moral law keeps our gaze on heaven!

serve

think about what we've learned!

Learning about the natural and moral law is very important. These laws aren't just a set of rules—they create a structure within which we can flourish! ...A structure by which our Divine Artist can create a masterpiece of our life!

God's moral law speaks to you through your conscience. Your conscience is a gift from God. This is the little voice in your heart that says "don't do this!" when you're tempted to do something you know is a sin. Every moral law can be summed up in these two commands from God: Love God, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Write down 5 moral laws that we must follow. (We'll give you a hint... take a look at the 10 Commandments!)



6th Sunday of Lent | unvarnished PRAY + GROW + SERVE canvas.

pray

(Luke 23:42-43)

“Jesus, remember me when you
come into your kingdom.”
He replied to him,
“Amen, I say to you,
today you will be with me in
Paradise.”

This Sunday, we read the Passion according to the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of Luke includes information about the two criminals crucified beside Jesus. Unlike Jesus, those men were guilty of their crimes. While suffering on the cross, one of the men had a change of heart. In that moment He set His eyes on heaven and wanted to be with Jesus forever! From the words shared between this man and Jesus we learn that it is never too late to give your heart over to Jesus.



grow

radiate His beauty!

Remember, you are a masterpiece of God's creation; He delights in you! Remember how much He loves you. Keep your gaze fixed on Him. Thank Him for His good gifts. Be the son/daughter, friend, and sibling He asks you to be. Be the disciple He is calling you to be. Listen to Him. Love His truth. Radiate His beauty with your heart full of His love. When you get distracted, go to the desert. Hear His voice. Pray for your friends, pray for your enemies, pray for your family, pray for yourself. Worship Him. Praise Him for the gift of Redemption. And, glorify Him, by caring for those in your life with His hands and Heart.

serve

eyelash to eyelash

At our Baptism, we are cleansed from Original Sin. From this moment on, when we sin, we must confess our sins to God, tell Him we are sorry and ask for forgiveness. Jesus gave us the Sacrament of Reconciliation to do this. Reconciliation is a big word that comes from Latin. If we break it down from Latin we get: "re" (back), "con" (with), "cilium" (eyelash). Simply put, reconciliation means to bring back together, eyelash to eyelash.

What do our eyelashes have to do with it?!

Think about how close you must be with someone to stand eye to eye, or eyelash to eyelash. Jesus desires us to be this close to Him—so close that He can gaze into our eyes, and we can gaze into His.

When we sin, we turn our back—and gaze—from Jesus. The Sacrament of Reconciliation allows us to turn back to Jesus restoring our communion. When we are forgiven our relationship is restored and we can stand before Him once again, eyelash to eyelash. Before Easter, receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

For they did not yet understand the Scripture that He had to rise from the dead. (John 20:9)

hope [virtue!]

A virtue is a gift from God (also called grace) that helps us grow closer to God. Hope gives our hearts great peace because we know that God desires us to be in heaven with Him, and He will give us everything we need to get there!

We receive the grace of Hope at our Baptism. We can pray that God strengthens this gift in our hearts every day. When we celebrate Easter we are reminded of everything Jesus did to give us the gift of heaven! He would have done it all even if YOU were the only person in the world

Christ, my hope is arisen!

GROW: Have you ever hoped to win your soccer game? Or, have you hoped to get an ice cream cone on the way home? We all "hope" for things—it is a feeling of excitement for what may happen!

Christian Hope, or the **virtue of Hope**, is much different. This Hope is rooted in the promise of Jesus—the promise that we can choose happiness forever in heaven and He will give us everything we need to get there.

Christian Hope isn't a feeling of excitement for what may happen—it is a feeling of excitement over what WILL happen if we choose it!

"Christ, my hope is arisen" are the words of Mary Magdalene's heart who saw the empty tomb—her words remind us of the promise of Jesus and the gift of the virtue of Hope!

God designed us to search for happiness. Because of this, everyone you know is searching for happiness.

Nothing in this world can fulfill us forever—only being with God in heaven for the rest of eternity can bring us perfect happiness.

PRAY & SERVE: Let others know that God will bring them happiness. Pray that their hearts meet Jesus in a powerful way. Invite a friend to Mass or Sunday School. Share this sheet with them and talk about the gift of Hope!

“Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song.”

Pope Saint John Paul II

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

what is Divine Mercy?

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ... (1 Peter 1:3)

In the 1930's Jesus shared a powerful message of His Divine Mercy with a nun named Sr. Faustina. Jesus asked Sr. Faustina to meditate on His sorrowful passion for the mercy of the world. **PRAY:** Praying for and sharing Christ's Divine Mercy bears witness to the dignity of the human person and God's perfect, merciful love for each of us. We are invited to pray this special prayer every day at 3 PM, the hour of Christ's death. **GROW:** Learn more about this powerful prayer below! **SERVE:** Service can be faithful conversation! Talk with your family this week about the different ways you experience God's mercy.

Who was Sister Faustina?

On August 25, 1905, Helena Kowalska was born in Poland. Helena was from a poor family who lived through the hard years of WWI. She only attended school for 3 years. When Helena was 19, she felt God calling her to be a nun. Helena made her vows on April 30, 1926 taking the name Sister Maria Faustina of the Most Blessed Sacrament with the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. Her friends called her Sr. Faustina for short.

How did Sr. Faustina Share Jesus's Message?

Sister Faustina wrote down the words Jesus spoke to her heart in a diary called Divine Mercy in My Soul. Through this diary, Jesus desired Sr. Faustina to share the truth of His healing, never-ending, Divine Mercy with the whole world. The entire diary is over 600 pages!

What is the divine mercy image?

Jesus placed an image of His Divine Mercy in the heart of Sr. Faustina. The image reveals two rays shining from His merciful heart. Jesus told her that the red and white "represent the blood and water." This reminds the faithful of the blood and water that poured forth from Jesus's pierced side after His crucifixion. Pope St. John Paul II explained that Christ's blood reminds us of the sacrifice of the Cross and the mystery of the Eucharist, while the water reminds us of Baptism and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

What is the message of Divine Mercy?

Ask for Mercy

Jesus reminds us that we must constantly pray with a *contrite** heart asking for the gift of His mercy. (*A heart that is sorry for our sin.) Jesus desires to shower us and the whole world with His never-ending mercy. God will forgive every sin when we ask with a contrite heart.

Be merciful

Jesus reminds us of His command, "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:36) When we receive God's mercy, we must then allow it to radiate from our hearts to those we encounter each day.

Completely trust in Jesus

For our hearts to be healed and transformed by Christ's mercy, we must be open to receiving His merciful love. Our hearts open when we trust in His perfect love. The prayer, "Jesus, I trust in You," must always be on our lips.

What is Divine mercy Sunday?

Jesus told Sr. Faustina that the Sunday after Easter should be the Feast of Divine Mercy. He asked her to pray a novena leading up to the Feast starting on Good Friday. Each day, Jesus gave her a special intention. The faithful are invited to pray this Divine Mercy novena! For the Divine Mercy prayers, visit: TheDivineMercy.org

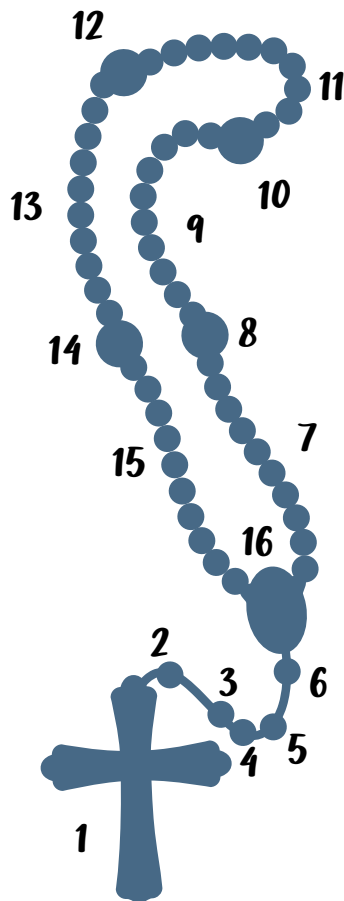
Jesus, I trust in you

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

praying the Divine Mercy chaplet

“Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful, so that I may never suspect or judge from appearances, but look for what is beautiful in my neighbors’ souls and come to their rescue.”

May Your mercy, O Lord, rest upon me” (Diary # 163).



HOW TO PRAY THE DIVINE MERCY CHAPLET

Pray this chaplet using Rosary Beads

1. MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

2. OPTIONAL OPENING PRAYER

O Jesus, eternal Truth, our Life, I call upon You and I beg Your mercy for poor sinners. O sweetest Heart of my Lord, full of pity and unfathomable mercy, I plead with You for poor sinners. O Most Sacred Heart, Fount of Mercy from which gush forth rays of inconceivable graces upon the entire human race, I beg of You light for poor sinners. O Jesus, be mindful of Your own bitter Passion and do not permit the loss of souls redeemed at so dear a price of Your most precious Blood. O Jesus, when I consider the great price of Your Blood, I rejoice at its immensity, for one drop alone would have been enough for the salvation of all sinners. Although sin is an abyss of wickedness and ingratitude, the price paid for us can never be equalled. Therefore, let every soul trust in the Passion of the Lord, and place its hope in His mercy. God will not deny His mercy to anyone. Heaven and earth may change, but God's mercy will never be exhausted. Oh, what immense joy burns in my heart when I contemplate Your incomprehensible goodness, O Jesus! I desire to bring all sinners to Your feet that they may glorify Your mercy throughout endless ages (Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, 72).

You expired, Jesus, but the source of life gushed forth for souls, and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fount of Life, unfathomable Divine Mercy, envelop the whole world and empty Yourself out upon us.

(Repeat three times) O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You!

3. OUR FATHER

4. HAIL MARY

5. APOSTLES' CREED

6. THE ETERNAL FATHER

Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

7, 9, 11, 13, 15. ON EACH OF THE 10 SMALL BEADS OF EACH DECADE

For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

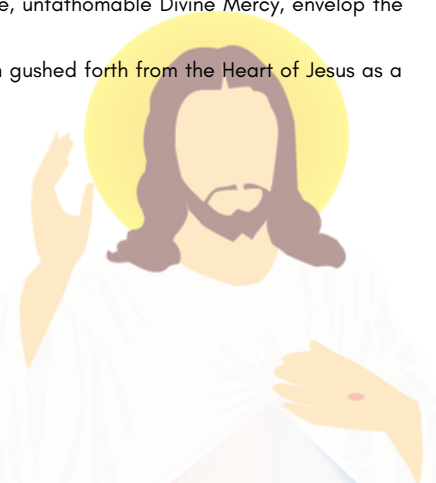
8, 10, 12, 14, 16. ON THE LARGE BEAD OF THE DECADE.

The Eternal Father Prayer (see 6)

16. CONCLUDE WITH HOLY GOD

(Repeat 3 times) Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

**Prayer found at TheDivineMercy.org



“For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on me and on the whole world.”

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:25-26)

take up your cross and follow Me

Many topics that address the dignity of the human person are mature in nature. As a parent of an elementary school-age child, your job is to prepare their heart today so that someday you can navigate these topics together with a Christ-centered bearing. Share with your child Christ's command that we must take up our cross to follow Him.

hard things

Have you ever experienced pain or suffering? Perhaps you have hurt yourself on the playground, lost a friend or family member, or experienced a difficult illness. God does not cause any of this to happen, but sometimes He allows it. Sufferings such as these are considered in the Christian life a "cross." In Luke 9:23, Jesus teaches the apostles that to follow Him means we must take up our cross. God the Father allowed the suffering of His Son and His death on the Cross for the sake of our salvation. Sometimes God allows hard things for a greater purpose.

PRAY: This week, pray over Jesus's words. In a prayer journal write down a cross you are carrying right now. Pray for Jesus to help carry its burden.

daily

Luke 9:23 reads, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Taking up one's cross is not a one time effort, rather, the Christian life is a journey. Each morning we must begin with a heart open to the joys and sufferings that lay ahead knowing that God is always with us!

formed

GROW: Have you ever seen a beautiful piece of blown glass? It is an exquisite piece of glass art that has been formed by the hard work and breath of a glass smith. Blown glass begins as a lump of raw material such as sand and recycled glass and is placed into a fiery hot furnace where it turns into a molten lump of goo! The glass smith works with the material, bending, twisting, and breathing life into it, sometimes close to its breaking point. In time, the material forms into a beautiful piece of art.

These pieces of glass move through quite a journey towards perfection by their creator. This is much like the Christian life. Our Creator breathes into us, sometimes allowing us to bend and twist by the crosses in our life until we are well formed.

SERVE: Ask your mom or dad to watch a video of blown glass being formed. Ask your mom or dad about the ways they feel God has formed them.

"Whoever does not seek the cross of Christ doesn't seek the glory of Christ."

St. John of the Cross



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

I am the Good Shepherd, says the Lord; I know my sheep, and mine know me. (John 10:14)

what does it mean to be a girl?!

This Sunday, we read about Jesus as "the Good Shepherd." A shepherd is responsible for the safety and well-being of his flock; he is aware of each sheep and leads them on a sure path. With Jesus as our Shepherd, let us take time to understand how He leads us on a sure path so that we (His flock) may flourish into who God created each of us to be!

God creates every human person to have a body and a soul and chooses if they are to be a male (boy) or female (girl) from the very moment of their conception. Males and females are different but complementary. Complimentary means that God designed boys and girls to bring out the very best in the other. This month, we will talk about what it means to be a girl. Next month, we will talk about what it means to be a boy!

do you love me?

PRAY: When Jesus was arrested the night before He died, the apostles were scared that people would recognize them as His followers. Out of fear, Peter denied knowing Jesus.

While following Jesus brings happiness in this life and the next, not everyone knows this *yet*. Like they did 2,000 years ago, sometimes people are unkind to followers of Jesus, and sometimes they deny the Truth of God's beautiful plan for life and love. And, like Peter, sometimes we deny loving God and His Truth out of *fear*.

When we deny God and His Truth, we break our hearts and His. After His resurrection, Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" When He does this, Jesus gives Peter the gift of reconciling with His heart. Just like Peter, if we have denied God or the wonderful person He created us to be, He desires nothing more than to give the gift of His love and reconciliation.

This week, tell God how much you love Him every day. Ask Him to help you love the son or daughter He created YOU to be as much as He loves you!

commit

Serve: Each week this month, we are going to unveil beautiful, God-given Truths about His design for life, love, and girls! Help your parents remember to look for this devotional each week!



girl [noun]

Grow: One of our great saints, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, once described a girl's soul as a shelter (safe space) where other souls can unfold. Isn't this lovely? This is called the gift of *maternity*. As a part of His perfect plan, God designed girls with the supernatural gift to nourish life, body *and* soul, within themselves.

God has chosen girls to be mothers. Sometimes mothers adopt their children, sometimes they carry their children in their womb (the space in a woman's body where an unborn baby grows), and sometimes women care for the souls of others as spiritual mothers.

God perfectly designed girls to be able to share the work of their hearts with others in an extraordinary and mysterious way.

To be a girl is a gift from God! This gift can not be chosen, and it can not be given away.

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

She is priest, prophet, king

Jesus tells us we must love like Him. Christ was a Priest, Prophet, and a King. Through these three roles, Jesus shows us what love in action looks like. As a member of the Body of Christ, you are called to love like Jesus as priest, prophet, and king! A girl can live out these roles in a way that is unique to her feminine gifts! Our Blessed Mother shows us how to perfectly live these gifts! Let's explore!

PRAY: Offering our day to Jesus; especially our sacrifices.

Jesus asks us to participate in His priesthood by "offering" the sacrifices in our own life to His Cross. Because God chose to save us through His suffering, He gave suffering power! Our suffering, *when united with His*, has the power to bear beautiful fruit for those we love.

Through spiritual and physical motherhood girls are blessed to echo Christ's words at the Last Supper, "This is my Body, given up for you." When a girl shares space within herself to care for another, she is living the sacrifice of the Cross in a powerfully feminine way.

When the Angel Gabriel asked Mary to be the mother of Jesus, she said, "let it be done to me according to your will." With these words, Mary offered her entire life to her Son's Cross.

GROW: Sharing God's Word.

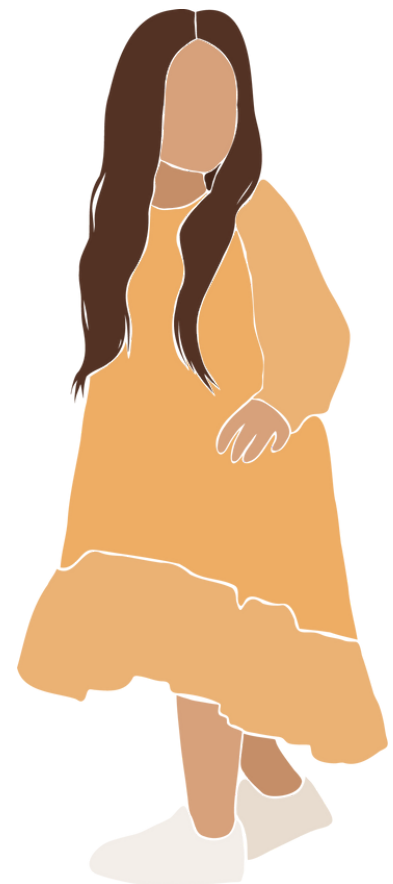
God is love; when we share in Jesus's prophetic role we proclaim God's love. Jesus's Sermon on the Mount teaches us to speak the Gospel through our daily life through the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes teach us to proclaim Christ's love by loving with His heart.

Girls proclaim the word of God through their gifts of maternity, sensitivity, generosity, and receptivity. God chose Mary's feminine gifts as the way He first shared His Son, Jesus with the created world! Mary lived the Beatitudes perfectly and in doing so shared the Gospel with her entire life.

SERVE: To reign is to serve.

Jesus is the King of Heaven and Earth. He rules with perfect love and perfectly follows the will of His Father.

We share in His role of King in our own life by being "master" over temptations and sin. Through the authority of Christ, we can declare power over anything that tempts us to stray from God's will for our lives. We do this by growing in virtue through God's grace. A girl's soul is specially created to seek and receive God's grace; she was made to flourish in this royal role! Mary, full of grace, Queen of Heaven, shows us how it's done.



priest

prophet

king

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows him. But you know him, because he remains with you, and will be in you. (John 14:16-17)

what is the feminine genius?

Pray & Grow: Listen closely to the Gospel this Sunday. Jesus told us He would give us the Spirit of Truth. We rest in the peace of God's truth when we accept how extraordinary He created each of us! Learn more about the extraordinary gift of being a girl! Pray for the Holy Spirit to fill you with understanding of what He created "the feminine" to be. **Serve:** If you are a girl, chat with your parents about how you feel God wants you to use your feminine genius! If you are a boy, pray for the girls in your family in a special way this week.

extraordinary + mysterious

God created girls in an extraordinary and mysterious way! Every girl is born with a "feminine genius" – this includes the beautiful gifts of maternity, receptivity, generosity, and sensitivity. To be a girl is a gift from God! This gift can not be chosen, and it can not be given away.

cherish + nourish

To cherish, guard, protect, nourish and advance growth is a girl's natural, maternal yearning.

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross

As a part of His perfect plan, God designed a girl to have the supernatural gift to nourish life, body *and* soul, within herself. This is called the gift of **maternity**.

God chose girls to be mothers. Sometimes mothers adopt their children, sometimes they carry their children in their womb (the space in a woman's body where an unborn baby grows), and sometimes women care for the souls of others as spiritual mothers.

a shelter within

A girl's soul is fashioned as a shelter in which other souls may unfold.

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross

A girl is created with a gift of **receptivity**. She is uniquely designed to make a safe space within herself for another.

mind + heart

Girls understand not merely with their mind but also with their heart.

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross

A girl is created with a unique gift of **sensitivity**. This gift allows her to see with her heart. This is the gift of perceiving (understanding without being told) a person's emotional or spiritual wounds and needs.

selfless giver

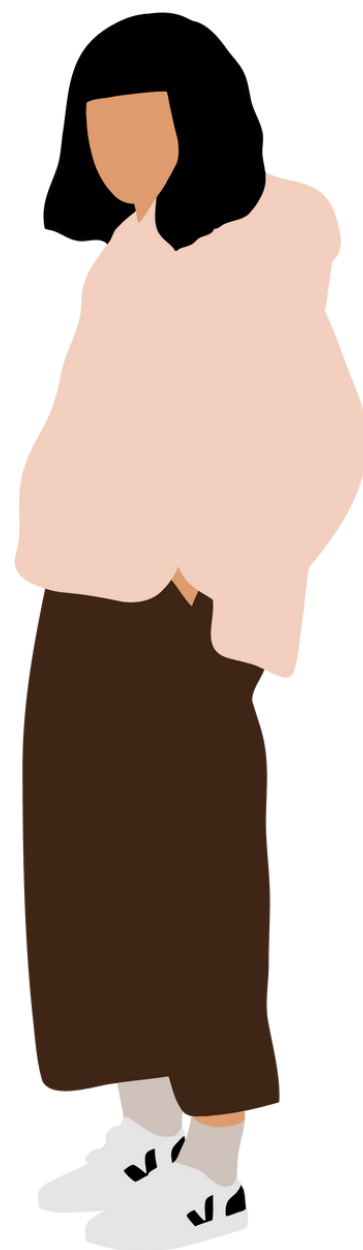
Girls naturally seek to embrace that which is living, personal, and whole.

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross

A girl is created with the gift of **generosity**. She can selflessly pour Christ's light and love into the heart of another in a uniquely feminine way. The generosity of her heart allows her and others to find peace and joy.

"When you seek truth, you seek God whether you know it or not."

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19-20)

The story of Jesus' s life, death, and resurrection is the greatest LOVE story ever told! When man and woman come together in marriage they are called to love one another in the same way Jesus loves His Church.

what is spousal love?!

love given, received, & shared

PRAY: In Genesis, we read about God creating a partner for Adam, saying, "It is not good for man to be alone." Why would God say this? The answer is simple—Love. God is love, and love must be shared. We were made for one another.

Designed to come together as one, when a man and woman marry, they reveal the image and likeness of God in a powerful way—love given, love received, love shared.

If God's plan for you is marriage, then it is never too early to start praying for your future husband or wife. Pray that they are always open to God's grace and always follow where He leads!

"spousal love"

GROW: "Spousal love" is a theme throughout the entire Bible. Specifically, it refers to God's design for families! God commands a husband and wife to fully offer the gift of their life to the other. Jesus shows us perfect spousal love.

In Scripture, Jesus calls Himself the "Bridegroom" and refers to His Church (us!) as His "bride." The most powerful example of Jesus loving His bride with sacrificial love is His crucifixion. Jesus carried His cross to Calvary and allowed Himself to die on the cross. In doing so, He freely made a total, faithful, and fruitful gift of Himself to His bride. Because of His perfect spousal love, His Church (you and me!) have been redeemed from our sin and are offered the gift of salvation (spending eternity with Him in heaven!) What a gift!

Husbands and wives are called to love one another with this selfless spousal love.



the crucifix

SERVE: A crucifix is an image of Christ on the cross. Catholics place a crucifix in their home to remind themselves of the power of Christ's spousal love. Do you have a crucifix in your home? How about your room? If you don't, talk to your parents about getting one. Consider doing extra chores around the house to earn money to help pay for it!

...therefore, what God has joined together no human being must separate" Mark 10:9

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20:21-22)

what does it mean to be a boy?!

Imitatio Christi

PRAY: Today is the birthday of our beautiful Church—Pentecost! On Pentecost God the Father sent the Holy Spirit to guide the faithful as the soul of His Church. It is through the Church that we live out our God-given purpose—to know, love, and serve God in this life and to be happy with Him forever in the next.

We live out our purpose by following Jesus as members of His Church. To do this we must live our lives the same way Christ lived, this is called imitatio Christi—or imitating Christ. We can only do this through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

While imitating Christ is something that every person is called to do, boys are called to live as Christ did in a unique way. Since Jesus became man, He shows all boys what it looks like to specifically live out the gift of masculinity!

John the Baptist

Serve: Throughout Church history we have great examples of men who live the imitatio Christi, through them we find some great advice. One example is John the Baptist, Jesus's cousin! John didn't yet know what the life of Christ would bring but He knew Jesus was the Son of God.

As we learn about God's design for the masculine commit to keeping John's words in your heart as a powerful reminder of what it means to live out masculinity. He said, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

God creates every human person to have a body and a soul and chooses if they are to be a male (boy) or female (girl) from the very moment of their conception. Males and females are different but complementary. Complementary means that God designed boys and girls to bring out the very best in the other. Last month we explored what it means to be a girl, this month we will explore God's design for boys!

boy [noun]

Grow: God created boys to be **fathers!** Every boy is called to be a father, either a spiritual father or a father of children within a family. In this role, he reveals God's Fatherhood to the created world, this is an incredible responsibility!

God created boys to be **sons.** They are to imitate Jesus by obeying God's will for their life, living in virtue and holiness, and loving with a sacrificial heart—this means loving others selflessly.

God created boys to be **priests.** Some men are called to make Christ Himself present here on earth to serve the Church and administer the sacraments.

God created boys first. Boys were created before girls, God did this so boys could forge ahead as the **protector** and **provider** of family. This is not because boys are superior to girls, but because they have a divinely given gift to recognize the dignity of girls, the sanctity of their ability to bear life, and the huge responsibility to care for them.



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life. (John 3:16)

initiate, protect, and promote God's love!

our Guide

PRAY: Sometimes we can feel unsure about who God created us to be, how to use the individual gifts He blesses us with, or how He calls us to serve and love others well. When we feel like this, the Holy Spirit is there to guide us in perfect truth!

As we discover more of God's intentional design for boys—or "the masculine" let us remember the words from Scripture—the Holy Spirit guides us in all truth! Let us pray, Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle them in the fire of Your love!

SERVE This week, invite your family into a conversation about God's design for boys. Make a list of the men you'd like to pray for. Commit to praying for each of them—that they have the faith and courage to live as the men God created them to be! If you are a boy, don't forget to pray for yourself too!

The Blessed Trinity as a sign of the "masculine"

GROW: God reveals Himself through the created world—including His creation of US! We are made in the image and likeness of God in mysterious and incredible ways; this is the source of our dignity! God intentionally created boys to be **initiators, protectors, and promoters** of His love. This intentional design of "the masculine" is a sign of God—the Blessed Trinity! By learning more about each Person of the Blessed Trinity, we can learn more about who He created boys to be!

FATHER: The 1st Person of the Trinity is our heavenly Father. He is an eternal Father—this means He always was, is, and will continue to be Father! As a Father, He **initiates** love and new life! All men are called to love with a Father's heart.

SON: The 2nd Person of the Trinity is the Son, Jesus Christ. In a special way, the Son **protects** love. Jesus gave us His teachings, commands and modeled perfect virtue—following His example is how we protect the love and life of God within our hearts against temptation and sin. Boys are called in a unique way to imitate Christ's perfect example of masculinity, protecting love in their hearts, homes, and communities.

HOLY SPIRIT: The 3rd Person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit **promotes** love. Because we sin, we can only love like God with the help of supernatural grace. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, our hearts are transformed—open to receive God's grace. When the Holy Spirit—God's very life—dwells within us, we grow in love and holiness. Boys are called in a special way to promote God's love as spiritual leaders—cultivating hearts ready to receive the love of God!

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. (John 6:57)

provide & protect | temptation & virtue

Abe's story

SERVE: Abe loved ice cream — he enjoyed every flavor except pistachio (yuck!). For a special birthday celebration, Abe's parents planned a surprise party. The morning of the party, Abe went out to play with friends. Knowing the fabulous surprise party planned for that night, Abe's dad asked him to not ruin his appetite with sweets while he was out playing. Abe ignored his dad and ate a whole box of cookies with his friends; he went home with a tummy ache.

When Abe got home, he was surprised by the wonderful birthday party! On the table were giant sundaes—cookies n' cream ice cream with hot fudge, sprinkles, and whipped cream! But, Abe's tummy hurt so much from the crummy cookies he had eaten earlier that he couldn't eat the delicious sundae his mom and dad gave him.

Abe didn't listen to his dad. He chose to take the crummy cookies that made his tummy hurt and, as a result, couldn't enjoy the celebration sundae his father had prepared for him. How often do we do this with God?

Sometimes our Heavenly Father asks us to say "no" to the things so we don't spoil our appetite for the feast He has planned for us. God desires the very best for us; we must trust that when He asks us to follow His plan, His desire is to bless us beyond anything we could imagine.

The enemy (the devil) doesn't want us to follow God's plan and find eternal happiness. He will tempt us away from God's will by distracting and deceiving us. Discuss as a family the distractions keeping you from what God desires for you. Does extra screen time at night keep you from nighttime prayer? Talk as a family about eliminating these distractions.

temptation & virtue

GROW: We are created in the image and likeness of God—this is the source of our dignity. Satan hates God, because of this, he tempts us to deny or violate one another's dignity. Knowing this would happen, God, our loving Father, created boys as *protectors* of dignity—*especially* the dignity of girls! To be the protectors God created them to be, boys must have great *virtue* to resist the temptation to reject their masculine gifts and duties for an "easier" path. Boys must have strong faith and courage!

How do we grow in virtue? Much like running or lifting weights conditions our physical muscles, fasting, praying, and receiving the sacraments conditions our spiritual muscles!

anima Christi

PRAY: A powerful prayer, especially when receiving the Eucharist, is the Anima Christi. This is a prayer asking God to strengthen you and protect you from evil. Pray the Anima Christi at Mass this week.



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give. (Matthew 10:8)

what is the masculine genius?

PRAY & GROW: As Catholics, we rest in the peace of God's truth when we accept how extraordinary He created each of us! Learn more about the extraordinary gift of being a boy! Pray for the Holy Spirit to fill you with understanding of what He created "the masculine" to be. **Serve:** If you are a boy, chat with your parents about how you feel God wants you to use your masculine genius! If you are a girl, pray for the boys in your family in a special way this week.

Father, loving with the Father's heart

God created boys to be **fathers**! Every boy is called to be a father, either a spiritual father or a father of children within a family. In this role, he reveals God's Fatherhood to the created world by loving with a father's heart. As Father, He is *protector* and *provider* for His children's physical and spiritual needs.

First, forging ahead in obedient action

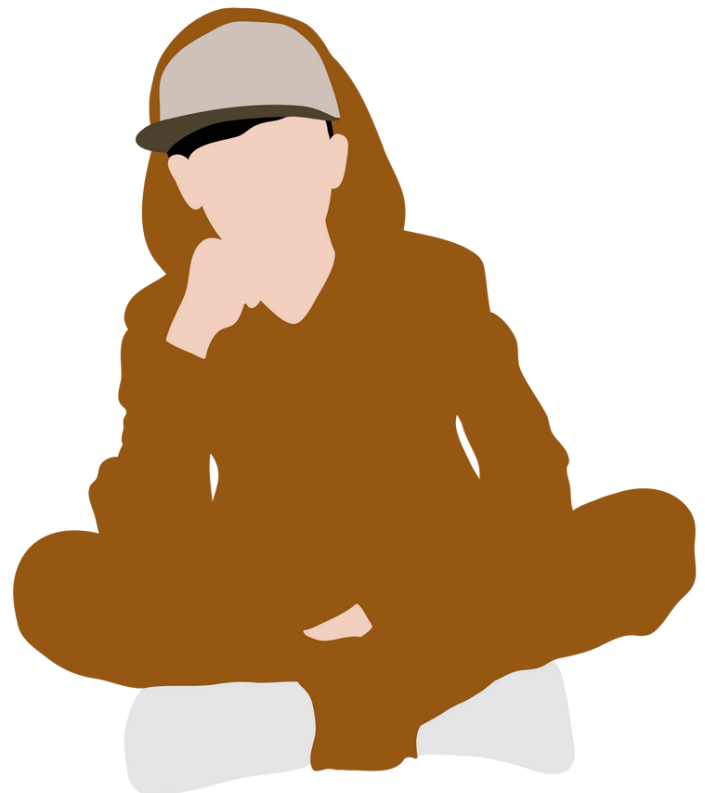
God created boys to be first. Every boy is called to forge ahead with obedient action. This means they are to courageously go where God is leading them as initiators, protectors, and promoters of the Father's perfect love. This means boys are called to lead the way in protecting the dignity of human life.

Son, living as priest, prophet, and king

God created boys to be sons! Every boy is called to imitate Jesus by obeying God's will for their life, living in virtue and holiness, and loving with a sacrificial heart—this means loving others selflessly. Living as Christ, boys are to live as **priest, prophet, and king**. To live as priest, boys are to offer their lives to God; to live as prophet, boys are to share the love of the Gospel in the way they act and speak; and to live as king, boys are to lead others by putting themselves last.

Chaste, loving with an undivided heart

God created boys to be **chaste**. Every boy is called to love God and his family with an undivided heart. Boys are created with a special reverence for God's design for families and the *duty* to care for it within the created world.



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. (Matthew 10:26-27)

marriage between man and woman, a beautiful sign!

God creates each human person as male (boy) or female (girl). Boys and girls are different, but complimentary. "Complimentary" means they bring out the very best in each other! The Church teaches that we must reflect the image of God in the union of marriage between man and woman. God uses marriage as a sign pointing us to His love and the gift of heaven. This week, **pray** for the gift of faith to trust in God's plan for life and love. **Serve** your family by **growing** in understanding—discuss this guide together!



looking for happiness

Each day you make decisions you think will make you happy. You do this because God created you to seek happiness! However, nothing in this world can give you happiness forever. God created you for something far greater than this world; He created you for heaven! Heaven is where we can rest in perfect happiness forever. Sounds good, right?

spousal love

God created a husband and wife to love one another freely, totally, faithfully, and fruitfully. How a husband and wife are asked to love one another in marriage is how Jesus loves His Church and how we understand the gift of eternal life.

Jesus = Bridegroom Church = Bride

Willing our perfect good, Jesus wanted to give us the gift of happiness forever (eternity in heaven). On the cross, Jesus (the Bridegroom) gave Himself freely, totally, faithfully, and fruitfully to us (His Bride). He willingly allowed Himself to be nailed to the cross (free); in doing so, He gave His life holding nothing back (total); His sacrifice was obedient to the will of the Father (faithful), and opened the gates of heaven giving each of us the gift of new life (fruitful).

The Bridegroom's sacrifice opened the gates of heaven for His Bride!

We must take great care to honor the gift of marriage between man and woman because it is a beautiful sign of Jesus's love and the gift of heaven — perfect happiness *forever*.

helpful signs

Because God created us for the perfect happiness of heaven, He wants us to know how to get there. So, through His creation of the human person, God gave us a sign pointing to heaven — **marriage!** We read in Genesis that at the very beginning of creation, God creates the gift of marriage between one man (bridegroom) and one woman (bride). God created the love between spouses — husband and wife — to be very special and unlike anything else in the created world.

"God Himself is that Author of marriage and He has given it a purpose."

USCCB, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, pg. 7

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-4)

what is the domestic church?

Created in His image and likeness, the dignity of the human person is rooted in God's desire for us to share in His perfect love. God created *the family* to be the place where we first encounter His love and learn to share that love with others. He created the family as a sign that points us to His Church, also called the "family of God." Through our Baptism we receive the gift of salvation—we become adopted sons and daughters of our heavenly Father. As a part of God's family we share in His love and grow in communion with Him! Let's learn more about the dignity of family life!

the school of love

Grow: Within family we first encounter God's love. Love means to "will the good of the other." Our parents and guardians share God's love with us by taking good care of us. As we grow older, we begin to pray, do chores, spend quality time, encourage one another, and grow in virtue. When we do these things we are learning how to "will the good of the other" or share God's love with our family! By receiving and sharing God's love, we flourish into the person God created us to be.

the domestic church

When we go to Mass we encounter God in a radical way—His love, His Word, His mercy, and His life. Our family home is called the "domestic church." God designed the family to also be a place where we encounter Him in a radical way. Within family we learn to love, how to read Scripture and pray, forgive one another, and grow in virtue. All we encounter within the Mass and domestic church are ordered to our communion with God and one another—the gift of salvation!

the mission of the family

Pray: In Scripture, Jesus tells us: You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Following Jesus and sharing our Catholic faith means loving God and our neighbor—but *how do we learn to love well?* The answer is family life! The mission of the family is to guard, protect, and reveal God's love. Pray over this Scripture verse, ask God to help you live His command.

Jesus's family home

Serve: Jesus died when He was 33 years old. If He spent 3 years in public ministry what was He doing the other 30 years?! You guessed right!Jesus spent most of His earthly life living in the beautiful gift of family life. Jesus's mother, Mary and foster father, Joseph raised Jesus within the domestic church. Much like you, Jesus lived in the day-to-day of family life. He prayed, did chores, spent quality time with His family, and even learned a trade (woodworking!) Can you picture Jesus helping Mary pull weeds from the garden or carrying wood with Joseph? Can you picture them reading the psalms together or celebrating a birthday with a special meal? This week, discuss with your family what life for Jesus was like as He grew up in His family home. Write down three ways that you can model your family home after Mary, Joseph, and Jesus's family home. Pray for the intercession of the Holy Family to fill your home with God's perfect love.



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Thus says the LORD: Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he... (Zechariah 9:9)

praying like Jesus at home

Jesus was born into a faithful Jewish family. Mary and Joseph taught Jesus to pray according to the customs and traditions of the Jewish people. The Shema is the name of an important prayer recited in the morning and evening by Jewish families. Often, this is the first prayer a Jewish child learns. It is reasonable to believe that Jesus said this prayer with Mary and Joseph every day. Let's learn more about this beautiful prayer!

Hear O' Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. Blessed is the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5



the better part

Pray: "Shema" means "listen." Prayer is a conversation with God. It is sharing the words of our heart with God then listening to his reply.

The Shema begins with the words, "Hear O' Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. Blessed is the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever." Three passages from the Torah are read along with this prayer, Deuteronomy 6:5-9; Deuteronomy 11: 13-21; and Numbers 15:37-41.

Jesus reminds us of the importance of prayer throughout the Gospel. When Jesus visits Mary and Martha he tells them that Mary, who had paused from the hustle and bustle of the day to sit at Jesus's feet and listen to His word, had chosen the "better part."

back to the heart

Grow: Family life can be busy! Chores, sports, homework, work schedules, and extracurricular activities can sometimes distract us from the best part of the day—spending time with God. The words of the Shema call our attention back to the heart of Christian life, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

pray like Jesus!

Serve: Begin the habit of praying like Jesus! Together, morning and night, pray the words of the Shema. Take time with your family to read the 3 passages listed above that are read as a part of the Shema when prayed by a Jewish family.

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold." (Matthew 13:23)

made in His image, I have dignity

For you created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. Psalms 139:13

PRAY: Scripture tells us that each person is the intentional work of God. This means that God, the King of Kings and Creator of the universe, knew that the world needed YOU!

God knit you together as a boy or a girl and gave you the gender, physical characteristics, gifts and talents of His choosing. He then breathed His love into your body—giving you a soul and bringing your body to LIFE!

Everything that God creates is good! He loves you as if you were His only creation. He invites you to share in His life and love here in this world, and forever in the next! In prayer, ask God to help you love yourself as He loves you.

S.L.E.D.

GROW: Because all human beings are created with dignity, all human life should be cared for and protected regardless of:

- **Size...** If you're really small or really big.
- **Level of Development...** If you are done growing or just started.
- **Environment.....**if you sleep in your mother's womb, or in her arms.
- **Degree of Dependency...**If you need lots of help, or you don't.

When God first breathed you to life, you were very small! From the moment of your conception you started to grow as a human person. Each of us continue to grow older every day. Throughout our life our size, our abilities and knowledge, where we live, or how much we depend on others for help will change...But our dignity and how much God loves us will never change.

God is love.

**Love must be shared.
God loved YOU into being.
In His image and likeness.**

Being made in His image means that God created you to share in His life and love.

THIS is the source of your DIGNITY.

Dignity means "worthy of respect." Our english word "dignity" comes from the Latin word "dignitatem" meaning "worthy" or "worthiness." Every human person has dignity because each of us is the intentional and loving work of God. Reverence for the dignity of the human person must be the foundation for our entire moral vision.



SERVE: Some people do not understand how much God loves them or the precious value of human life. You can help them understand by being a good example. No one is too young, too old, or too sick to receive our heart full of love, care, and protection.

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom. (Matthew 11:25)

what is body literacy?

Written in collaboration with PearlandThistle.com

What does it mean to have a reverence for life?

It means having a deep respect for the dignity of every person, no matter how old they are, where they come from, what they look like... or even whether we like them! We do this because God created every person as a unique and unrepeatable image of HIM! In our body and soul we have been created to be like God.

This week, **pray** for a deep reverence for the dignity of the wonderful body God gave you. **Grow** in understanding of how our body speaks a language. **Serve** your family by learning together about the unique ways He created your body!

special mission

We are called by God to a special mission! To not only love and serve the spiritual life of each person, but our bodily existence as well.

Jesus shows us this in the Gospel when He loved and served people's spiritual needs by teaching them how to love, praying with them, and of course, through the gift of salvation.

Jesus loved and served people's bodily needs by healing, feeding, and comforting those with physical suffering. This is why we sometimes call him the "Divine Physician" or the "Divine Healer."

made in His image

When we learn anatomy, we also learn about how our bodies grow and change as we get older through a process called "puberty." This is also part of how our bodies image God!

By learning about how and why our bodies change, girls and boys will both have a better understanding of how we are uniquely made in God's image as either male or female. This particular knowledge can be called "body literacy."

our body speaks a language

When we understand the language of our body and soul we come to better know our Creator and who He created us to be.

The language of our soul is understood through prayer and the sacraments. The language of our body is understood through something called "anatomy," the study of the human body.

When we come to know more about our bodies, we come to know more about the God who made us. God desires for us to love our bodies and to care for them with great reverence.

body literacy

Becoming "body literate" means:

- 1.) Learning to understand what our bodies tell us about what they need.
- 2.) Understanding how our bodies are designed.
- 3.) Understanding how we can serve not only our own bodily health, but also the health and wellbeing of others.
- 4.) Understanding how our bodies reveal God and as a result, the reverence due each human person.

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom. (Matthew 11:25)

telling the truth with our bodies

Written in collaboration with Pearlandthistle.com

God made us to be helpers for one another out of love!

PRAY: Humans are unique to all of creation because we are the only creature that God formed with both a body and soul.

God chose to create us in His image and likeness, both our body and our soul are an important part of WHO we are.

God sent His Son, Jesus, so we could encounter Him in a new way—as *Man*. Jesus reveals the fullness of what it means to be human. Jesus teaches us how to use our bodies to express the truth of who God made us to be.

God made us to be helpers for one another *out of love*. When we read the Gospel we learn how to be loving, bodily helpers to those around us.

Spend time in prayer thanking Jesus for your body. Every part of you from your head to your toes is a beautiful gift from God. Thanks God for the ability to physically do the things you can do!

We have a responsibility to use our body to speak the language of love in truth!

We have a responsibility to use our bodies to speak this language of love in truth! This means that each action we take with our body must unselfishly will the absolute good of the person we are serving.

Jesus teaches us that whenever we perform bodily works of mercy we are serving HIM! (Matthew 25:35-40) When we choose not to speak a language of love with our bodies we deceive ourselves and those around us about the dignity of the human body and who God created us to be.

Deceiving another is called lying. Just as it is a sin to tell a lie with our words, it is also a sin to tell a lie with our body.

cor.po.ral [adjective]

GROW: The word “**corporal**” means pertaining to the body. Given to us by Jesus, the corporal works of mercy are ways in which God asks us to express the truth of who He is (Love) and the truth of who we were created to be (sharers in His Love).

These 7 acts of mercy are done through our bodies and specifically care for the dignity of the human body.

the corporal works of mercy:

Feed the hungry.

Give water to the thirsty.

Provide clothing for those without clothes.

Shelter the homeless.

Visit the sick.

Visit the imprisoned

Bury the dead.

SERVE: You can speak the truth of God's love by performing the corporal works of mercy in your home!

When you help to bring in the groceries, make dinner, take care of a sick sibling, or help with the laundry you are speaking the truth of God's love and who He created you to be!

“Our actions have a tongue of their own; they have an eloquence of their own, even when the tongue is silent. For deeds prove the lover more than words.”

St. Cyril of Jerusalem



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. (MT 10:26-27)

we are created to love!

God brought your body to LIFE with the breath of His love and invites you to love with His heart! When we love with the heart of God, we love the way God loves. What does this mean?

agape love

In the English language, we use the word "love" for many things. We "love" blueberry muffins, the Red Sox, a favorite T-shirt, our parents, and God. Even though we use the word "love" for all these things, we do not "love" blueberry muffins the same way we love God!

In the Greek language, there are many words for "love." The love God calls us to can be understood by the Greek word "agape." **Agape** is the Greek word for love, meaning sacrificial love. To love sacrificially means to unselfishly want what is the very best for someone else. Sometimes we think this type of love is a feeling. Maybe you have heard someone talk about being "in love." Agape love is not a feeling; it is a choice!

God's love is perfect

Have you ever heard someone say, "If you do this... I will love you." This is NOT love. Agape love does not hurt other people, it does not make people uncomfortable, and it can never make someone do something that is not right (a sin). Agape love does NOT require you to touch anyone, to keep anyone's secrets, or to lie. **Agape love is a beautiful gift from God that can never be "earned" it is simply given.**

Many people struggle, at some point in their life, with the feeling of being unloved. If this happens to you, you must remind yourself that God loves you just the way you are!

There is nothing you ever have to do to earn His love because you already have His whole heart!

**God gave all of us a commandment:
"To love God with your whole heart and to love your neighbor as yourself." (John 13:34)**

GROW: Jesus commands us to love God and our neighbor. Our neighbor is each person created by God. The people in your neighborhood, your classmates, your soccer team—and even your rival sports team!

It is easy to love those who are kind, but in the Gospel, Jesus tells us we must also love those who are unkind. This can be much harder. Loving those who are unkind to us does NOT mean that we allow others to hurt us, it simply means we must pray for God's grace to transform their lives for the best.

PRAY: This week, we read about the Transfiguration. Jesus appearance changes for a moment reflecting the glory of His divinity. When we love with agape love, we reflect the glory of God in a powerful way. In prayer, ask God to help you love with His divine, agape love. We must pray every day for the strength to love with His heart!

SERVE: Remember that agape love is not a feeling, it is a choice. With this in mind, write down three ways you choose to love your family well. (Example: Helping a sibling with a chore they struggle with, honoring your parents by following directions the first time they tell you. Reading your sibling's favorite story to them.)



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for his word. (Psalm 130:5)

The Feast of the Assumption

GROW: Mary is a mother, unlike any other mother. While you and I were born with original sin, Mary was not. We call God breathing life into Mary's body free from the stain of sin, the *Immaculate Conception*. Mary was born this way because God the Father willed her to be the mother of His Son, Jesus. As the Holy Mother of God, it was only fitting that she be free from sin's blemish.

You may wonder, if Mary had no sin, did she need a Savior like us? The answer is, *of course!* Every human person is only saved from sin and death through the blood of Jesus. Since God is not restricted by time or space, the merits of Jesus's passion were communicated to her at the moment of her conception. *Jesus saved His mother first!*

For reasons beyond our perfect understanding, at our death, as a consequence of sin, our souls enter into the next life, but our bodies decay. However, because Mary never sinned, always remaining in a perfect state of grace, her body and soul entered the gates of heaven as one.

Mary, Holy Mother of God

In pregnancy, Mary carried Jesus within her womb. Her belly grew over 9 months! One thing that happens during pregnancy is something called fetomaternal microchimerism. This is a fancy way of referring to a physical bond between a mother and her baby where the baby's cells travel beyond the womb and stay within the mother's body. These cells remain with her, sometimes, for the rest of her life. This means a mother carries within her, a part of every child she conceives.

Mary and Jesus experienced a perfectly human pregnancy. Is it possible that Mary carried within her a part of her Son, Jesus, for the rest of her life? If she did, it would certainly be fitting that her body would be preserved, and she would be assumed into heaven. We don't know if Mary's pregnancy experienced fetomaternal microchimerism, but it is beautiful to consider how faith and science always complement one another as they have the same Divine Author!

takes us by the hand

PRAY & SERVE: Mary is our Mother. She desires to take each of us by the hand and lead us closer to her Son, Jesus. Pray always, but especially today, that Mary intercedes as only she can, for the gift of an unshakable faith. Say the rosary together with your family in observation of this blessed Feast!



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

"Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon." But Jesus did not say a word in answer to her. (Matthew 15:22-23)

when prayers feel unanswered

When we teach our children to pray, we teach them that God hears every one of their prayers. But what happens when your child prays for God's help, and they don't "see" His hand at work? It can be difficult to understand why the prayer for the bullying to stop, a cure for their loved one's illness, or to finally make the team after so much hard work, seems to go unanswered.

God allows the crosses in our life as a means of sanctification, today, help your child understand that even under the heaviest burdens their prayers are always heard and always answered according to His perfect timing for the sake of our salvation. Use this guide alongside the LIFE Focus Guide "Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me." This week, **pray** for strength in the midst of suffering, **grow** in understanding of "the cross," and **serve** as a faithful companion for your loved ones when they suffer.

"as You will."

During Jesus's earthly ministry, He healed the sick, cured the blind, and raised the dead. Miracle after miracle, Jesus revealed to the world that He was God! Before His Passion began, Jesus wept in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying, *My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will.*

Jesus prayed like many of us pray, by asking the Father to save Him from His suffering. Have you ever asked God to save you or a loved one from suffering such as sadness or pain? It is important to remember that Jesus ended His prayer with the words, *not as I will, but as you will.* With these words, Jesus accepted the cross—even though it was hard.

When it came time for His Passion, Jesus suffered terribly. The soldiers hit Him with whips tearing away His flesh, placed a crown of thorns on His head, and mocked and spat at Him. During His greatest suffering, Jesus's heart ached with perfect love and trust for His Father.

the world was darkest

At three in the afternoon, the clouds darkened and Jesus Christ, Son of God, died. Those who stood at the foot of the Cross wept before Jesus's lifeless body. From their perspective, the Father had remained silent in the terrible suffering, the miracle they were praying for didn't come, and the world was at its darkest.

It is here we learn that even when we don't see God's hand moving in our midst that He is there. At this darkest hour, when God seemed the farthest away, *He was redeeming the world.* The Father had allowed the suffering of His Son for the salvation of you and I.

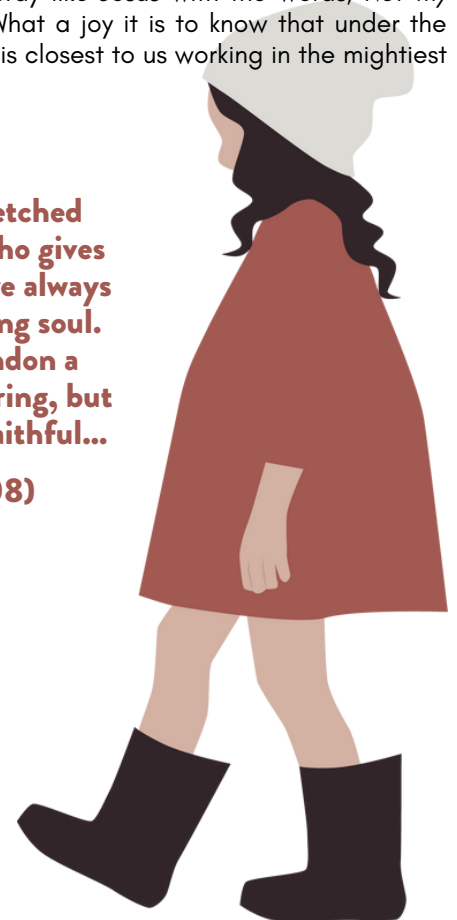
God's grace abounds

Jesus came to teach us how to be fully human. He teaches us how to love, pray, and accept the Father's will even when it's really hard. We must always remember that the glory of Easter came through the suffering of Good Friday. We will not always understand the crosses in our life, but we must always trust that where there is suffering, God's grace abounds.

When God feels far away in our suffering or when our prayers seem to go unanswered we must only remember the suffering of Good Friday and pray like Jesus with the words, *Not my way God, your way.* What a joy it is to know that under the pain of our cross God is closest to us working in the mightiest of ways.

It is You Jesus, stretched out on the cross, who gives me strength and are always close to the suffering soul. Creatures will abandon a person in his suffering, but You, O Lord, are faithful...

--St. Faustina (1508)



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

The LORD is exalted, yet the lowly he sees, and the proud he knows from afar. Your kindness, O LORD, endures forever; forsake not the work of your hands. (Psalm 138:6)

unique and wonderful

Share with your child the story of St. Margaret of Castillo. Through her intercession, plant seeds of faith and courage in your child so they may always be a loving voice for those who the culture deems "unwanted."

Meet...

Saint Margaret of Castillo!

GROW: St. Margaret of Castillo was a joyful and kind little girl who loved God and served Him by caring for the sick and visiting the lonely. St Margaret understood what it felt like to be unwell and lonely. She was born with a condition called dwarfism, kyphosis, (a severely curved spine resulting in a "hunched" over appearance), and was blind. Her condition caused her great physical pain at times.

St Margaret's mom and dad were very unkind. Rather than focusing on Margaret's loving heart and helping her flourish into the wonderful child of God He created her to be, they chose to be embarrassed by their daughter's condition. When she was 6, they locked her away in a small, doorless room beside the parish chapel. Rather than feeling angry at her parents, Margaret grew in faith and virtue through prayer and the education she received from the priest who offered her meals and the Sacraments through a small window.

When Margaret got older, she was able to leave this small prison. With no one to care for her and unable to work, she had to beg for food to survive. However, she always shared her joyful heart with all who encountered her. Soon, she chose to dedicate her life to God as a third-order Dominican. Her days were spent caring for the sick and visiting those in prison.

St. Margaret died at the age of 33—the same age Jesus died. Remarkably, at her funeral, a disabled girl was miraculously cured! The Church began to investigate this miracle. In 1609, Pope Pius V declared her "Blessed;" and in April 2021, she was canonized a saint by Pope Francis!

wonderfully made

PRAY: Every one of us is born "different" than those around us. St. Margaret could not see and did not stand very tall, but she was a mighty child of God who shined the light of Christ on everyone around her. Our differences do not limit us; rather, they allow us to share the love of God in a way that no one else can!

Many people in this world, like Margaret's parents, see those born physically "different" and shrink away. When people do this, they not only turn their hearts from God, but they lose out on getting to know someone great. Like Margaret, always remember what Scripture tells us: we are wonderfully made!

Today, pray for those in this world who feel unloved or unwanted because of a physical condition. Pray that all parents see their children the way Jesus does.

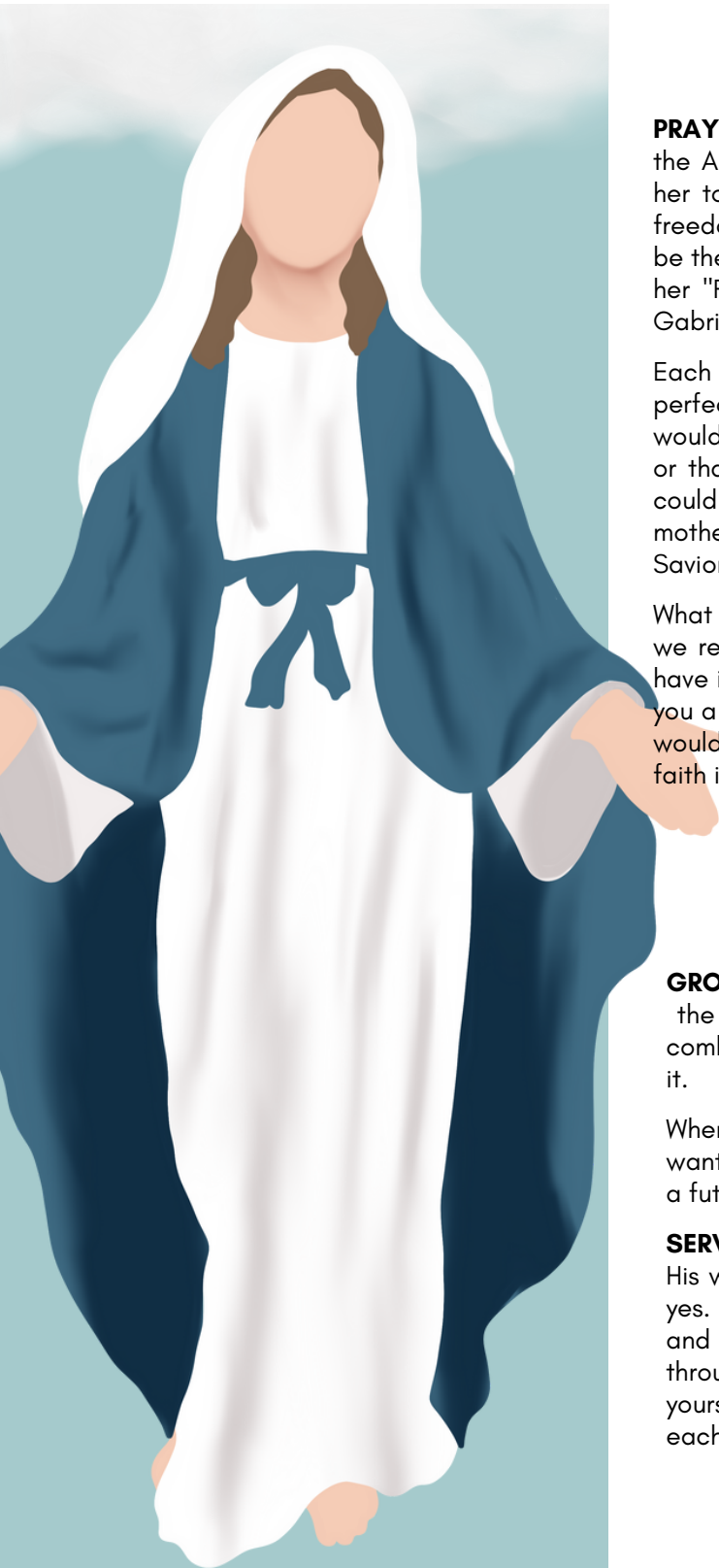
SERVE: What is uniquely wonderful about you? As a family share the ways you use those differences to shine Christ's light.



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." (Matthew 16:23)

the strength of Mary's Fiat.



"Fiat" = "let it be done"

PRAY: Mary's "Fiat" is her "yes" to God's plan. At the Annunciation, when the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, he shared with her God's plan for her to be the mother of Jesus, God's only begotten Son. Mary had the freedom to say no to God's plan. After all, God would never force her to be the mother of Jesus. Mary chose to say yes to God. We call Mary's "yes" her "Fiat" because in Latin, fiat translates into the words Mary said to Gabriel, "Let it be done."

Each of us is asked by God to accept His will for our lives. Mary is the perfect example of how to say "yes" to Jesus. She did not know what life would bring as the mother of Jesus. She did not know that He would suffer or that because of His suffering, she too would suffer greatly. She also could never have imagined the immense joy she would experience as the mother of Christ or the joy of Easter morning when she worshipped her Savior, victorious over sin and death!

What Mary did know was that God is always faithful. In the Old Testament, we read the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you...plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope." Mary knew that where ever God would lead her, He would bless her with His love and the gift of hope. Pray today for this same faith in God's plan for your life!

"God, I want what YOU want!"

GROW: Hope is a theological virtue, this is a gift from God that gives us the strength to give our "yes" to God's will for our lives! "Hope" is the combination of desiring God's goodness with the expectation of receiving it.

When Mary said "yes" to God's plan her heart said, "God I want what YOU want!" She rested in the hope of knowing that God had a plan to give her a future of hope and she had faith that God never breaks His promise!

SERVE: Mary's "yes" took a lot of courage. God is asking for your "yes" to His will for your life—to give you a future of hope! It takes courage to say yes. Each day, we must renew our "yes" to Jesus by living a life without sin and being open to where He leads us. Commit to serving your family through prayer. Pray the "Hail Mary" for each of your family members and yourself each morning. Pray for the courage to give your "Fiat" to God each day!

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20)

Our Lady of Sorrows

Mary, the martyr of all martyrs

GROW: In the 15th Century, about 600 years ago, "Our Lady of Sorrows" used to be referred to as "Our Lady of Compassion." In Latin "com" = "with" and "passio" = "suffering."

Our English word, "compassion" means "to suffer with."

Mary suffered with Jesus. She loved Him as her Son and Savior with a perfect (sinless) heart. Mary never tried to step into Jesus's life to say "not your way God—my way" when things became hard or when she did not understand. She accepted God's plan fully. From the moment of her Fiat (when she agreed to be the mother of Jesus), Mary began the long, difficult journey towards Christ's crucifixion at Calvary. Through Mary, we come to know, in a very special way, the great dignity and power of suffering with another.

Mary laid down her life for the sake of His sorrowful passion. She is the martyr of all martyrs.

SERVE: Read through the 7 Sorrows of Mary with your family. Talk about times you have felt sorrow.

PRAY: Together, pray the "7 Sorrows Rosary." Here are the 7 times the Church recognizes Mary's deep suffering:

- 1) The Prophecy of Simeon (Luke 2:34-35)
- 2) The Flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-21)
- 3) The Loss of Jesus for Three Days (Luke 2:41-50)
- 4) The Carrying of the Cross (John 19:17)
- 5) The Crucifixion of Jesus (John 19:18-30)
- 6) Jesus Taken Down from the Cross (John 19:39-40)
- 7) Jesus Laid in the Tomb (John 19:39-42)

"From Mary we learn to surrender to God's will in all things. From Mary, we learn to trust even when all hope seems gone. From Mary, we learn to love Christ, her Son and the Son of God."

St. Pope John Paul II



...and you yourself a sword will pierce

Our Lady of Sorrows is a devotion to the sufferings of our Blessed Mother as prophesied (foretold) by Simeon. During the time of Jesus, it was customary for Jewish families to present their son to the Temple, consecrating him to God with a sacrifice of two small birds.

Following this Law of Moses, eight days after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph presented Him at the Temple in Jerusalem. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, a devout man named Simeon saw the baby Jesus and immediately knew He was the salvation of the world! Filled with awe and wonder, "Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:34-35)

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

I give you a new commandment, says the Lord; love one another as I have loved you. (John 13:34)

how are we called to care for one another?

faith working through love

PRAY: Jesus teaches us that we must love our neighbor as ourselves. Love is desiring and choosing the good of another—it is an *action* and the *measure* of our faith. Our joy and share in God's goodness are intimately related to our desiring and choosing the good of our neighbor—truly, the more we share love, the more we receive it!

Take time this week to read the story of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37. Pray for those who are suffering, that their needs will be met through the love of those around them.



caring for the vulnerable

GROW: We have a responsibility to love our neighbor, *especially* those who are vulnerable. In the Gospel of Luke, we read the parable of "The Good Samaritan." Through this parable, Jesus shows us how we must care for those we encounter who are hurting or who need help. He reminds us that we are all called to the unselfish love of the Good Samaritan. **The love God calls us to honors the inherent dignity of all human life.**

Who is someone that is "vulnerable"? This is a good question! Sometimes people are physically or emotionally unable to advocate for their own well-being because they are very young, very old, or very sick/injured. Our job as Catholics is to make sure those in these vulnerable situations are loved well by taking good care of their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

The Catholic Church has many documents that help us to better understand our beautiful faith. **Evangelium Vitae** is an example of one of these very important documents written by Pope St. John Paul II. In it, he shares the importance of respecting the dignity of all human life, including those who are sick, elderly, and dying by caring for their needs.

prayer and fellowship

SERVE: As a young person, you can love these neighbors well through the gift of prayer and fellowship! Do you have a sick or elderly family member who would enjoy time in fellowship with you? Perhaps you can read your favorite book together or play a game of cards!

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Brothers and sisters: Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me life is Christ, and death is gain. (Philippians 1:21)

the power found in suffering

Jesus gives your suffering POWER!

Suffering was not a part of God's creation. Adam and Eve invited suffering into the created world by choosing to sin. God hates suffering, but He *allows* it only when it serves to **1.)** strengthen our faith, **2.)** help us grow in holiness, or **3.)** leads us to selfless love.

In the Old Testament, suffering is sometimes portrayed as punishment for personal sin. This is how the disciples understood suffering until Jesus taught them differently. In the Gospel of John, when the disciples encountered a man who had been born blind, they asked Jesus whose sin he was being punished for—his own or the sin of his parents? Jesus's answer was surprising. He said, "Neither he or his parents sinned; it is so the works of God might be made visible through him." (John 9:3)

We know that Jesus never sinned, yet He suffered greatly. Not only were people hurtful to Jesus's heart by mocking, rejecting, and betraying Him, Jesus also endured great physical suffering the day of His crucifixion. However, He used the terrible pain of each of His wounds as the way in which He redeemed the world. Jesus used His suffering to save us! He gave great POWER to suffering!

You may have already experienced suffering. Maybe you have been sick, hurt yourself playing, or felt deep sadness from feeling left out or bullied. Jesus's heart breaks over your suffering. But there is good news!... Through Jesus's work on the Cross, He gives your suffering POWER too! Through our suffering, we can grow in great virtue and holiness if we allow our suffering hearts to unite with the suffering of Jesus on the Cross. You can be an instrument of His light and love through your suffering!

This week in prayer, ask God to help you grow in holiness through any suffering you may experience.

SERVE: You can serve your family by offering any suffering you experience to God as a prayer intention!

How do we KNOW we must unite our suffering to Christ's suffering on the Cross?

GROW: Good Question! St. Paul, in his Letter to the Colossians, writes this curious statement...“Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking (missing) in regard to Christ's afflictions (suffering), for the sake of his body, which is the Church.”

When St. Paul refers to “what is still lacking (missing) in Christ's afflictions” he is referring to you and me!

Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection was a *perfect* and *complete* act that redeemed (freed) us from sin. **But, Jesus gives us the dignity of participating in His work of redemption by giving our suffering “redemptive power” when united to His suffering on the Cross!** We are able to unite our suffering to His because our baptism makes us members of His Body! The Church IS the Body of Christ.



Respect Life Month | the little way.

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

the little way | st. therese of lisieux

October is Respect Life Month! During Respect Life Month, we are invited to intentionally examine our hearts and commit ourselves to act, think, and speak with reverence for the dignity of human life. God created each of us in His image and likeness. (Gen 1:27) Being made in His image means God created us to share in His life and love. This commitment shouldn't just last for October but should create good habits that continue always!

love what God loves

GROW: God loved us into existence and knew us before He placed us in our mother's womb. This means that when God created the entire universe, He thought of YOU and ordained a time and place for your life. He created you with a great purpose and showered you with the gifts to achieve His will for your life. You were made for greatness!

God loves and has a plan for every person—because of this, each person is worthy of love and respect. When we say we must act, think, and speak with a reverence for the dignity of human life, it means that in everything we do, we must be respectful of God's love and plan for every person. We are called to love what God loves!

St. Therese of Lisieux was a young girl who understood the love God was calling us to. As a young girl, St. Therese looked for all the "little" ways throughout the day she could do an act of service or offer up a little suffering for her love of God and her neighbor. Through little actions done with great love, St. Therese grew in holiness. The more she loved what God loved, the closer she felt to His heart. St. Therese's path to holiness is called "The Little Way."

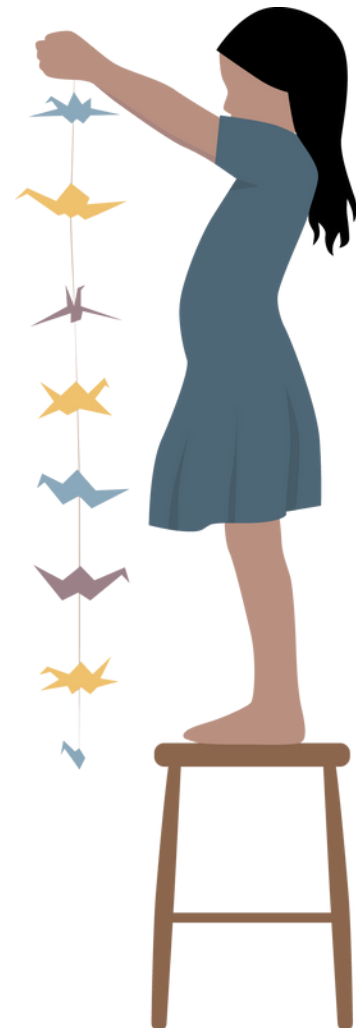
St. Therese wrote "You know well enough that Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty, but at the love with which we do them."

special gift

SERVE: Grab a piece of paper and a pencil—or a crayon! Write or draw a special gift God has given you and the "little" way He desires you to use that gift at home, at school, and within your church. (Here is an example, the gift of a beautiful and ready smile! A ready smile shares God's joy with great generosity. God can use your beautiful smile as a joyful reminder to those around you that they are worthy of God's great love.)

love what God loves

PRAY: This week, pray over this Scripture verse together as a family: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you. (Jeremiah 1:5) Thank God for His great love, ask Him to fill your heart with a burning desire to love what He loves!



Respect Life Month | the little way.

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

Brothers and sisters: Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. (Philippians 4:6-7)

spiritual adoption

parenthood is sacred work!

GROW: Human life is sacred. Sacred means “set apart for a divine purpose.” When God creates new life, He entrusts him or her to a mother and a father. He asks both of them to love this new, sacred person with His heart, and asks each parent to be an instrument of His loving care and protection. Parenthood is sacred work!

Sometimes parents can feel overwhelmed, especially as they wait for their new baby to be born. They know what an important job parenthood is, and sometimes they feel scared that they will not be able to do the job well. God desires for each new life to be born into the arms of parents who are open to God’s grace. Grace is a magnificent gift God gives us of His life that dwells within us to heal and sanctify us. God’s grace fills us with faith, hope, and love. Faith, hope, and love are the three MOST important gifts parents need to do their job well.

**God does not
love us
because we
are valuable.
We are
valuable
because God
loves us.**

**Venerable
Fulton Sheen**



make a commitment

PRAY: Since we know that God hears and answers every prayer, spiritual adoption is a powerful tool for the love and care of an unborn baby and his or her parents. Spiritual adoption is the intentional commitment to pray for an unborn baby and his/her parents throughout the 9 months of pregnancy. While you do not know exactly who you are praying for—God does! God unites your prayers with a family in need and answers them according to His perfect will.

When you begin, have a parent help you count forward 9 months. Follow the baby's development by using a resource of your mom or dad's choosing. Consider getting *Angel In the Waters* by Regina Doman for your book shelf.

“little” but powerful prayer

SERVE: Following St. Therese’s Little Way, take a moment to write this prayer on a piece of paper. Ask a parent or sibling to help if you are still learning how to write. Place it somewhere in your home where you will see it, and remember to pray it every day. (Consider placing it by your toothbrush, while you brush your teeth, you can recite the prayer!) This is a powerful “little” way that you can show great reverence for the dignity of human life!

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I love you very much. Please wrap your loving arms around the parents and unborn baby I have spiritually adopted. Please protect them and fill them with your gifts of faith, hope, and love. Amen.

Parent's Note: You can use this PGS with the LIFE Focus Guide "Praying for the Unborn" and there is an accompanying Children's Spiritual Adoption Guide you can access at PelicanProjectMinistry.org/toolbox

A CHILD'S GUIDE TO Spiritual Adoption

The Pelican Project's mission is to joyfully reawaken a culture of life by supporting parents in the holy work of teaching their children about the sanctity of human life. As our teacher and mother, the holy Catholic Church guides and informs our work because it is within her that we are nourished by Christ's LIFE and truth. Visit our website for many free digital tools to use within your domestic church!

Love what God Loves

God loved us into existence and knew us before He placed us in our mother's womb. This means that when God created the entire universe, He thought of YOU and ordained a time and place for your life. He created you with a great purpose and showered you with the gifts to achieve His will for your life. You were made for greatness!

Your life is sacred because it was "set apart" by God for a special purpose. Because of this, you are worthy of love, respect, and care. This is true for ALL people, big or small, young or old, sick or healthy. We must love our neighbor well because we are called to love what God loves!

Parenthood is Sacred Work!

When God creates new life, He entrusts him or her to a mother and a father. He asks both of them to love this new, sacred person with His heart, asking each parent to be an instrument of His loving care and protection. Parenthood is sacred work!

Sometimes parents can feel overwhelmed, especially as they wait for their new baby to be born. They know what an important job parenthood is, and sometimes they feel scared that they will not be able to do the job well.

God desires for each new life to be born into the arms of parents who are open to God's grace. Grace is a magnificent gift God gives us of His life that dwells within us to heal and sanctify us. God's grace fills us with faith, hope, and love. Faith, hope, and love are the three MOST important gifts parents need to do their job well.

The Spiritual Adoption Prayer!

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I love you very much. Please wrap your loving arms around the parents and unborn baby I have spiritually adopted. Please protect them and fill them with your gifts of faith, hope, and love. Amen.

God hears your prayers

You can spiritually adopt an unborn child and their parents through prayer! Spiritual adoption is a powerful tool to love and care for an unborn baby and his or her parents. It requires the intentional *commitment* to pray for an unborn baby and his/her parents for 9 months, the length of pregnancy. Nine months may feel like a long time—but in Luke 18, Jesus reminds us to pray always without becoming weary!

While you do not know exactly who you are praying for—*God does!* God unites your prayers with a family in need and answers them according to His perfect will.

When you begin, have a parent help you count forward 9 months to determine the due date of your spiritually adopted child!

How it works...

Commit: Have your mom or dad complete the commitment form to spiritually adopt an unborn child and their parents at www.PelicanProjectMinistry.org/spiritual-adoption. (*Remember, never use the internet without permission!*)

Pray: Write this prayer on a piece of paper. Don't forget to decorate your paper! Place it somewhere in your home where you will see it, and remember to pray it every day. (Consider placing it by your toothbrush, while you brush your teeth, you can recite the prayer!)

Grow: Ask your mom or dad to teach you about how a baby grows before birth! Did you know you can hear an unborn baby's heart beat?

Serve: Serve your family by being a good example! Invite your family members to pray this prayer too. Consider praying this prayer every night together or before you head to school or work!

Hope: Know that your prayers are heard and God delights in your faith and love!

Respect Life Month | the little way.

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

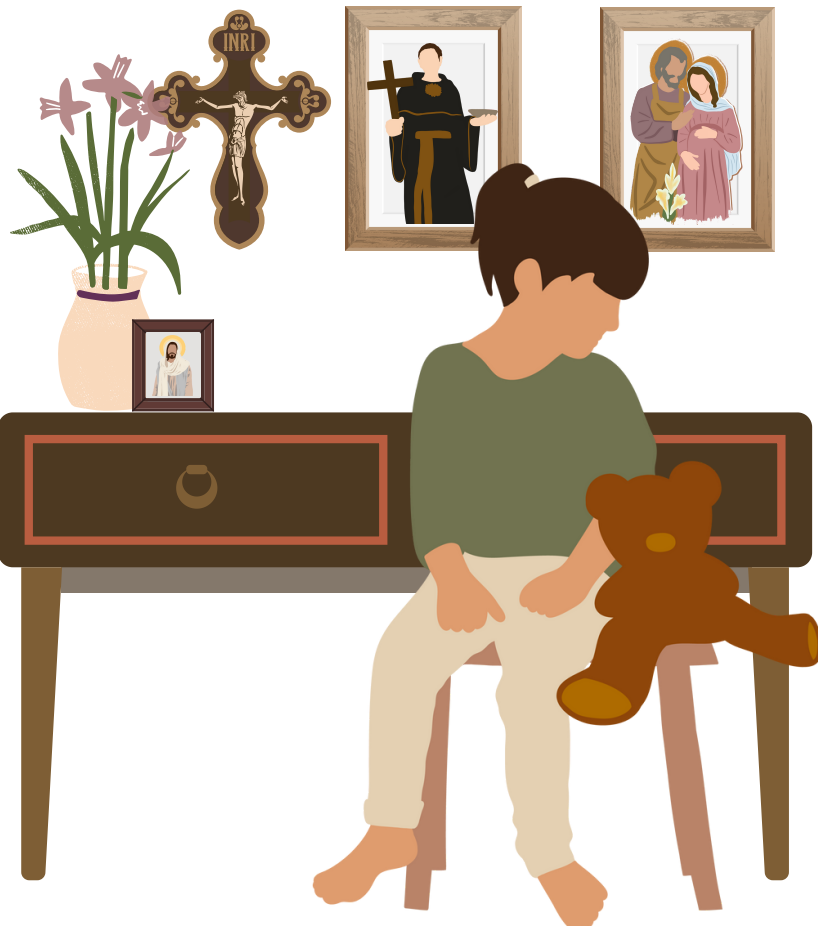
I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. I can do all things in him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:12-13)

creating a space to pray in your home

pray like Jesus

Throughout the Gospel, we read many times that Jesus made time for private prayer. After the miracle of feeding thousands with only a small basket of fish and loaves, He went up on a mountain to pray. Before He chose the twelve who would follow Him as apostles, He prayed all night in the hills. Before the Transfiguration, where He was visited by Moses and Elijah, and His divinity glowed through His physical appearance, He went up the mountain to pray. And before He taught the disciples how to pray by teaching them the "Our Father," He spent time in quiet prayer. These are just a few examples of how important it was for Jesus to spend time talking to His heavenly Father.

Jesus was both God and Man. When He became Man, He experienced human joy, sorrow, and suffering. Jesus shows us that it is through prayer that we stay close to the heart of God. In Luke 18, Jesus reminds us to pray always without becoming weary.



talking and listening

Prayer is having a conversation with God, and it is the most important part of growing in relationship with God. There are two parts to a conversation, talking *and* listening. When we talk to God, we must never forget to take time in silence to listen to what God is speaking in our hearts!

St. Therese of Lisieux said this: "For me, prayer is a burst from my heart, it is a simple glance thrown toward Heaven, a cry of thanksgiving and love in times of trial as well as in times of joy."

St. Therese reminds us that a part of her "little" way is to *always* thank God for His love in each "little" moment of joy or suffering. For St. Therese, prayer was a part of the air she breathed!

prayer table!

PRAY & SERVE: This week In your domestic church, we invite you to create a prayer table. A prayer table reminds us to pray and helps our hearts focus on God. This can be something you have in your room, in a main area of your home, or both! A prayer table should have a chair or pillow nearby to sit and spend time in conversation with God. It should be filled with things that allow you to focus on God's love and your relationship with Him. Your prayer table can include pictures of saints who you enjoy praying with, a Bible, a rosary, flowers... and the list can go on and on! If you do not have any of those things, check to see if your local church has a Bible and rosary you can take home—I bet they do! Commit to serving your family well by praying for them in little ways *every day*.

st. teresa of avila

GROW: Yesterday was St. Teresa of Avila's Feast Day. She is called a "Doctor of the Church," just like St. Therese of Lisieux. St. Teresa wrote much about the importance of prayer, especially in her book called "Interior Castle." In it, she describes an image of our soul as a beautiful castle made of crystal with 7 magnificent rooms! She wrote that through prayer we grow in holiness moving from the outer rooms to the inner one, traveling closer and closer to the heart of Jesus.

St. Teresa wrote, "Each of us has a soul, but we forget to value it. We don't remember that we are creatures made in the image of God. We don't understand the great secrets hidden inside of us." St. Teresa knew the great dignity of human life and God's desire to grow in communion with us through prayer.

Respect Life Month | the little way.

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

It is I who arm you, though you know me not, so that toward the rising and the setting of the sun people may know that there is none besides me. I am the LORD, there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5-6)

breaking bread as a family!

the sweetness beneath

PRAY: God desires you to grow in communion with Him and one another. When we honor the dignity of family life, such as gathering around the table for a family meal, we will begin to find the sweetness of God's plan for life and love. Commit to praying as a family before each meal.

"Most of us pass our lives away eating the husks of life. Within them, beneath the rind, is a sweeter fruit than ever we have tasted. How shall we find it unless the rind is peeled away by Wisdom greater than our own, by a Love whose ways are strange and bewildering to us." -St. Therese of Lisieux

serve joyfully!

SERVE: Helping mom or dad cook the meal is fun—but on a busy night, sometimes you may be more helpful doing the less fun job of clearing the table or doing the dishes. This week, work on caring for your family by helping clean up after each meal. ...Go the extra mile by finding the "little" ways to show your love WHILE you do your chore. Share a smile as you work, thank whoever cooked the meal for their hard work, give the last yummy biscuit to a sibling...



the nourishment before...

GROW: The Bible is filled with stories about God feeding His people. Before their flight from Egypt, God instructed each Israelite family to eat a slaughtered lamb during the Passover. Before the Israelites reached the Promised Land, they wandered in the desert for 40 years; God fed them with manna (bread) that fell from the sky each night. In the Gospel, before He preached, Jesus miraculously fed thousands with only a small basket of fish and loaves. Before His Passion and death on the Cross, Jesus fed the apostles at the Last Supper, and on the road to Emmaus, before Cleopas and another disciple's eyes could recognize Jesus, He broke bread, said a blessing, and gave it to them. Notice that God takes great care to feed His people—especially *before* something BIG happens?

God knows that breaking bread together (sharing a meal) is an important way in which we grow in communion with one another and nourish our hearts and minds to prepare ourselves to live God's plan each day. It is so important that God chose the humility of bread and wine for consecration to make Himself intimately and completely present to us as our divine meal. When we gather at Church and receive the Eucharist, we grow in communion with God and one another—God feeds us before we face the BIG day ahead!

God has ordained our home as the domestic church. When we share a meal as a family, we honor the dignity of God's design for family life. With each meal, many little sacrifices and acts of love come together to nourish us. The family meal is a powerful spiritual tool!

a powerful spiritual tool

When we gather to eat together we grow in gratitude by giving thanks for the food we eat from God's bounty and for parents who labor at home and at work. The joy of fellowship is shared when the meal is enjoyed by grateful hearts.

We grow in communion as a family with our Lord when we pray before our meal, thanking Him for His providence (caring for our needs, in this case, food) and when we share about our day and encouraging one another in small and large matters.

Finally, the family table allows us to do acts of service such as preparing, cooking, and cleaning up a meal.

Respect Life Month | the little way.

PRAY + GROW + SERVE

Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord, and my Father will love him and we will come to him. (John 14:23)

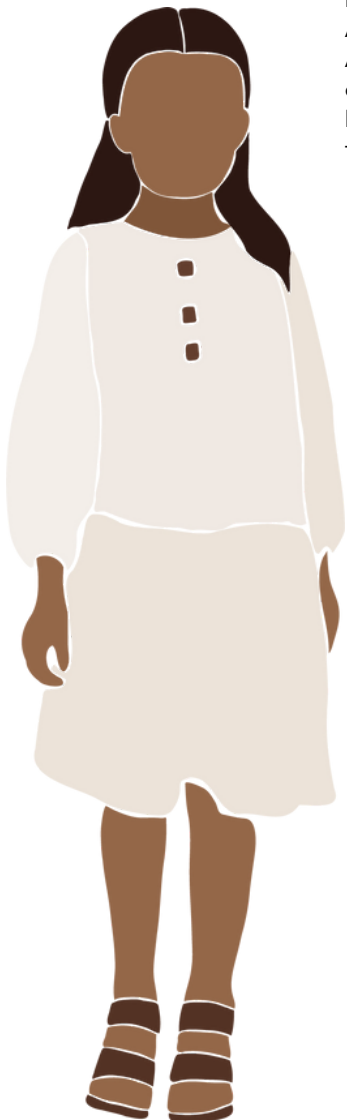
the miracle of the Mass

the Eucharist

— for you alone

PRAY: The Eucharist is a gift given to us by God. In the Gospel, we read about Jesus giving us the Eucharist at the Last Supper. He tells the apostles, "Do this in memory of me." During Mass, when the priest consecrates the gifts of bread and wine, He recounts the words Jesus said at the Last Supper. Through the miracle of transubstantiation, the substance of the bread and wine becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ! Every time you attend Mass, you witness a true miracle!

Pray this week for eyes of faith! Ask God to deepen your faith. Ask Him to help you love and desire the gift of the Eucharist. Pray for a heart that rejoices in the miracle of the Mass!



Do you realize that Jesus is there in the tabernacle expressly for you – for you alone? He burns with the desire to come into your heart...."

St. Therese of Lisieux

GROW: At the beginning of this Respect Life Month, we reminded you that God created you out of love, and He has a purpose for your life. He loves you and desires to be in communion with you as if you were the only person He ever created. The Eucharist is the most perfect communion on this side of heaven and nourishes our body and soul with every grace we need to live a life of love. When we gaze upon the Eucharist, we gaze upon Jesus—and He gazes back.

St. Therese of Lisieux wrote, "Do you realize that Jesus is there in the tabernacle expressly for you - for you alone? He burns with the desire to come into your heart...." When Jesus looks at you, He sees only you. He is not looking at the person behind you who is taller or the person on your left who can run faster than you. He is not looking at the person on your right who got a better grade on your last math test. When He looks at you, He fills His gaze with only you.

look back

SERVE: We serve those around us by first being at the service of Christ. When we are at Mass, God asks of us one thing—to be present with Him in that moment. As we near an end to October's Little Way, we share with you St. Therese's "littlest" but most powerful piece of spiritual guidance... She tells us simply to "look at Him while He is looking at you."

When you go to Mass on Sunday, know that Christ is gazing upon you. Know that His heart burns for your heart. Know that He delights in your every joy and suffers within your every hurt. Know that He wants to shower you with all the gifts a good Father desires to give to His children. Know that He has planned a future for you of hope! As He looks upon you, follow St. Therese's Little Way and simply have the courage to look back.

Parent Note: You can use this PGS with the "Bringing Your Children to Mass" Guide that you can access at PelicanProjectMinistry.org/toolbox

PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

And for this reason we too give thanks to God unceasingly, that, in receiving the word of God from hearing us, you received not a human word but, as it truly is, the word of God, which is now at work in you who believe. (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

your parents are your most important teachers!

a special mission

GROW: Did you know that your parents are your MOST important teachers? God has given your parents the big job of teaching you about HIM. His love, His truth, His grace, His gifts, His justice, and His mercy. As we learned before, Pope St. John Paul II teaches us in Familiaris Consortio (that is Latin for "The Fellowship of the Family") that the mission of the family is to guard, reveal, and protect God's love.

The family carries out this special mission in four very important ways: 1.) By coming together in love as one, 2.) by allowing our love to be fruitful, bearing new life in Christ, 3.) by loving our neighbor well by celebrating and protecting the dignity of others 4.) and, by sharing the love of the Gospel with those we encounter.

It is your parent's responsibility to teach you how to guard, reveal, and protect God's love and to lead the way! We must always honor our parents, be good students of their love, and remember that the domestic church (home) is the most important classroom!

our model of faith

At home, you learn to unite your hearts through praying together before meals, school, or bed. As a family, you prepare together to receive God's life and love in your hearts through participating in the sacraments such as, Sunday Mass, Reconciliation, and the Baptism of a new sibling! You learn how to honor the dignity of human life by watching the gentle and loving care your parents as they take care of you and one another. Through your parent's love and care for your extended family, including aunts or cousins expecting a new baby or their gentleness with an elderly grandparent, they teach you that life at every age must be celebrated and loved well.

SERVE: This week, try to notice the way your parents show you how to love through their good example. Next time they do something to take good care of you, tell them, "Thank you for showing me how to love well!" There is no sweeter gift for a parent than this!

your protection and strength

PRAY: In a letter to the Thessalonians, St. Paul writes, "But the Lord is faithful; He will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. We are confident of you in the Lord that what we instruct you, you are doing and will continue to do. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the endurance of Christ." St. Paul reminds us that God's love is our protection and strength. Pray today and always for your parents. Pray that God's love fills their hearts and gives them the endurance to carry out the special mission of the family as your MOST important teacher!



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom... (Matthew 25:1)

God desires your life to reflect the light of His love!

even when it is hard

We have learned so much together about the dignity of the human person, God's design for the family, and His call for us to love. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus says, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them." He raises a very good question—the best questions are the ones that make us think within our hearts.

It can feel very easy to love our family and friends, especially when they love us back. God has given us such a beautiful gift of allowing us to share in His love and joy in this way. The hard part of God's command to love is that we must love the people we encounter who feel hard to love, those who are unkind, grumpy, selfish...and the list goes on and on. It is very important to remember that this does NOT mean that we should allow others to hurt us, but it does mean that we must pray for God's grace to transform their lives for the best.

shadow of darkness

GROW: When Adam and Eve chose to turn their back on God and disobey Him, they cast a shadow of darkness over all of creation. Today, hundreds of generations after Adam and Eve, we still sin, and the shadow of darkness continues. As a Catholic, God desires your life to reflect the light of His love, *always*. As the "Light of the World," Jesus desires you to shine His light. This can be a hard job.

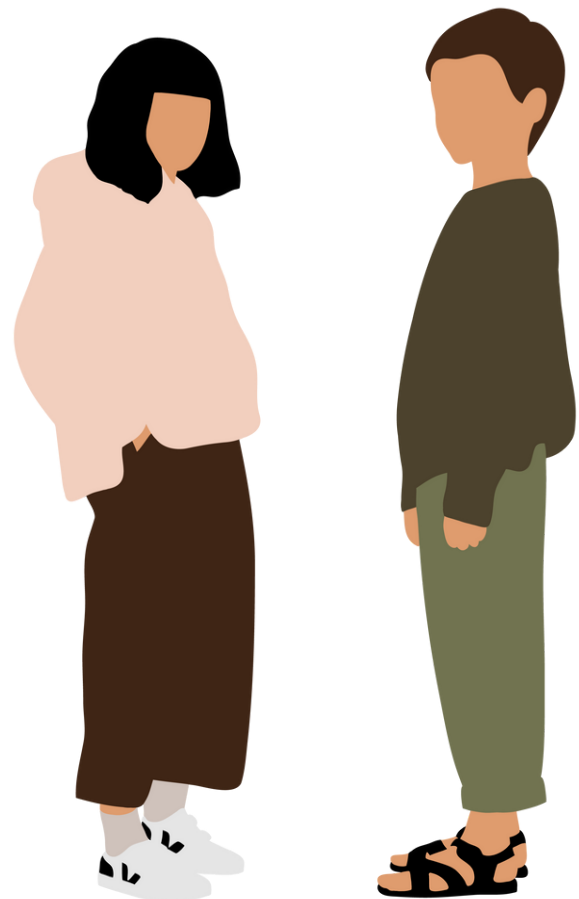
Have you ever been in a very dark room when someone suddenly turns on a bright light? What is your first reaction? Usually, the sudden burst of light can cause you to shrink back and look away or cover your eyes! It does not take long to adjust to the new sense of clarity with which you can see the room, but at first, it was hard.

Sometimes people do not embrace the light of Christ's love right away, especially if they have been in darkness. Sometimes this can make the job of living our Catholic faith hard—especially if we feel people shrinking away from us. It is in these moments that we must remember that Christ told us we would sometimes be persecuted (treated badly) because of our faith. This week, start to pray for the strength to love the way Christ taught us to, even when it is hard.

God calls us to 2 things

PRAY & SERVE: Remember at the beginning of the year that we learned that some people do not believe that all human life has dignity and must be cared for and protected? Maybe they do not believe this because they do not understand the Gospel, or perhaps they find it hard to believe because their own broken heart causes them to be confused about God's love for them. It does not matter why a person does not believe this truth, God still calls us to two things. 1.) To stand up for the care and protection of all human life and 2.) to pray for God's grace to soften and transform the hearts of anyone who does not.

How do we stand up for the care and protection of human life? The best and most important ways are 1.) through prayer and 2.) by thinking, speaking, and acting with reverence for the dignity of every human person we encounter.



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one-- to each according to his ability... (Matthew 25:15)

using the talents God gives us!

Jesus reveals man to himself

GROW: God sent His Son, Jesus, so that we may understand what it means to be fully human! In a Church document called **Gaudium et Spes**, the Church explains that "Christ... fully reveals man to himself and makes his supreme calling clear." This means that the more we come to know Jesus, the more we understand the value and purpose of our own human life.

We have learned over the past year that you were created by God with a great purpose. You have been given unique talents that God knows you can use to love and care for others. Maybe you have the gift of musical talent, and you can soothe the weary hearts of those around you with the gift of your voice or instrument. Perhaps you have a fantastic ability to play soccer, and you can teach others a skill building their confidence and camaraderie centered around good sportsmanship. Perhaps you have the gift of making others feel included and welcomed, or maybe you are a great listener, helping others feel heard. Perhaps you can draw and share a piece of God's beautiful world through art or are amazing at math and help unveil the intricate precision of God's creation through arithmetic. Our list could go on and on!

our supreme calling

PRAY: This week in prayer, ask God to reveal your talents and to bless you with a humble confidence to use them with holy boldness. Ask God for guidance on how to use your gifts well.

SERVE: Christ shows us how to live. Jesus lived a life loving what His Father loves and wanting what His Father wants. In the same way, our supreme calling is to allow our lives to be used as an instrument of God's love. We do this by loving what He loves, wanting what He wants. Talk with your parents today about how God is calling you to use your gifts. How do they think God is calling you to use your gifts? Ask yourself the hard questions, do you love what God loves? Do you want what God wants?

accepting our gifts

Consider a situation when someone you love gives you a gift. For the gift to be used you must first accept the gift, learn about what it is and how to use it, then intentionally find opportunities to make good use of it. Similarly, we must accept, understand, and choose to use the gifts God gives us. One of the most important gifts God gives us is our talents—the strengths God has blessed us with so that we may love and care for our neighbor. God's heart breaks when He gives us gifts to care for those around us, and we choose to not use them. This would be much like receiving a gift then placing it under our bed to collect dust and be forgotten.

Jesus was born with every gift. This means that if we have a gift that we do not understand, we need to ask Jesus in prayer how He desires us to use that gift. We must also ask Jesus how He desires us to use other gifts He allows us to have, such as our wealth and position as leaders. Everything we have must be used for the glory of God, this is first done by using all we have to care for the dignity of every human person!



PRAY, GROW, AND SERVE

"...For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25:35-40)

serve Christ by serving the "least of these."

Today, on the final Sunday of this year's liturgical cycle, we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. As Catholics, we are called to imitate the life of Christ by living His commands to love God and love our neighbor honoring the dignity of every person we encounter. Our all-powerful, almighty, all-knowing God became Man not to be served, but to serve. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life!

This Sunday's reading reminds us that when we give loving care to others we are loving and caring for HIM! We first learn how to love and serve at home. This week, **grow** in understanding by learning how to "serve the least of these," and **pray** for faith to see Christ in those who need care.

Who are the "least of these," and how can I serve them as a young person?

Hungry. Every day, you need to eat. When your tummy is growling and you are looking forward to a great meal, stop and think about how you can help serve your hungry family. Some ideas include setting the table, washing produce, and helping to cook. Chores like clearing the table and washing the dishes are a great way to serve the next hungry family member who needs a clean dish and a space to sit and eat!

Thirsty. Nothing is more refreshing than a cold glass of water on a hot day! To live, we need water. However, we "thirst" for more than just water from the faucet; our hearts thirst for the "Living Water"—Jesus! To live in heaven, we need Jesus. Sharing Jesus with your family is something you can do every day. Through prayer, service, and virtuous character, you can help quench their supernatural thirst!

Naked. God gave you a unique body and soul, unlike any other person who has or ever will live. He created you with great purpose and dignity, and, as a child of God, our Lord dwells within you! The clothes we choose to wear are very important; we must dress in a way that honors our great purpose as a marvelous Temple of God. Serve Christ by honoring Him in the way you clothe your body. Clothes do not need to be expensive or new but must honor your God-given dignity!

Sick. Sickness never feels good. Sometimes we get physically ill such as a stuffy nose or the flu, and sometimes we get heart sick with deep sorrow. When we get sick, we need rest and care to heal. When a family member is sick, tend to their needs by offering comfort, helping with chores, and praying for their healing.

Imprisoned. God created us for relationship—we flourish in communion with God and one another. Sometimes a person may feel isolated from community or "imprisoned" by sin or difficult feelings that affect their freedom to flourish. In family life, we serve those who suffer from these feelings with the gift of time. We can serve Jesus by spending quality time with family members and reminding them how special they are to us.