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Sample Script:

We are created out of the love of God and are given our mission for our life from this love, which is to say we are called to love God and love our neighbor during the days of our life. So love is not just some nice thing that we are asked to express but rather is truly the driving central force that orders our life towards fulfillment, happiness, and peace.

Throughout our human history, Love Himself has sought to be an intimate part of our human story, not wanting us to try and live a life centered in love apart from the Source from which all love flows. The Trinity, who is Love, wants us to experience the fullness of who He is so that we can encounter this life as completely as possible.

We see the Trinity’s action throughout Scripture that speaks to God’s desire to be with us. From the dawn of our creation, Adam receives his life from the love of the Father, the word of the Son, and the breath of the Holy Spirit. Shortly after, realizing Adam’s need for another to love and share in life with, the divine power of the Trinity creates Eve from a rib of Adam. Being in relationship and community with God blessed Adam with the gift of Eve.

We see in the story of Sarah and Abraham in their encounter with God in the visitors at Mamre how a life lived seeking to be in a loving relationship with God and the people around you can yield fruit of love and blessing. Abraham receives these three visitors who assure him that in a year his wife Sarah will give birth to a son, thus fulfilling God’s promise of offspring and blessing. You see, God being Love Himself and existing as three persons in community, wants His people to also live in community and experience love in their proper time and place (in this case, Sarah and Abraham, as wife and husband, are able to receive a gift of a child in love and support).

Scripture continues with numerous accounts of God, of love Himself, seeking to encounter humanity and walk with us. This desire of God to be with us extends beyond Scripture as well, as we have countless stories and examples from the Church and from Saints that speak to this reality. Even up to this very moment, God wants to encounter and be with us; God even wants to be with you!

So you might be thinking; “If God wants to be with me so bad, why haven’t I ever experienced Him like Adam or Abraham or the prophets or the Saints?” God does want to be with you and how He speaks to us is often individual to the person. We need to do our part to prepare to meet Him, doing the things that are pleasing to Him. So, we need to go to weekly Sunday Mass, pray daily, follow the Commandments, and serve our brothers and sisters in love, to name a few. Here, we give God praise, grow in relationship to Him, and soften our heart to hear and experience the God of love in our life. The community of the Trinity loves you and wants to walk with you during your life!

Questions:

- Tell two or three things that tell us God is love.
- Describe the roles of the Trinity at the Creation story.
- In the story about Sarah and Abraham, why do you think it is so important to receive visitors and guests with attention?
- Have you ever experienced an encounter with God? What was it like?
- What are some ways you are preparing to encounter God in your life?

Activities:

Pick out a story from Scripture, together as a family, of the Trinity interacting with humanity. Read this together and discuss what you each notice about this encounter.

Keep a journal and each day write down a word or phrase that sticks out to you when you pray or go to Mass. Keep this word or phrase with you throughout your day; God could very well be speaking to you through these.
God the Father constantly reaches out for His people. Even when Adam and Eve committed the Original Sin and disrupted the harmonious relationship between God and man, God sought to restore things as they were. He reached out to the Patriarchs (the early Old Testament leaders) to guide the people of Israel. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses; these leaders were given various roles to bring the people closer to God. Next, He reached out to the Kings of Saul, David, Solomon, and a whole host of individuals to further the mission of God. While much good was accomplished with these variety of leaders, they also fell short in many ways that left the people of Israel falling into the same old sins as before. So, God called upon a number of people to be heralds or proclaimers of His word that would call the people to repentance and to follow in the ways of the Lord.

RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament. He is the living face of who God has revealed Himself to be.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
The Prophets of the Old Testament were chosen individuals who were given grace by God to carry the mission of the Divine message to the people of Israel. These messengers, who were called from various walks of life at different ages and different levels of success from the eyes of the culture, were called forth to be the mouthpiece of God, the Father. God never stopped calling His people throughout the ages but the
inability of the people to listen and adhere to the words of God necessitated the need for human messengers taken from the people to pass along what it was that God had to say. God, the Father chose to continue to send these prophets to give His message of His love and care for His people. This is a message of the love of a Father. Sometimes it is misunderstood as a message of an angry God, or a mean rule maker. But His message needs to be seen in light of how Jesus revealed God as the Father. When we see that we understand God’s wrath of that of a dad protecting his family. We see the rules of that of parents trying to guide their children toward good things.

While there are a number of major (4) and minor (12) prophets in the Old Testament, we want to introduce you to just a couple in brief; Isaiah and Jeremiah. Isaiah is one of the major prophets and is someone that we hear quite a bit about in our First Reading on a fair number of Sunday Mass’ throughout the year. A significant reason for this is because he had a lot to say about the coming Messiah, who we as Christians know to be Jesus Christ. Some of Isaiah’s most common verses center around what became known as the Suffering Servant, which spoke of one who would heal the people with His wounds and afflictions. We see Jesus here, who suffered and died for us through His scourging and crucifixion, bringing us healing from our sin that graces us with the eternal consequence of Heaven.

Jeremiah is another one of the major prophets, and offers you and me an important lesson on the time frame that God uses. We read in Jeremiah 1:4-10: “The word of the LORD came to me: ‘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.’ ‘Ah, Lord GOD!’ I said, ‘I do not know how to speak. I am too young!’ But the LORD answered me, ‘Do not say, “I am too young.” To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you...’ Then the LORD extended his hand and touched my mouth, saying to me, ‘See, I place my words in your mouth! Today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to uproot and to tear down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant.’ Our age, our experience, our knowledge of theology... When God calls you, know that He is calling you because He knows you to be ready and that He will give you everything you need to carry out the mission He has for you. Jeremiah was calling the people of Israel to have faith in God; he is also calling you and me to have faith in God. These two general and brief examples afford us a great foundation of how the Prophets were called to share the message given them by God. God is calling you and me to be messengers of His word today... Are we listening and responding?

Questions:

- Why do you think God wanted to bring His people back closer to Himself?
- In what ways is the God we hear about in the Old Testament like a Father?
- Why did God call prophets?
- In Jeremiah we see that God said, “do not say, ‘I am too young’. If that is the case how can you be like a prophet today?
- What are ways we share the message of God?

Activities:

Brainstorm different ways that you as a 5th grader could be a messenger of the love of God, come up with at least 5 different ways.

Write down a letter to friends that talks about God the Father and why knowing Him would be important.
RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus desires that all may be one; united together as being united with God in the Church. The Sacraments communicate Christ’s presence which consistently calls the names of all to gather together under God’s care.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
Faithfully knowing that God is reaching out to us, we need to do our best to listen for God’s call by reducing or even eliminating anything that would hinder us from the voice of Jesus in our life.

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Sample Script:
At our baptism, we receive the necessary grace (through the washing of Original Sin and the reception of the Holy Spirit to be marked as a child of God) to live as we are called to live. God’s plan for humanity has always been to be one of union with Him. With baptism, this unity is realized again as we become permanently sealed as a child of God. This seal, while it can be damaged and broken due to sin, can never be removed and marks us as belonging to Jesus Christ not only in this life, but in the life to come.

Now, Jesus Christ, through His saving work that culminates in His passion, death, and resurrection, has at the central point of His mission the task of uniting the divide that exists between God and man. To begin His public ministry, Jesus initiated an important and necessary step in the life of the Christian; namely to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, while not in need of baptism Himself, makes present another example of God’s desire for humanity to be one with Him. When we are baptized, we leave behind the ways of man and put on the ways of God.

Jesus shows us that God wants to accompany His people through each of our own personal journeys throughout this life. To put it another way, God isn’t going to ask us to do something that He hasn’t already done. He wants to walk along side of us so that we can come to know Him more fully. The Son of God wants us each to be sons and daughters of God who are united to Him in a loving relationship that not only brings our own personal lives to a place of happiness, but also encourages and invites others to do the same.

Questions:
- Based on this lesson, what is part of God’s plan for humanity?
- Who does baptism unite us to?
- Why did Jesus get baptized?
- Does God want to be a part of your life? How do you know?
- What does God want you to get out of life?

Activities:
Ask you parents/godparents about your baptism. Ask them to share with you anything they felt or experienced that day and why it was such a special day for you.

Consider some ways that you act or live that tell others that you are a baptized child of God. How do you think Jesus is being communicated to others by the way you are living?
Take a moment and think of the sport or activity that you are most involved with. Think about all that goes into preparing for a performance or a game. All of the practice, all of the time committed to help yourself be the most prepared so that you can be successful takes a certain amount of focus and determination. As well as being committed and focused, you need to have the right equipment and gear to perform what you practiced in the game or at the performance.

Now, take a moment and consider the disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ. Throughout the Gospel passages of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we see these men and women in the very beginning stages of learning what it means to be a disciple. They are found often having a difficult time grasping fully what Jesus is teaching and misinterpreting the points that Jesus is trying to get across (see Mark 10:29-45 or Matthew 16:21-25 for some examples). The disciples emotions and quick reactions often lead them to go down a path that is not the intended direction of Jesus, finding them receiving correction and sometimes outright rebuttals (see John 18:10-11). Most notable, is the fear...
and rejection, three years into the relationship, that Jesus experiences from most of the apostles during His passion and death, especially from being betrayed by Judas Iscariot and by being denied by Peter himself.

Through it all, the disciples maintained connection to one another, remembering the teachings of the Lord but full of fear and confusion. The book of the Acts of the Apostles details the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that won for the apostles and disciples the freedom to embrace fully the mission God was calling them, and is calling you, to live and preach. Most powerfully, in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we read how the Holy Spirit comes down upon each of the apostles and enlivens them to boldly and confidently proclaim Jesus Christ, who died and has risen, and calls us to repent from our sins and live a life centered in God.

So, how does this apply to you? We have received the Holy Spirit just as the apostles have when we were baptized. The Holy Spirit descended down upon you and gave you the grace to be a child of God. This gift opens you up to receive the teachings of Jesus with faith and confidence and communicate these truths in your life. Believing that we have this indwelling or the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, we must respond to the call to practice, live and share our faith so that others may come to understand the love God has for them.

How do we practice our faith? We need to attend weekly Sunday Mass, listening to the readings and the homily and receive Jesus in the Eucharist with great attention. We need to say our prayers each day, praying to know God and to help others. We need to say sorry for our sins and go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We need to pay attention to people around us and respond to their needs with care. As we continue to grow in our practice of the faith, we’ll come to feel more comfortable in living and sharing the faith and recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit in the moments of our life. Being able to point out the existence of God in our life will help us encounter Him and realize Him in our daily life. You’ll be able to name the presence of God for yourself and for others, proclaiming the truth that God loves you and wants you to be an active part in building up His Kingdom.

Questions:

- Were the disciples perfect once they started following Jesus? Name some ways that they struggled in following Jesus.
- What is it that you think kept the disciples wanting to follow Jesus?
- How have you encountered the Holy Spirit in your life?
- What are some ways that you can grow in your faith?
- What are some ways that you can share your faith with others?

Activities:

As a family, read a chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. What are some ways that you notice the presence and working of the Holy Spirit?

One of the easiest ways to begin proclaiming the faith to others is to live it. For example, using kind words when you speak and ending a conversation by telling the other “God bless you” shows your belief in the presence of God. Think of one way that you can proclaim your faith by your life and start practicing this.
We are blessed to have a God who is love and truth. Because He is love, and knowing that love is meant to be shared, we know that God wants to be in relationship with you and me. Because He is truth, and truth is meant to be known, we know that God wants to share the truth with you and me so we can know the reality of things. The love and truth that God has for you and me is revealed and given to us through the Holy Scriptures of the Bible. We see in the Bible the love and truth that God is and how these get shared with the people in the stories. And since these stories are authored by God, the love and truth told in the Scriptures are alive for us to not only read but to experience in our own lives today to show us the love and truth present in our own situations and experiences.

Our own reading of the Bible is important so that we can come to learn and know the love and truth of God around us in our life. While the entire Bible offers us this love and truth, it is particularly important that the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John become familiar to us as they tell the words and life of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God who is the fullness of revelation that shows forth the love and truth of God most clearly.

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RELATES TO JESUS:

Jesus’ life and ministry, as explicated in the Gospels, shows us that He is fully God and fully man. We come to know Jesus in the Gospels, learn to model and follow Him, and witness to others about our Savior.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:

We can place our confidence in Sacred Scripture as a Living Word who helps us know, love, and serve God.
The Gospels are the heart of the Scriptures, containing the important work and mission of Jesus Christ to save us from our sins and to bring us back into loving relationship with the Father. Jesus is the fullness of revelation that fulfills all of the law of the Old Testament and proclaims true all that was foretold by the Prophets. Jesus is the summary of the Bible while also being the central point; namely to love God and to serve Him with all your mind, heart, body, and soul and to love our neighbor as our self. Jesus’ words and life as found in the Gospels also provide us with our supreme role model for living the Christian life, Who calls us to follow after Him by being His disciple and to offer a living witness to the truth and love that God desires for all through His Son Jesus Christ.

While it is true that we receive the grace to be a disciple through prayer and practice of virtue and the like, we receive the supreme grace to be like Jesus from Jesus Himself, given to us in word and sacrament at each Sunday Mass. Hearing His words in Scripture, receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, worshiping together in community with our brothers and sisters who make up the body of Christ the Church, we come face-to-face with our Savior.

Important to note is that the celebrant or the leader of the Mass in each parish is the pastor, who when he is performing his liturgical duties is acting “in persona Christi” or the person of Christ and carries out the work that Jesus handed on through the Apostles to be present until the end of the age. We understand here the importance of the reader of the Gospel then, the reading of Jesus’ life and words, is the ordained man who has the grace to be in the person of Christ; we understand the importance of the prayers and actions over the bread and wine that becomes the Body and Blood of Christ to be the priest just as Jesus who offers the sacrifice of himself for the souls of his parish; we understand the importance of the role of the lay faithful who make up the body of Christ to pray for and support the pastor who represents Jesus the head of the Church in teaching and governing souls so as to attain salvation. Being in the person of Christ is a special grace to both lead the people of God in right worship and to be a witness of Jesus so that all might encounter Him through the Mass and the priest and be drawn ever closer as a disciple. Since the priest has this special role, it is the priest (or sometimes a deacon) that reads us the Gospel, and then gives us the homily to understand the Scriptures that are read at Mass. It is important to know as well that next to the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, and the priest as being in the person of Christ, the book of the Gospels has a special place as an image of Jesus (this is why we stand for the Gospels).

Questions:

- Who or what is the central point of all the Bible?
- What group of books of the Bible have a special place as an image of Jesus?
- What is the role of the Scriptures (or Bible) at Mass?
- How can we know about the love of God?
- Why should we read the Bible?

Activities:

Read one of the Gospels for half an hour, write down something you learned about the love of God, or specifically about Jesus.

Write a prayer to God thanking Him for giving us the Bible so that we may know His love.
We live in a world that is made up of both the physical and the spiritual. While there exists these two distinct realms, the physical and spiritual realities around interact with one another and make-up the created order around us. And just as we experience the world that we can see and touch, we can also experience the world we cannot see and touch. Both the physical and spiritual realms affect our lives and influence our journey in finding happiness and fulfillment in this life.

In considering the spiritual realm, we know that it is populated with both angels and demons. Angels are the messengers that work for God and assist Him in helping to guide and protect us in our lives. Demons are the angels that choose to disobey God and seek just the opposite of the angels; namely to lead humanity astray to make the same choice of disobedience that the demons themselves have. The spiritual realm, and the angels and demons that exist here, are as real as the animals and plants that we experience and are moving about us, often veiled from our vision. Angels (and thus demons as fallen angels) are created being like humans, but they are separate from humans, humans do not become angels at our deaths.

RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus is Lord over all of creation, including the angels. Jesus came to save us from our sins so that all of creation might have a chance to be reordered to God and us as humans could live lives of holiness.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
We are called to live lives of holiness that are rooted in Mass, prayer, study, works of service towards others, which keep us close to God and focus our life on fulfillment.
It is interesting, and perhaps a little scary, to think about, but in the spiritual realm there exists a very real battle of good and evil between the angels and demons. The battle that exists is ultimately for us; both sides of the angels and demons vying to bring us to their particular side. God’s angels, the good angels, operate in a way to keep our soul in the light of God. Again, angels are messengers and so their words speak love and goodness and truth to guide us to Jesus Christ and to keep us in the grace of God. The demons, the bad angels, operate in a more deceitful manner, seeking to encourage our soul to move away from the light of God and to follow our own desires over and above God’s or to even follow sinful desires. The demons use words that speak anger and incompleteness and lies to guide us in the way of the devil and a life of isolation apart from God.

You notice that I said angels and demons “speak words”. While they are messengers and certainly the messages that come forth from them can come to us as words in our mind or heart, these messages can also manifest themselves as inspirations or even feelings that could be either peaceful or unrestful. Whenever we receive such messages or inspirations in our mind or heart, we are best served to bring these first to God in prayer and pray to the Holy Spirit to show us the origin of this message. If we are intentional and patient in this request, God will show us from whom this particular message and inspiration is from.

We must remember that God and His angels love us and do not want to lose any one of us, knowing that Jesus conquered sin and death and all the demons. In fact God has given us each a guardian angel to help guide and protect us. These guardians do not want to go against our free will so we need to ask daily for their help. We need to always make the choice to follow God, to follow that which is loving, true, good, beautiful, peaceful, joyful (cf. Philippians 4:8-9), knowing that this is where God resides and seeks to have us live with Him. With God, we live our life of holiness that is centered in Him and keeps us close in His loving care.

Why is it so important to be aware of the spiritual realm? God created us out of His love, which shows us how much He is in love with us. He is so in love with us! The demons are jealous of this love and would do anything to hurt God by leading one of His beloved away. To know that God and His angels are fighting for us shows us just how special we are in God’s eyes. With this knowledge, we are inspired to live lives of holiness that put God in the center of everything that we do, so that we might always choose the good and avoid the evil and be the children of God who don’t go astray.

Questions:

- What are the demons?
- What are some ways that angels and demons might “speak” to us?
- What is the role of angels?
- How can we follow the good angels and ignore the bad demons?
- Why do demons try to get us to turn from God?

Activities:

Research what the nine choirs of angels that the Catholic Church names. Draw a picture of these choirs of angels.

Take some time each day this week to ask your guardian angel for help and protection.
When you look in the mirror what do you see? A person who was created in the image and likeness of God, and redeemed by the death of Jesus, the Son of God and Second Person of the Trinity. You see the same truth in every person you set eyes on. Whether a person knows this great truth about themselves or not, we do because God has revealed it to us through His Church. God draws all of us into one big family, His family.

Being made in God’s image and likeness means that we were given capacities that the rest of creation does not have: the ability to think and reason (intellect), the ability to make choices and distinguish right from wrong (free will), and an immortal soul. These qualities enable us to understand the workings of the natural world, to have self-awareness and understanding, to have empathy and give of ourselves in relationship with others. It also enables us to know and love God, and to live out the covenant Jesus established by his death and resurrection.

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Being made in God’s image and likeness gives every human person an inherent dignity. We were born with this dignity, God placed it deep within us, and no person or thing can take it away. This shared dignity gives us an instant bond with the rest of humanity. As Christians, we understand human nature and the gift of dignity. That knowledge also gives us a responsibility to take care of one another and to uphold human dignity in every setting. How we interact with our family members, schoolmates, teammates, colleagues at work, and random people we meet in a store or on a sidewalk is to be guided by the duty to recognize and uphold the inherent human dignity of that person. We are called to do this individually, as a family, as a parish community, and as a society. The Catechism reminds us: “Everyone should look upon his neighbor (without any exception) as ‘another self,’ above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity.’ (CCC 1931).

Our society often judges the value of a person by the work they do. As Christians we are called to witness to the truth that the value and worth of the human person is rooted in who they are as a unique creation of God, formed in His image and likeness. Human life is sacred, because God’s love envelopes each human being from the moment of conception, throughout the years of life, to death, when the soul returns to God. That is why the Church speaks out in defense of the dignity of every human life, from the womb to natural death. A human being is a person, not a thing, and every person’s dignity and basic rights are to be protected. Not every human being can speak out for his/her own rights, and in that case it is our responsibility to speak out for them. The most fundamental right is the right to life. God is the author of life, and the life he gives each person is a gift to be cherished, protected and defended from conception to natural death.

Jesus showed a special care and concern for the poor and those who society excluded. By his words and actions he showed that they had dignity and worth. He addressed their physical and spiritual needs. He demonstrated that we are interconnected, and that when an individual suffers it has an effect on the rest of us. Reflecting on Jesus’ life and teachings, the Church developed the concept of the “Common Good.” The Common Good can be defined as the total of all the conditions that are necessary for a person or group of people to grow and thrive: food, clothing, shelter, education, health care and employment. It is essential that all members of a group or society flourish, and when they don’t it hinders the ability of the rest of the group to flourish.

The Church continues to show special care and concern for those who are most in need, and to work to build up the common good, the common dignity of all people. As members of the Church, the Body of Christ, we each have a duty to take part in this work.

Questions:

- What three capacities set humanity apart from the rest of creation?
- What do those capacities allow human beings to do?
- What is the most fundamental human right?
- What is meant by the term “the Common Good”?
- Who are those that may not be seen by society as having dignity?

Activities:

Identify ways in which your parish community cares for those most in need and works to build up the dignity of all people

Pray for those whose dignity has been rejected by society: the unborn, the imprisoned, those with any disabilities or any others.
RELATES TO MY FAITH:

Unfortunately, we are going to sin in our life. By frequenting the Sacrament of Reconciliation, maintaining a life of prayer, reading the bible, reading abot and imitating the lives of the Saints, going to Mass regularly, making personal sacrifices, and helping our brothers and sisters, we can dramatically lessen the sins of our life and lead virtuous lives which will lead us to become saints of God.

RELATES TO JESUS:

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. When we turn our hearts towards another, we are less fulfilled, less happy, and ultimately incomplete. Sin pulls us away towards this incompletion; Jesus offers life in the full.

Sample Script:

Every human heart has a desire to be loved and to love. We receive this desire from God, who is Love and loves His creation with total and perfect perfection. Since our creation, God has desired all humans to experience the same love that exists within the Trinity, a perfect gift of love from one person, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to the other for all eternity. God wants us to love Him in the same way and to love one another with the same sense of selfless love.

Because of Original Sin, everything was thrown out of order. It made us incapable of giving love in a way where we put others first. Instead, it made our love self-seeking---"me first". "Love me." "Look at me." Instead of first asking, "How can I serve others?" I ask, "What about me and my needs?" Certainly, there are times when our
needs must be met in order that we may serve others more effectively, but the example, for instance, of Saint Maximillian Kolbe, who took the place of execution of a man with a wife and family certainly did not put his need for life above that of the man with the wife and family. Original Sin made the doing of our will over God's common place for all of humanity; being born into the Original Sin of Adam and Eve wired us with an unhealthy disposition to be attracted to and choose sin over the good (called concupiscence). Sin always seeks the things that are not of God and is the intentional choice against the good that is due to God, to the other, and to the self.

One way of looking at and considering sin is to see it as “missing the mark,” a phrase from which the root word for sin comes from. This makes a lot of sense for us in that by following our own design for our life, in choosing to sin over choosing the good, we miss the mark on what our life is intended for. If we are the archer and our life choices are the arrow, the bulls-eye would be the life of love offered to us by God. Anything else on the target board is a miss. Thank goodness God is always inviting us to take another shot to hit the bulls-eye...

Another way to understand sin is to see it as choosing a lesser good or a good that is not a good at all, but that we wrongly perceive to be. Again, the goal of our life is relationship with God. We are created for such a relationship, but our sinful disorder can shift our focus away from God. Our desire is still to be fulfilled, to seek the good, and quite often the things we focus on participate in some form of good that might actually fill us up for a time. It is only for a time, though, because these particular things are not God, the One who can truly fill us up. So, it becomes common for sinful man to choose the lesser goods of the world, make them god-like, and cling to these instead of God Himself. A good example here is sports. Sports are good and fun and bring about good health and community and work habits. It is easy to be involved with sports all the time, including on Sundays, pulling us away from Sunday Mass and ever thinking of God on Sunday. The god of sports can only satisfy for so long; the God of the universe satisfies for eternity.

Sin can also be understood as a twisting around of what God actually has intended for us. Satan, the author of sin and death, is also known as the great deceiver. In the garden, in Genesis 3, we hear how Satan tricked Eve into thinking that God didn’t really mean what He said. This deception from Satan has been one of his tricks ever since, getting men and women to think one way while really tricking us and misleading us from what God actually intends for us. This reality of Satan and sin tells us the importance of staying close to God in prayer and reading His Word in the Bible. When we come to understand and know the voice of God through these particular spiritual tools, we recognize the voice of love that belongs to the Lord. When Satan comes to deceive and twist the words of God around, we'll have greater clarity in recognizing this as not being the voice of God and that this is a time to run far away from what is being whispered to us. Praying often to the Holy Spirit for his guidance will also assist us and help us know right from wrong.

Understanding what sin is helps us in our spiritual journey to cling close to God and to stay away from anything that would lead us away. Following the peace that surrounds us when living in God’s love will help us to maintain the life of grace that God desires for each of us and allow us to best hit our mark of life with God.

Questions:

- What does it mean that only God can truly fulfill our lives?
- How does sin harm your relationship with God?
- What is concupiscence?
- What is one way we can learn the truth of what God asks of us?
- Why does God give us more than one opportunity?

Activities:

Think about the temptations in your life and make a list about how they hurt your relationship with God.

Is there someone in your life that you did not give a second chance? Can you find room to forgive them the way God forgives you?
CALL TO HOLINESS

Fifth Grade

Sample Script:

In God’s creation of humanity, He created us all intentionally and out of love. God created us not to wander around aimlessly but for a reason, for a purpose. Life itself thus has a purpose for the individual and life here calls for a certain level of engagement so as to learn about ourselves, learn about others, and learn about God. We recognize within ourselves and see in the others a thirst to explore and come to understand the world around in an effort to discover with the purpose of this life is.

Further, this desire to explore and encounter the purpose of this life often brings us to consider other questions such as; “Who gave us a purpose?” and “How do I fulfill this purpose?”. We realize that this desire is something that is innate within us, causing us to continually reach out to fulfill the yearning. We long to know and explore and understand the world around us. We seek to encounter more and more the things that inspire the beautiful and the true. We want to find peace and seek love and to grasp the things that money cannot buy and store cannot manufacture.

RELATES TO JESUS:
In the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 5:48), Jesus said, “You must be perfect as God is perfect”. In the book of Romans (Rom 8:28), Saint Paul reminds us that, “All things are possible with God.” In the book of Leviticus and the 1st letter of Peter, we are told to, “Be holy for God is holy”.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
I am called to live a holy life. This is my primary calling. Unless I strive for perfection, and am made perfect by God through my striving to live a life of holiness, I cannot expect to enter heaven, but I should not be discouraged, because as St. Paul reminds us, “All things are possible with God.”
We eventually come to the answer that all of these things have an origin and are founded at a point which is their source; the same source from which we are created in love. God gives us the purpose and the reason for life and thus gives us the desire, written on our human heart, to pursue these greater goods of life. By reaching for these things, and seeking to find fulfillment, we come to understand that it is God who is calling us to encounter Him. The desire He places on our heart is for us to return to Him and to be brought close in relationship shows God’s intention that not a single one of us be apart from Him.

God desires thus that we be Saints, practicing living like a saint during our earthly life by seeking holiness so that we can spend eternity as a Saint living the fulfillment of our desire with the One who desires to be with us. Embracing our desire to live and love as God does consists in living an intentional life of practicing virtue. Virtues are those good habits that allow us to lead a good life centered on God and rightly ordered toward the self and others. Virtues are found in many different forms, but foundational for our Christian life is what are referred to as the theological virtues and the cardinal virtues.

The three theological virtues (often referenced, love is mostly covered, in St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians in chapter 13) are faith, hope, and love. These three are virtues that are given by God and help the individual to not only live but to reflect God is his or her life. These graces are still needed to be sought after and lived out with intention, finding any opportunity to practice these.

The four cardinal virtues consist of temperance, justice, prudence, and fortitude. These four virtues are the foundational virtues that allow other virtues in one’s life to grow and blossom. Operating with these virtues consists of time and practice that order your mind and heart toward the good and develop your will to act on these as second nature.

Questions:

- What is the main cause and focus of all of our desires?
- Why does God desire to be with us now, during our earthly lives?
- Name the three theological virtues.
- Name the four cardinal virtues.
- God created us _____________ and ________________.

Activities:

Discuss, as a family, what are the things you desire most? How do these desires point you to God?

Talk and share, as a family, some of the virtues you recognize in your favorite Saints. Discuss what virtues you can work on together as a family.
Grace is always a gift of God's blessing and presence among us. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines grace as “the free and undeserved gift that God gives us to respond to our vocation to become his adopted children”. This gift that God gives provides you and me with greater clarity and allows us to carry on our path to be the holy daughters and sons that God has called us to be with strength.

Looking at sanctifying grace, which again from the Catechism; “God shares his divine life and friendship with us in a habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that enables the soul to live with God, to act by his love”. Sanctifying grace keeps us in the loving care of God. Here, we actually experience the life that He desires all humans to share, living in friendship with God and being united in His love. It is interesting here to talk about the Church’s use of the word “stable” in regards to Sanctifying Grace. God Himself is unchanging, meaning that His love for us never moves (up one minute, not really into us the next - no) and is thus always stable. His love is something that is always there for us no matter what. It is you and

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**RELATES TO JESUS:**

Jesus desires to be with us at all times and the grace of God that He gives provides us with participation in divine life.

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**RELATES TO MY FAITH:**

The Catholic Church is the storehouse of grace which provides the faithful with the necessary strength and inspiration to strive towards holiness and fulfillment.

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I who change, who make decisions one way or the other to accept or reject God’s love.

A wonderful example of sanctifying grace is seen through the Sacraments for salvation. When we are baptized, we receive sanctifying grace that annihilates the stain of Original Sin on our soul and we become sealed with the indelible or unerasable mark being a son or daughter of God. Baptism provides us the necessary grace to receive and remain in relationship with God. Another example here is seen in the Eucharist, as the Eucharist sustains us in our relationship with God through the reception of His Son Jesus. Here, we find the import of attending Mass with attention and to have our souls as prepared as possible to receive Jesus in this graced sacrament of the Eucharist.

In considering actual grace, the Catechism states that “God gives us the help to conform our lives to his will”. Actual grace accounts for the daily and more frequent gifts from God that keep us aware of His presence and provide us with certain strength to choose Him over the many things vying for our attention. Actual graces reminds us that the God of love isn’t far away watching us on His throne; rather He is closely and attentively involved in our lives, eager to walk with you through your life, just like a good friend or trusted loved one.

By coming to know and understand the life of grace in and around us, we can learn that grace seeks to keep us away from sin and to assist us in growing in holiness. We need both Sanctifying and Actual Grace to achieve our goal of living a holy, fulfilled life that ends with us spending eternity in the life and love of God. To accomplish this, we must take serious the life we lead and attend to our attention to the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, we must be people who attend weekly Sunday Mass and pray, we must lovingly attend to the needs of our brothers and sisters that we encounter, we must detach and root out anything that is sinful or that brings us to sin. Grace will be given us to help us, to keep us, and to guide us to relationship with the Holy Trinity.

Questions:
- What is actual grace?
- What is sanctifying grace?
- Why is grace bestowed on us?
- Does God’s love for us ever change based on how we live our life?
- What is God’s promise of salvation?

Activities:
As a family, plan a day in which you all can go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. On the way home, discuss how grace has been restored in your life and share ways that you can help to keep grace active in your life.

Consider the stories of some of your favorite Saints. What about these men and women made them holy? What are some things that they practiced that you could practice in your life in order to grow in holiness and thus closer to God?
Mary, as the Mother of God, looks out after her children just as any good mother does. One of Mary’s many titles is that she is the “Saint of Saints”, being the principal intercessor for you and me before her Son, Jesus. Throughout the centuries of Christianity, many saints wrote of the importance of forming a relationship with Mary and allowing her to guide us to her Son. Mary’s nurturing love would not only gently lead a soul to Jesus but also give the assurance of Mary, as Jesus’ Mother, as the one earthly figure who knows our Lord best. This connection to Mary with our own earthly existence makes Mary a most powerful intercessor for us.

There are a great number of ways in which we can reach out for and call upon Mary for her intercession, that is, her prayers for us before God, who is not only her Son (in Jesus) but her Spouse (in the Holy Spirit) and her Father (in God’s first-person). It goes without saying that the most popular and familiar way to honor Mary and call for her powerful intercession is through the Hail Mary. The great, yet humble and simple prayer to Mary that both honors and magnifies her role as the

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Mother of God, and asks her prayers for us. And while the prayer is sometimes used to falsely accuse Catholics of worshiping Mary, it is actually a great proclamation that calls to mind the awesome power of God who can work through a humble and holy soul who cooperates with his grace. Everything in the prayer of the Hail Mary points to Jesus! Let’s take a look how:

- **Hail Mary, Full of Grace, the Lord is with you** (Luke 1:28) - These initial words of the prayer are uttered by the angel Gabriel in greeting Mary with his message from God. The “hail” greeting of Mary serves as a formal salutation, much like us using “dear so and so” in a letter today. “Full of Grace” is actually a title that the angel is calling Mary that speaks to the state of her soul, having been spared the stain of Original Sin and being free from personal sin throughout her life. “The Lord (truly) is with you” is saying that as Mary has been close to God throughout her young life, he has been even closer to her. Up to now, this closeness has been in a spiritual way. Now it will also be in a physical way.

- **Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus** (Luke 1:42) - These are the words spoken by Mary’s cousin (kinswoman) Elizabeth, who upon hearing Mary’s greeting, uttered these great words of blessing. The double “blessed” refers to Mary’s place among the women of Israel both past and present, as well as among all women, and for the fruit of her womb, that is, the child Jesus in her womb, who is the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

- **Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death** - Mary is holy, not in the sense that the Trinity is holy, but in the sense that she has been blessed by God and lives a holy life. Mary is Ever-Virgin, meaning she has dedicated her entire life, including her virginity, to God; she is Immaculately Conceived, meaning she has been specially graced by God to be free from sin; and she is the Mother of God, meaning she bore the Son of God who is Jesus come into the world to free us from our sins. We name her these titles of Ever-Virgin, Immaculate Conception, and Mother of God because she is blessed by God to be an intercessor for us, for just as she helps to bring Jesus Christ into the world, she also helps to being Jesus Christ into the lives of each and every one of us. We ask her prayers at each moment of our life, especially at the hour of our death, praying that we may have a happy death like hers and that she might help to usher us into Heaven to be with God forever.

These three teachings (known as "doctrines") about Mary, that is, her title as Mother of God, her Perpetual Virginity, and her Immaculate Conception are special doctrines that the Church calls, "dogmas". A dogma is a specially defined teaching that every Catholic must believe on faith. It does not mean that we may understand it, or have to, but we take it on faith—trust in Jesus’ divine revelation—that it is revealed by the Holy Spirit to the Church, through her authentic teaching authority and gift (charism) give by Jesus to Peter and the Apostles as we read in the Gospel of John (Jn 16:13) and the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 16:16-18).

There is also a fourth dogma of Mary called, the Assumption of Mary into Heaven. In this final dogma of Mary, The Church teaches that at the end of her life, Mary was taken body and soul into Heaven. Although this event is not written about in the scriptures, and though it was not declared as a dogma until 1950 by Pope Pius XII, it had been a belief and teaching of the Church, part of the Church’s "Tradition", that was passed down from the time of the apostles. some of whom, according to that Tradition, were present as witnesses to that event.

How can we trust this? First, we know that Jesus gave his mother to the apostle, John, from the cross, to take care of her and help provide for her. Secondly, we know from the first chapter of Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:14) that Mary remained with the Apostles, and, as Jesus’ mother, they remained close to her. Thirdly, the apostles and the early Christian community preserved the tombs of Christ and the apostles as well as his burial shroud, his cross, his crown of thorns, the nails, the home of Mary (which is now in Loreto, Italy—another story entirely), and other artifacts, and thus, had Mary been buried, they would have preserved Mary’s tomb, except that there is no preserved tomb of Mary because there is
nothing of her to bury. While not all the apostles were with Mary when she passed from this life to heaven, extra-biblical writings speak to some of the apostles, such as John, who was only about 18 at the time of Jesus' death, being present. Also, the event is not recorded in the New Testament Scriptures because those Scriptures are not about Mary, but about Jesus and his teachings to the early Church through the letters from the apostles.

The Church holds these four dogmas in special regard in the celebration of the Church year. We celebrate the Mother of God on January 1, the Immaculate Conception on Dec 8, and the Assumption of Mary on August 15. While the perpetual virginity of Mary does not have its own special feast day by itself, it is recalled on Christmas day in the propers (special prayers proper for the day) of the Divine Liturgy (the Mass) of the Eastern rite Catholic Churches.

Questions:

- What are the four dogmas of Mary and what does each dogma teach?
- According to the lesson, why it is a good idea to form a special relationship with Mary?
- What are the 3 days that we celebrate Mary?
- Which line of the Hail Mary prayer is the greeting that Elizabeth met Mary when she visited?
- What is the most recent dogma of the Catholic church regarding Mary?

Activities:

As a family, write out the Hail Mary prayer much like above. Discuss, within each section of the prayer, what this prayer says about Mary and what this prayer says about Jesus.

Make a list of people and situations that you know are in need of prayer. Write these down and add to this list as prayer requests come your way. Before bed each night, pray three Hail Mary prayers for these petitions.
We are all created in the image and likeness of God, and finding our origin in the loving God, we know that it is His desire that we live as His children. Being a child of God consists of coming to know Him living in relationship with Him, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. Living as a child of God is not always easy, but God desires us to live in His loving relationship, which means that He does not leave us on our own to figure out how to live as His child. God gives us certain encounters with His grace which helps us experience His presence in our lives and tells us that we are children of God. The Holy Spirit speaks to us through the Church, through His Word in the Sacred Scriptures, and through our parents, even though our guardian angel. We can learn to hear and recognize His voice by developing the habit of listening through prayer and interior silence and letting that voice be confirmed through the Church.

When Jesus gave us the gift of the Church, He left us the Sacraments as intentional points of encounter with Him. Specifically, in the Sacraments of Initiation, we are given the grace to encounter God and live in the reality of His love by receiving certain gifts that strengthen you and me to be children of God.

**Sample Script:**

The Sacraments of Initiation open the gateway of the Church’s salvation and privileges to me, and provides me with the foundation, strength, and gifts to faithfully live the life of a disciple and live our call to be holy members of the Catholic Church.
The first Sacrament of Initiation, which is referred to as the gateway Sacrament since it begins our life of grace in our life lived with the Sacraments, is Baptism. Baptism offers the recipient Sanctifying Grace, washing the soul of the person clean from the stain of Original Sin, and marking the person as a son or daughter of God with an invisible mark or "character" on our soul. Although we cannot see this mark, God and angels, both good and bad can. Bad angels will work especially hard at pulling baptized souls away from God. So, it is important that baptized souls stay close to God. The sacrament of Baptism restores our relationship with God broken by Original Sin and opens for us the graces of redemption and salvation and to become and remain close to God. Baptism also incorporates us into and unites us to the Church, infuses the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity in us, and opens our minds and hearts to receive the love of God, beginning the journey of holiness that God desires for each and every one of us. It also initiates us into the "apostolate" that is, the Church's apostolic mission, that is, her priestly (or sanctifying), prophetic (or teaching), and kingly (or governing) missions.

The second sacrament of initiation is the Sacrament of Confirmation whereby the recipient is sealed or confirmed in the faith. Like baptism, confirmation marks the recipient with an additional mark or "seal" by the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a fully initiated member of the Body of Christ. The gifts received at baptism are strengthened as is the sanctifying grace of the recipient. It deepens our "divine affiliation" that is, our union with God as adopted sons and daughters, and with the seven Gifts of the same Spirit, the person confirmed is strengthened to begin living fully the life of the Church and confirms us in her apostolic mission. The confirmed person is called to carry on the Church’s mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and often does so by serving the Church according to one’s call. Living as a witness to the reality of God present in one’s life affords others that you speak with or interact with to come to recognize that God is a God of love, peace, joy… These and other Fruits of the Holy Spirit proclaim Jesus and invite others to participate in this grace.

With the Sacrament of the Eucharist, here the faithful receive the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ that is promised to the Church and offers the daily grace of being not only in close union with but in actual contact with God. Eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus gives the recipient the tremendous gift of intimate union with our Savior, who is taken into our very body so that He might dwell in and experience every aspect of our life and enables us to participate in His. This Most Blessed Sacrament is the center of our worship, for Jesus in the Eucharist reminds us of God’s love for His people, sending His only Son to suffer and die for our sins so that we might be brought back into relationship.

These three Sacraments of Initiation invite us in and sustain us in our spiritual life in the Church. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist give us the spiritual foundation to say yes to God, participate in His life of grace, and strengthen us to maintain this relationship throughout our life. We should take very seriously and respectfully the love God has for us and hold fast to the teachings of the Church so that we stay close to God through these Sacraments. For truly, the grace and life with God present through these Sacraments and supported by the Church, we can weather any storm that this life may throw at us.
Questions:

- Why is baptism called "the gateway sacrament"?
- What are the effects of baptism (what does it do for us) according to the lesson?
- What does confirmation do for us?
- Why is Holy Communion so important for us (what does it do for us)?
- True or False: When we receive Holy Communion, we are in actual contact with God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ.

Activities:

On a sheet of paper, write out your experience as a child of God in the Church. How do you experience Jesus' presence in the Church and how does this effect your relationship with Jesus? Before you begin this activity, spend some quiet minutes in prayer.

Ask your mom and dad about your baptism and your first communion. Ask your mom and dad about their confirmation. How do these important moments in one's faith life connect one to Jesus and the Church?
Sacraments are defined as efficacious, outward signs that point to an inward reality. These outward signs consist of natural elements (i.e. water, oil, fire, etc.) and gestures (i.e. exchange of words, laying on of hands, etc.) that show the presence of the inward gift of grace being given to the other. All seven Sacraments are instituted by Jesus Christ, meeting you and me where we are at, communicating to us the reality of God in our time of need through the use of various elements around us. These Sacraments are safeguarded by the Church through the Holy Spirit and are given to the faithful to support us on our spiritual journey and build us up in living the divine life of grace as children of God.

Now, it is important to note that we are all children of God by being created human, born in God’s image and likeness. However, in a most special way through the Sacraments of Initiation, we are marked and brought closer into relationship with God as His children. This does not mean that God loves the Initiated more than the rest of humanity, but rather that those who are initiated through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are brought into a deeper spiritual life with the Trinity and are offered intentional grace to live the life of the Church. For in Baptism, the soul is washed clean of the stain of Original Sin and is given that foundational grace to receive God in a more direct way through one’s life. In Confirmation, the
soul is conformed more fully to God and the life of holiness and vocation that he or she is called to. Receiving the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the soul is able to choose God and live a life for Him with strength and confidence. In Eucharist, the soul is allowed to encounter Jesus Christ most intimately within his very person, taking on Jesus so that our lives might be a reflection of Him to all that we encounter in thought, word, and deed. We are true children of God in the Eucharist, uniting with His Son in carrying out the work of proclaiming the Gospel message of love and truth with our lives.

While the Sacraments of Initiation are the foundation for our life of grace with God, truly all of the Sacraments support this life of grace and journey with us throughout our life in encountering the living God. Each Sacrament is set-up with a certain spoken form as well as using specific matter or material to confer or give the Sacrament to the soul on journey to encounter God the particular moment of their life. Let us consider generally what each of these Sacraments look like:

- **Baptism:**
  - Matter = Water
  - Form = “Name, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”

- **Confirmation:**
  - Matter = Holy Oil (Chrism)
  - Form = While the Bishop anoints with the holy oil, he says, “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit”

- **Eucharist:**
  - Matter = Bread made from wheat and Wine
  - Form = The Words of Institution, spoken by the priest over the bread, “Take this, all of you and eat of it: for this is my body which will be given up for you." After, with regards to the precious blood, "Take this, all of you, and drink from it: for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant; which will be poured out for you and many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me."

- **Reconciliation:**
  - Matter = The penitent’s contrition and confession of their sins
  - Form = The Words of Absolution, spoken by the priest; ““God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. Through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

- **Anointing of the Sick:**
  - Matter = Holy Oil and the laying on of hands
  - Form = Prayer of Anointing; “Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up."

- **Holy Orders:**
  - Matter = The man properly prepared to be ordained
  - Form = Laying on of hands by the bishop with the prayer for the particular level of orders (either deacon, priest, or bishop).

- **Matrimony:**
  - Matter = The woman and the man
  - Form = Consent or vows professed to one another
Questions:

- Why are the Sacraments of Initiation so important?
- What is the matter and form of the Holy Eucharist?
- Who is the one who is really absolving you in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- What is the matter and form for Holy Orders?
- Which Sacrament was most surprising to you? What did you learn about this particular Sacrament?

Activities:

Think of your relationship with your best friend. Why are you such good friends? Now, think about your relationship with Jesus. Would you say that you are close friends? What about your relationship with Jesus is strong? What isn't strong and what can you do to make your relationship with Him stronger?

Write out the Sacraments with their appropriate matter and form. Study these and consider what is being said about Jesus Christ.
Baptism is the first sacrament of initiation. Initiation is the beginning of something, and baptism is the beginning of our life as Christians. The word ‘Baptism’ means to plunge or immerse—can you guess why this sacrament is called Baptism? It is named after the rite by which a Baptism takes place, namely to plunge into water! The priest will dip the baby into the water, or pour a little bit of water onto their forehead, while adults will have water poured onto their head, or they may be fully immersed in water, a real plunge! This plunge into the water symbolizes dying with Christ and being born to new life.

Death with Christ and rising to new life is an important element of Baptism. When a person is baptized it does not mean that their soul separates from their body like in a physical death, rather the person dies to sin. Ever since Adam and Eve committed the first sin, all are bound to sin. Similar to an illness, original sin is passed down through every generation, and human nature is in need of healing. But man can’t heal himself, he needs a doctor capable of treating our illness! By dying on
the Cross, Jesus took on man’s illness, our sin, and he restored new life to us that allows us to participate in God’s divine life! This divine life we receive in Baptism, and it is called sanctifying grace. It helps us our whole lives to live the way we ought, following in Jesus’ footsteps in our actions and the way we love that makes Christians!

In the Gospel of John, Jesus teaches a man named Nicodemus this reality. “Amen amen I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and spirit.” Being born of water and spirit in Baptism allows us to participate in divine life on earth through sanctifying grace, and makes it possible for us to also share in his divine life with him in heaven someday! We begin to experience and show others his love on earth and are able to experience it even more fully with him in heaven, and that is what he wants for everyone! Baptism is the door through which we can plunge into this new life with God!

Questions:
- What does initiation mean, and why is Baptism the first sacrament of initiation?
- What does Baptism mean?
- What does it mean to die with Christ?
- What does it mean to be born to new life?
- Who are we meant to imitate in our actions and the way we love?

Activities:
Ask your parents to look at pictures of your baptism, or the recent baptism of someone in your family. What was used by the priest during the baptism?

Read Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus in the Gospel of John (John 3: 1-5). What does Nicodemus ask Jesus, and what is Jesus’s response?
If you remember, Baptism is the beginning of our life as Christians. We plunge into new life with Christ and our human nature is healed from the wound of sin. Yet even in this newness of life on earth we encounter challenges, times when we need to defend the faith, times when we must choose to do the right thing when our friends might not, or when we need to reach out to a lonely person that everyone else shuns. Though we may know the right thing to do, actually doing it can be scary when we think our friends or others will judge us for it. But carrying though is the noble thing, the courageous thing to do! And we have available to us exactly what we need to take courage in these difficult tasks; that is the sacrament of Confirmation.

RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus loves us and wants to be a part of every single moment of our life. The Sacraments are intentional encounters that make the Trinity’s presence evident in our life.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
Being fully initiated in the Church opens our souls up to the divine life of grace that aides us in being holy sons and daughters geared towards living lives of holiness.
Confirmation completes Baptism—it is a strengthening of the graces that God has already given us in Baptism. Where this strength comes from is the Holy Spirit himself! In Confirmation we receive the Holy Spirit in a special way, in that he is poured into us and remains with us! Jesus promised that he would give the Holy Spirit to us when he told his apostles, “you will receive my power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Jesus gave us the fullness of the Holy Spirit that he himself received in Baptism. The prophet Isaiah prophesied, “But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:1-2). This prophecy is fulfilled when John the Baptist baptizes Jesus, and exclaims, “I saw the spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him” (John 1:33). The same Gifts that Isaiah mentions, namely wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, awe of the Lord, and piety are received in the sacrament of Confirmation as well. These are the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and they are given to us by God exactly so that we can face those challenges we come across as Christians trying to imitate Jesus. We need the strengthening of Confirmation in order to meet these challenges and to bring us even more deeply into our familial relationship with God.

Questions:

- What sacrament do we receive that helps us meet the challenges we face when striving to imitate Jesus?
- What does Confirmation complete? How so?
- What are the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit?
- Which one do you think you need to be most strengthened in?
- Who first received the gift of the Holy Spirit?

Activities:

Think of a time when it was difficult to be courageous when you knew the right thing to do. Why was it so difficult to do the right thing? Talk with your family about this time, and hear their advice for the next time you may encounter a similar situation!

Discuss with your family what the apostles must have been thinking when the Holy Spirit came to them the first time.
CDo you remember a time when you were injured and needed some time to heal from it? Just like our body needs healing, our soul needs healing when our relationship with God is strained. When we sin, we deliberately act against the true order of things that God has arranged out of love. A mortal sin is a serious sin that destroys the divine power of love in a person’s heart, while venial sins which are less serious sins still strain our relationship with him. This is why our soul and our relationship with God is in need of healing when we sin.

RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus gives comfort to the sick and suffering, sometimes physically healing but always spiritually guiding to help us find meaning and comfort in our time of trial.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
The Sacraments of Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation can be and should be received as often as appropriate so as to help encounter the grace of God and to grow closer to the Lord.

Sample Script:

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There are two sacraments of healing available to us, the Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation. These sacraments repair our relationship with God, bring us back into grace and right relationship with him, and strengthens our journey of faith that began at Baptism. Anointing of the Sick is received by a Catholic who is especially sick in their body and at risk of dying, because the sacrament gives a person what they need in the face of death: consolation, peace, strength of spiritual battle and also the forgiveness of sins so that they can meet God with a clean soul.

Receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation is more common, and it’s important to make a consistent habit of going to receive the sacrament. When we receive the sacrament of Reconciliation, we are forgiven of all our sins, healed from them and our relationship with God is restored, and we are given the graces that help us better tackle future temptations to sin. With our goal as Christians to imitate Christ, Reconciliation is like medicine and a boost of energy! For this reason it is good to make a habit of going—once a month is a healthy goal to strive for. It is the sure way of having a fruitful prayer life too. Once everything in the way of our relationship with God is removed, it is easier to be still, to listen, and to share with God what is on our heart and mind.

Questions:

- What is the effect of mortal sins on our relationship with God?
- What is the effect of venial sins?
- What two healing sacraments are available to us?
- What do each do to heal our relationship with God?
- Why would we want to make a habit of going to Confession? How often is a good benchmark to strive for?

Activities:

Make a plan with your family to go and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation together, and be sure to plan at least some small way to celebrate afterwards!

Tonight, perhaps right before you go to bed practice this method of prayer:

1. Think of 3 good things that happened during your day, and thank God for them.
2. Think of the times when you sinned today, or when you didn’t imitate Jesus as well as you could have. Confidently ask God for mercy for these times.
3. Think of the moments when you did make a good choice or imitated Jesus well. Thank him for the strength to do it! Lastly, make a tiny resolution for tomorrow.
The greatest sacrament available to us is also the source and summit of our lives as Christians. Our prayer, our good works and even all of the other sacraments all point to this—the Eucharist. The Eucharist is central and so important because when we receive the Eucharist, we receive Jesus himself. The Eucharist is his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—all of him!
In the Eucharist Jesus remains fully present to us. While on earth, he gave himself under the appearance of bread and wine to his apostles at the Last Supper shortly before his death, saying “This is my body” and, “This is my blood” (Matthew 26:26-27). He announced much earlier that he would do so, when he said “the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” (John 6:51). At Mass, the bread transforms into Jesus’ Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity when the priest or bishop says the words, “This is my body” and, “This is my blood...” even as it still appears to be bread and wine.

Jesus instituted the Eucharist so that he could always remain fully present to us and be united to us, in anticipation of heaven! When we receive him, we are joined more fully to Christ, we are more fully united with the Church who is God’s family, we are freed from venial sins and preserved from mortal sins, and our faith is made more solid!

In order to fruitfully receive all of this, we should make sure we are prepared to receive Jesus into ourselves! That means we should be free from mortal sin, make sure we don’t eat or drink anything (except water) in the car on the way to Church, or an hour before receiving Communion, and once we get to Mass we don’t want to zone out. Try your best to pay attention to what the priest says and the prayers that you say in response. We are meant to take away something from Mass that we can think about, so we should do our best to be fully present at Mass like Jesus is!

**Questions:**

- What is our Christian life centered around, and why?
- When and how does the bread become Jesus during Mass?
- What happens in us when we receive the Eucharist?
- What can we do to prepare for receiving Jesus?
- What is it called when the bread and wine become the body and blood?

**Activities:**

Sometimes it can be hard to believe that the Eucharist we receive is really Jesus. To help solidify your faith, read the words from Jesus himself recorded in Scripture, and explain what Jesus says to another family member. John 6:30-59

Discuss why you think it is important for us to have received the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to our First Communion.
Do you know what a mediator is? Think of a time you had a disagreement with one of your siblings and took the matter to your mother or father to settle. Or if you had a disagreement with a classmate at school, and took it to your teacher to help settle it. When you did that, your parent or teacher was acting in the role of a mediator. Someone who stands between two parties and helps them reach agreement and restore a peaceful interaction in a specific situation. Being a mediator isn’t the same thing as asking for intercession. We often pray to the Virgin Mary or a favorite saint to intercede for us. Interceding means speaking on the behalf of someone else. When we pray for the needs of a friend or family member we act as an intercessor, bringing their specific need or situation before God. The role of a mediator is much deeper and complex.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that Jesus is the one and only mediator between God and men. (#480) St. Paul in his first letter to Timothy states, “For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as ransom for all.”
(I Timothy 2.5-6) St. Paul points to the reason Jesus is the one and only true mediator: the Incarnation. Jesus is fully human and fully divine, and as such he understands the joys, challenges and sufferings of human nature. Jesus being fully human, is like us in all things but sin (Hebrews 4.14-15). Jesus is also fully divine, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God. He shares God’s unconditional love for all of his creation, and his desire to reconcile humanity to himself. No human by his/her own power can perfectly atone for sin. Jesus, the sinless one, takes on our nature and our sins and freely offers himself on the cross as a sacrifice to the Father. Sin and death are defeated and our relationship to God is restored. Through his death Jesus removed the obstacle of sin that had stood between God and men, and brought reconciliation. His mediation brought salvation to the world.

We also speak of Jesus as our High Priest, the ultimate, irreplaceable High Priest. From the Old Testament we learn that the priests led the ritual prayer of the people. They were anointed as a sign of being chosen by God for that role. They were the representatives of God to His people, and also of the people to God. They offered the sacrifices in the name of the people. When the Passover lambs were sacrificed in the temple, the blood was collected and the priest poured the blood of the lamb on the altar. The people and events of the Old Testament often foreshadow, or point forward to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The priesthood of the Old Testament points toward what the priesthood of Jesus will be. Jesus completes and fulfills the Jewish priesthood. He is sinless and offers the sacrifice for us, unlike the Jewish priests who offered sacrifices for the sins of themselves and the people. His priesthood is everlasting, and his sacrifice offered once for all people and all time. Jesus’ sacrifice (himself) is the perfect sacrifice that brought about remission of sin. Jesus, in dying for our sins, becomes our sacrificial lamb, and the cross the altar on which his blood is poured out.

Jesus completed and fulfilled the priesthood of the old covenant (Jewish priesthood) and instituted the priesthood of the New Covenant at the Last Supper when he instructed the apostles to “do this in remembrance of me.” What is the role of the priest at Mass and all the formal prayers of the Church, which we call the liturgy? He leads the people in prayer, and is our representative before God. But he is more than just our representative. By the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, he also acts in persona Christi which means he acts in the person of Christ. That is why the priest wears different clothing, which we call vestments. They help us remember that he is not leading our prayer as himself, but in the person of Christ. When the priest speaks the words of the consecration at Mass, (“Take this all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you. Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my Blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me.”) it is Christ who is speaking and acting. Only Jesus has the power to consecrate the Eucharist, to change the bread and wine into his Body and Blood. When the priest speaks the words of absolution when we go to Confession, “I absolve you of your sins...” it is Jesus who speaks. Acting in the person of Christ during the liturgy, the priest makes the presence of Christ, the Head of the Church visible to the community. By establishing the priesthood, Jesus continues his work of salvation through His Church in the world today.

We are called to full, active and conscious participation in the Mass. We aren’t just sitting there like we are watching a movie. We aren’t there just to receive something from God. We offer ourselves, all of our lives and our being, with the gifts that are brought to the altar. Jesus offers our prayers with his when he offers himself to God through the person of the priest. We are an active part of this work of praise and thanksgiving. The various prayers of the Mass are meant to help us to be engaged and participate as fully as we can in the Mass. If you look at the prayers of the Mass carefully, you will see there is a pattern that is repeated throughout the Mass: God speaks to us and we respond. Let’s look at some of the prayers.
• The Sign of the Cross: We begin the Mass, like we begin all our prayer, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” This prayer should remind us of our baptism, and of the Trinity. This prayer is also a gesture, as we physically trace the cross upon our bodies. We call to mind how our redemption was achieved, through the death of Christ on the cross. We often make the Sign of the Cross without thinking about what we are doing. It is a simple prayer and gesture that speaks volumes, and we should be very intentional when we do it.

• Amen: It’s such a small word, but it packs a big punch! Amen means “so be it”, but in the urgent or intense sense that my life depends on it. It is never a neutral word. We should put all of our being into speaking it.

• The Penitential Rite encourages us to admit our sinfulness and need for God’s forgiveness and mercy. It helps us to be humble before God, knowing that he knows us more intimately than we know ourselves. As we ask for God’s mercy and forgiveness for our sins and failures, crying out Lord have mercy! Christ have mercy! We admit that our sins have an impact on our relationship with God and with others as we pray “I confess to Almighty God, and to you my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned....” These prayers prepare us to encounter God in Word and Sacrament.

• The Gloria: After remembering our sins, we recall with joy the glory of the God who saves us. This great prayer of praise begins with the words of the angels proclaiming the birth of Jesus: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.” The same Jesus who was born of the Virgin Mary that day in history will be bodily present to us in the Eucharist. Using titles drawn from Scripture we praise the members of the Trinity and acknowledge their glory and power.

• As God’s Word is proclaimed in the readings, we express our gratitude (“Thanks be to God.”) and praise (“Alleluia,” a Hebrew word meaning “Praise the Lord.”) God speaks to us in the Scriptures, and we respond with thanksgiving and praise.

• The Creed: The English word creed comes from the Latin word “credo” which means “I believe.” We stand as a people united, and respond to the gift of God’s Word in the Scripture by formally proclaiming what we believe. The prayer has three sections that address each member of the Trinity. Each small phrase is a powerful statement of belief. This isn’t just an intellectual statement. These are the beliefs on which I build my life.

• At the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer the priest invites us to lift up our hearts, and we reply “We lift them up to the Lord.” He then calls us to give thanks to God and we reply: “It is right and just.” In the Bible the heart is understood as the center of the person, where your thoughts, feelings and actions come from. The heart is the source of all we think, say and do. So in lifting our hearts to the Lord, we are offering him all of who we are. This isn’t just an exchange of words spoken from our intellect (head), it is an expression of our total being. Every ounce of our being should be focused on what is about to happen during the Eucharistic prayer. He reminds us that our attitude should be one of deep gratitude and thanksgiving for all that God has done, and for the miracle we are about to witness as the bread and wine are changed to the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Holy Holy Holy: As the Eucharistic Prayer begins, we join the angels and saints in proclaiming the indescribable holiness of God. “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord, God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory...” These words echo the words spoken by heavenly beings when both the prophet Isaiah and the apostle John received a vision of God’s throne in heaven (Isaiah 6.2-3; Revelation 4. 8). We are about to witness the ultimate act of our salvation, as the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus. God has suspended time and space, and we stand with the angels at the heavenly banquet. We kneel as a sign of reverence.

- Memorial Acclamation: In response to the great mystery that has taken place, where the bread and wine have been changed to the Body and Blood of Jesus, we express with a sense of great awe and wonder they mystery of our faith. That mystery is the Paschal mystery of Jesus’ death and resurrection. We proclaim the historical fact of his death and resurrection, the reality that he is present to us now in the appearance of bread and wine, and that he will come in glory at the end of time. A short, concise statement of a reality that defies expression.

- Lamb of God: Jesus is the new paschal lamb who is sacrificed for us. Addressing Jesus as the Lamb of God echoes Scripture, especially John the Baptist, who identified Jesus as the Lamb of God. (John 1.29 and 1.36).

- Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed. We are about to receive Jesus, body and blood, soul and divinity, into our bodies. This prayer expresses our sense of unworthiness at so great a gift.

There are many other prayers in the Mass that we did not discuss. The Mass is structured so that we open ourselves to the presence of God and be open to receiving his Word and Jesus himself. We are called to respond by giving all of ourselves to God with a deep sense of gratitude, praise and thanksgiving.

Questions:
- Why is Jesus the one and only mediator between God and men?
- How is Jesus the ultimate High Priest?
- Do I come to Mass to receive or to give? What am I doing to prepare my soul for Mass?
- What does the word Creed mean?
- What does Amen mean to us? How should we say it?

Activities:
Choose a section of the Gloria and prayerfully read it. Which titles or descriptions of God are your favorite? Why?

Identify some of the prayers of the Mass that express gratitude, thanksgiving and praise.
Just like the regular calendar year has different seasons and important holidays, the Church celebrates different seasons of the liturgy as well as important holy days. Each year the Church goes through the same five seasons which helps us to learn about the entire life of Jesus from His birth, His death, and His resurrection. We go from Advent, to Christmas, to Ordinary Time, to Lent, and to Easter.

In Advent, we focus on the time leading up to Jesus’ birth, which we celebrate during Christmas time. Christmas time is when we remember the awesome gift of Jesus being born. Ordinary time helps us to learn about the rest of Jesus’ life. It goes over what Jesus did when He started teaching and inspires us to be more like him. Lent is the time when we get ready to celebrate Easter. We spend 40 days making sacrifices to remember the sacrifices Jesus made for us and so we can more easily let go of our sins. Easter is the most important season in the life of the Church. During Easter we celebrate how Jesus triumphed over death and rose from the dead. Easter is the source of Christian joy and peace, because when Jesus rose, He opened the way into Heaven so we can be with Him forever after we die.
Throughout the five seasons, the Church gives us six holy days of obligation to celebrate through attendance at the Mass. These days are not obligations for no reason. Attending Mass in general is integral to the Christian life just as much as food is necessary for us to be able to live. These few days are recognized as of particular importance to our Church family, and so we come together to celebrate in the most profound way we can: through the Mass. Would you ever miss your best friend’s birthday part as long as you were able to go? When someone is special to us and they are celebrating something significant, we make it a priority to go to celebrate with them. In the same way, the Church recognizes these days are very important for all of us, and so we come together as a Church family in order to celebrate.

The Church can name different holy days at different times, but right now there are 6 Holy Days of Obligation:

1. Feast of the Immaculate Conception
2. Christmas
3. Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God
4. The Ascension
5. The Assumption
6. All Saints Day

The feast of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated on December 8th. This feast commemorates the day when the Blessed Mother was conceived without sin. It’s an important day for the Church, because Mary’s immaculate conception is what allowed Jesus to be born into the world, so we could be saved. Christmas is of course the day when Jesus was born as man. Even though He is God, He decided to humbly become one of us so He could be close to us and sacrifice Himself for us on the cross. We celebrate Christmas on December 25th.

On January 1st we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God. This feast reinforces that Jesus is both man and God. Jesus is truly God and Mary is truly His mother. Because of this truth, even though God is timeless and is not “born”, Mary is responsible for God being born on earth as a man. I know that’s a little complicated, so it’s okay if you don’t understand it all right now. You just have to know that Jesus is really God and Mary is really Jesus’ mother.

39 days after we celebrate Easter Sunday, we celebrate the feast of the Ascension. This year the Ascension is celebrated on May 13th. On this day we celebrate Jesus ascending into Heaven to be with the Father. Even though He finished His ministry on earth, He left us the amazing gift of the Church and the Eucharist. This day reminds us to wait for Jesus’ second coming when we will all be with God in Heaven and that we should always spread the good news of the Gospel!
On August 15th the Church celebrate the feast of the Assumption. The Assumption is when Mary followed Jesus by being taken up into Heaven body and soul. Since Mary was born without sin and followed Jesus perfectly, she did not need to suffer death like the rest of mankind. Instead she was rewarded with going straight into Heaven. On November 1st, we celebrate All Saints Day. This is the day we celebrate all the Saints who are in Heaven. That means both the Saints we know who the Church declares and the Saints who we don’t know about who are in Heaven! The Saints inspire us and help us to become Saints one day ourselves.

Each of these feast days are incredibly important for the Church. They help us to commemorate some of the most wonderful days in our Church history and to grow in holiness.

Questions:
- What are the five liturgical seasons of the Church?
- Why are the Holy Days of Obligation important?
- What are the six holy days and what is each of their significance?
- What is a key indicator at Mass that tells what liturgical season it is?
- What is the difference between the Assumption and the Ascension?

Activities:
Work on making a “Liturgical Calendar.” This can be done with color coated markings or with pictures on a homemade calendar or any blank calendar. Make sure to include the holy days of obligation.

Discuss with you family ways to recognize the liturgical seasons with more awareness.
Making the right choices isn’t always easy, but we don’t have to do it alone or without help. There are three things you can do to help you make a good decision: ask, listen, and think. When we have to decide what the right thing to do is, you should always try to ask for help. You can talk to a trusted adult like a parent, teacher, or priest, and you should always make sure you talk to God by praying to Him. Always ask God to help you know what the right thing to do is and to give you the strength to do it. You can also ask to find out more information about the choice you are going to make. You might not know everything you need to know to make a good decision yet! Make sure you listen to what your conscience is telling you. What do you think and feel the right choice is? What is God telling you? Don’t rush your decisions if you can help it. Make sure you give yourself time to really think about it. Make sure you are considering how your choice will affect the people around you. Ask yourself, will this make the people around me better? Will this help me to be a better person? Why do I want to make this decision?

RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus teaches that the path to life is narrow but to follow Him as a disciple, continually reaching for Him through the ups and downs of life, grace will be given to walk on this path with and to Jesus.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
It is important for the disciple to be a witness to the truth found in our faith, which serves as a mediator to assist souls in finding the path of life.

Sample Script:
Making the right choices isn’t always easy, but we don’t have to do it alone or without help. There are three things you can do to help you make a good decision: ask, listen, and think. When we have to decide what the right thing to do is, you should always try to ask for help. You can talk to a trusted adult like a parent, teacher, or priest, and you should always make sure you talk to God by praying to Him. Always ask God to help you know what the right thing to do is and to give you the strength to do it. You can also ask to find out more information about the choice you are going to make. You might not know everything you need to know to make a good decision yet! Make sure you listen to what your conscience is telling you. What do you think and feel the right choice is? What is God telling you? Don’t rush your decisions if you can help it. Make sure you give yourself time to really think about it. Make sure you are considering how your choice will affect the people around you. Ask yourself, will this make the people around me better? Will this help me to be a better person? Why do I want to make this decision?

Sometimes it’s easy to think that doing the wrong thing isn’t a big deal. We don’t think we’re hurting anybody, especially if we can get away with it. The reality is, when we sin and make wrong choices, we end up damaging our relationship with God, we damage our own souls, we hurt the Church community, and the people around us. You and I are made to do the right
thing. We are made to have a holy relationship with God and healthy relationships with people around us. When we sin, we intentionally disobeying God and going against the purpose that He gave us. This creates unrest in our hearts, robbing us of our inner peace. It can disturb our conscience, making us feel guilty. By making the wrong choices, we start to teach ourselves that they are okay even if they are destructive.

Even if we steal something small and nobody notices, we are telling the person that we stole from that they don’t matter. We are teaching ourselves that other people and their possessions are not important. We tell God that what He has been trying to teach us is wrong. We might not mean to say these things, but it is what our wrong actions convey whether we want them to or not. The members of the Church are responsible for making the world a better place by living holy and righteous lives. You and I are meant to represent Christ on earth. When we fall into sin, even small ones, we are telling the world that the Church does not care about what is true and right or about other people. Sometimes we might not see the consequences of our actions. We may think we have gotten away with our sins when really we have damage the unity of the Church and hurt the people around us. When you and I don’t live up to who we are supposed to be, the world misses out on an awesome person. The wrong choices we make are so damaging, because we have the amazing potential to do incredibly good things that can change lives. When we don’t live up to that, the world suffers.

The sad reality is that we make wrong choices every day, and that goes for every human being. Nobody is perfect. The good news is, we can always turn things around. We can always make things right. We can always turn back to God when we do something wrong. We can ask for His forgiveness and for the strength to do the right thing. By choosing to grow in virtue little by little each day, we make repairs for the sins of the world, by allowing the grace of Jesus to work in our lives. Just as the little sins we commit can do more damage than we think, the good choices we make do infinitely more good than we can possibly imagine. By doing little gestures with great love, we can convey to someone that they matter, that they are loved, and they have a purpose in this world. We can heal our own souls and bring peace to our lives. Our choices matter, and even the little ones can make a big difference.

Questions:
- What are some keys to making a good decision?
- How do our sins and wrong choices effect ourselves, our relationship with God, and those around us?
- How can our good choices and personal virtue combat these evils?
- Who is our life supposed to be a reflection of?
- What are some good questions to ask about when we are making a decision?

Activities:
Spend some time this week praying for the Church and for our world, asking forgiveness from God for all of our sins, and that He might give us the strength to overcome our evils.

Take some time to reflect on the people around you. Do you see yourself making a positive or negative impact on their lives? Think about ways you can start doing more good for them by being a better version of yourself.
In living the Christian life, we are called to be a living witness to Jesus Christ. So, in all that we say and do in loving service to God, we need to do in loving service to our neighbor. We have to do more than just be nice to someone or to serve someone like a check box on a service hours worksheet. We need to serve the other as Jesus would; seeing the dignity of the other as a brother or sister that is due the same amount of love and kindness as anyone else. The Christian serves the other to give glory to God, out of love and compassion for the other, so that the other can experience the dignity that is theirs as a child of God.

Jesus reminds us of this in two very important ways: the Beatitudes and the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. The Beatitudes consist of the following:

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.
- Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.
- Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

The Catholic Church holds firm the importance of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and what the practice of these mean for our relationship with God and with our brothers and sisters.
• Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
• Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
• Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute your and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.
• Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

The Beatitudes serve as holy reminders that the poor and those that go without and are suffering are very close to the heart of God. We need to study and know these so that we can come to know more fully the heart of God and pray and practice that these Beatitudes will lead us to see the face of Jesus Christ in the poor around us.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy consist of the following:

- Counseling the Doubtful
- Instructing the Ignorant
- Admonishing the Sinner
- Comforting the Sorrowful
- Forgiving Injuries
- Bearing Wrongs Patiently
- Praying for the Living and the Dead

These particular works of mercy help us to focus on the spiritually poor in our daily encounters and offer these particular souls the grace of being drawn closer to God through spiritual needs. I’d like to offer one example that stands out; namely Comforting the Sorrowful. Often, when we see a family member or friend who is sad and sorrowful, we can feel awkward not knowing what to say or do in their presence. But know that it is often the case that when someone is sad or sorrowful, like when someone they love has died unexpectedly, that they don’t need words or great theological advice. Rather, they just need to have someone present to be with them to listen to their cries. Here, we are witness to and make present the loving God to the other, who walks alongside us providing loving comfort with His presence.

The Corporal Works of Mercy consist of the following:

- Feed the Hungry
- Give Drink to the Thirsty
- Shelter the Homeless
- Visit the Sick
- Visit the Prisoners
- Give Alms to the Poor

The Corporal Works of Mercy or those works that deal more with the physical side of things, offers godly aid to care for the more immediate needs in one’s life. We often think of these as being more material in action, providing resources and material assistance and time to help the other and bring a witness to the love of God in their life. Visiting the Imprisoned offers a very good example here. When visiting those who are in prison, you can’t bring with you much more than yourself and your own personal
time. Prisoners know this and it is often such a blessing for them to have another spending time with them, especially knowing that the visitor can choose to spend his or her time in any way that they wish. Sacrificing one’s time to spend with someone else communicates the dignity and worth that another has who may not feel like they have much dignity and worth.

Questions:

• Talk about three ways that you are a living witness of Jesus Christ.
• Why are living the Beatitudes and the Works of Mercy important for the soul seeking to live the Christian life?
• What Beatitudes are you practicing and living well?
• What Corporal Work of Mercy are you practicing and living well?
• What Spiritual Work of Mercy are you practicing and living well?

Activities:

Choose a Beatitude as learned in this lesson and make a goal to practice this once a week. How does performing this Beatitude show you the presence of Jesus Christ? How do you see the dignity and worth of the person(s) you are serving?

As a family, choose a Work of Mercy, one Corporal and one Spiritual, and make a plan to live these out at least once a month. How do you see Jesus in the other that you serve?
Reading through the Bible is an awesome way to pray. The Catholic Church believes and teaches that the Bible is not just a book like any other, it’s actually the Word of God. These are not just dead words that only have meaning to people two thousand years ago, it is the Living Word that speaks to you and me today! When we open the Bible to read, we are actually encountering God who is trying to speak to us and tell us something important. Because of this living reality of the Bible, the best way for us to read this book is in the context of prayer, talking with God, and asking Him to help us to understand what He wants to say to us.

The Bible is not just one book. It’s actually an entire library of books collected into one! It is an awesome example of God and man working together to create something amazing. The Bible doesn’t have just one author, but two equally important authors: God and the human author! It’s important to understand that God wrote the Bible by guiding and inspiring the human author who also used his own talents and skills in the writing. Because of the two authors, we have a book that is 100% human and relatable to us, but it is also 100% God speaking to us without any error in the writing.

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The Church offers us an awesome way to pray with the Bible called “Lectio Divina.” This method helps us to
guide us in prayer in five simple steps. First, you prepare. This just means you make sure you take the time you need to pray with the Bible and do whatever you need to do to enter into prayer. Maybe it helps to light a candle, place a holy image in front of you, practice some deep breathing, or just be quiet for a few minutes. The second step is called “lectio” which just means reading the passage! It’s best to pick a small passage that you can read slowly and really think about and take in. Sometimes we will be surprised at the little things that strike us when we take time to think about them! The third step is called “meditatio” and it means reflect. This is the time after we’ve read the passage where we just think about the elements that stuck out to us. We might go back and re-read a few parts. Then we just gently prompt our minds in prayer to think about what God might be trying to say to us in those elements of the passage. The fourth step is called “oratio” which means respond. This can be as simple as writing down your thoughts in a journal. It’s also a good idea to respond to God in prayer and share what you are thinking and how you are feeling with what He has given you through praying with the Bible. The best thing to do is think about how you can apply what you have learned to your life by taking action. The fifth step is called “contemplatio” which means rest. You just take a little time at the end of your prayer to let everything you’ve learned sit. You can thank God for spending time with you and helping you to understand what you’ve read.

There are some passages of the Bible that are hard to understand, and that’s okay! We aren’t meant to understand everything by ourselves. We need to ask for help! Each book in the Bible has a different author, a different genre, and a different purpose as to why the book was written. Knowing these things can give us clues as to what God might be trying to tell us through the book. Some Bibles have helpful sections written in them that help to explain these things to us, but sometimes we need to ask someone who has studied the Bible to help us. It’s always important to ask the Holy Spirit to guide us when praying with the Bible. He is able to speak to us in amazing ways and help us to understand many things better than we could on our own. God also wants us to work together with the other people He has put into our lives, so it’s a great idea to ask for your parents, teachers, and priests for help to understand the answers to any questions you may have.

Praying with the Bible is a great way to help us know God better and figure out what His plan is for our lives. By taking time to ask the Holy Spirit to help us as well as the people God has put into our lives, the Word of God can enter our hearts and change us to be the people God made us to be!
Questions:

- How does praying with the Bible help us to understand it?
- How does the Bible help us to understand God?
- What are the five steps to praying Lectio Divina?
- Why do we need help understanding the Bible?
- Who are the two authors of the Bible?

Activities:

Take some time to read a little bit of the Gospel of Mark once a day this week either when you first wake up or at nighttime before you go to bed. Make sure to pray asking for the Holy Spirit’s help while you read. Write down any question you have when reading and talk to your parents or priest to help find the answer!

Take time as a family to read and reflect on the Gospel reading for this upcoming Sunday Mass before Sunday. Use Lectio Divina method, especially making sure to have silent time after reading to ask for God’s guidance and afterward then spend some time sharing what stuck out to each of you.
Every single Christian is called to and given grace from God to imitate Christ. This does not necessarily mean travelling around, or wearing sandals, but it means we strive for a relationship with God, and reflect his love for us in the way that we love others. When a Christian reaches perfection in the way the love that resembles Christ, that is called holiness. Every Christian is called to holiness – to strive toward that perfection in imitating Christ’s love. This is something we work on our whole lives, and we cannot be totally perfect on our own just trying each day to be a little more like Jesus, God will ensure that we become holy. This is a state in life that each person is called to.

God also calls each person to a specific state in life. He calls us to the state where he knows we will be happiest, and that state serves us to help us become holy.
The most common state he calls people to is married life. Marriage is a covenant (a weighty promise that makes people become family) of life between a man and a woman, it exists for the well being of both the man and the woman so that they can be there for each other through life and reaching heaven, and for the birth of new babies and raising them. This state in life beautifully mirrors the Trinity – the love between a Mom, Dad and child is like the love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Your role right now is to be a son/daughter who loves and respects your parents and siblings.

Another heroic state in life that God calls men to is priesthood. You are familiar with the priest’s role at Mass – he gives the Sacraments and leads the people in worship. The priest acts “in persona Christi” which means “in the person of Christ” by the Sacrament of Holy Orders he truly represents Christ so Christ is present and acting – he possesses the power and place of Christ himself. This doesn’t mean he pretends to be Christ like actors in a play. Rather, when the priest takes action it is Christ’s action.

Another state in life to which someone may be called is the single life. This means that a person does not marry nor become a priest, but dedicates the time and gifts they have to building up the Church. Each person has specific gifts and a specific role, and their state as a single person enables them to focus on their specific calling. Another form of single life is becoming a religious brother or sister. A religious takes vows to give their life freely and totally to God, not another person. The single life places an incredible focus on God that models how many of us can grow!

Questions:

- What is holiness? Are we to reach it on our own?
- What is a marriage covenant?
- By which heroic state can a man act “in persona Christi”?
- What are the two forms of religious life?
- What are other states in life God can call you to live?

Activities:

A little practice you can add to your day – silent prayer, reading about a Saint, doing something for your sibling to show you love them. With this little practice God will give you what you need to do it well and grow in holiness.

God calls each of us to a specific state of life. As you pray each day, reflect on to which state of life you feel called.
Our life in Christ calls us to good “stewardship.” A good steward is someone who takes care of what is entrusted to him. God has entrusted mankind with being stewards of the earth and the animals. God entrusts people who have property with not just benefitting themselves but showing God’s care for His children by using one’s wealth and property to care for them, first and foremost, the owner’s family. God has trusted you with talents, time, friends, and family! He has made you a steward of these gifts, and He asks that you take care of them by using them and helping them to grow. God also wants you to use your gifts for the good of those around you who need it by giving little tithes of what you have. Ultimately, everything we are and everything we have is a gift from God. We should strive to thank Him by putting our gifts to good use and serving the people around us.

RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus is not just for this person or that person; rather He desires to be in relationship with all people and receiving Him in Word and Sacrament, we come to know Him most truly.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
We are called to speak and live the word of God to proclaim His love and truth at all times.

Sample Script:
Our life in Christ calls us to good “stewardship.” A good steward is someone who takes care of what is entrusted to him. God has entrusted mankind with being stewards of the earth and the animals. God entrusts people who have property with not just benefitting themselves but showing God’s care for His children by using one’s wealth and property to care for them, first and foremost, the owner’s family. God has trusted you with talents, time, friends, and family! He has made you a steward of these gifts, and He asks that you take care of them by using them and helping them to grow. God also wants you to use your gifts for the good of those around you who need it by giving little tithes of what you have. Ultimately, everything we are and everything we have is a gift from God. We should strive to thank Him by putting our gifts to good use and serving the people around us.
God and in His Church, that not everyone has. Some people haven’t been told about the faith, or they haven’t been loved the way that Jesus loves them. We should try to share our faith with everyone in our lives, even by little acts of great love: praying for them, spending time with them, and showing them, we care for them more than we care for ourselves.

However, what we need to do as Christians with our gift is faith is: evangelize. Evangelization is introducing people around us to the person of Jesus Christ and sharing the Gospel message. Christians need to evangelize out of love for God and love for their neighbor. Since we love Jesus and know the great price He paid for us by laying down His life for us, the Church desires to share this message with the world. Since we care about our brothers and sisters, we want them to be saved from death by believing in Jesus Christ. These two realities make it always important to spread the Good News. We need to share our love of Jesus Christ with everyone around us, so we can help each other reach Heaven together.

Questions:

- What does it mean to be a good steward?
- What is the Good News?
- What is evangelization?
- Why is it important to evangelize?
- What are some acts great love we can do every day?

Activities:

Make a list of your gifts and talents. Come up with ways that you can use some of your gifts and talents as a service to people who may need it.

Spend some time this week reading Matthew chapters 26-27, reflecting on the suffering and passion of our Lord. Remember throughout that Jesus endured everything out of pure love for you so that you can be with Him in Heaven. Write a paragraph about how this makes you feel and how you share this message with people around you.
What do you want more than anything in life? Why do you do what you do? Most people would say that they want to be happy, or they would say they want something because they believe it will make them happy. There is not a single person who doesn’t want to be happy. Most people spend their entire lives looking for some way or something to make them happy. There is no thing and no person that will be able to make us truly happy. What is limited and finite doesn’t last forever, so any happiness that comes from it will only last a little while.

Sometimes we keep trying to put more things in our lives to make us happy: whether it’s more friends, more games, move activities, less activities, or whatever it may be, we try to change the things in our lives because we think it will finally make us happy. These things may help! Sometimes a good friend is just what we needed to remember that we are loved and that we are not alone. A game can help to relax us and to spur
our imaginations or creativity. Sometimes we need to see ourselves do really well at an activity like our sports and clubs, or step back from our tasks to refocus on what’s really important. These are all good things, and too much or too little of anything, even good things, isn’t healthy for us, so sometimes we need to focus on those parts of our lives. However, even if we managed to get everything perfect, we would still find ourselves unhappy and unsatisfied.

Ultimately, what’s going to make us happy goes back to what we are made for. If you think of something simple like a tool, you can imagine a tool is at its best when it’s being used for its purpose, for what it’s made to do. A hammer might not make for a very comfortable pillow at night, but it’s an amazing tool to fix a broken door with a few well-placed nails. Human beings are also best when we are living according to what we are made for, and it’s when we get confused about our purpose that we are the most unhappy. You see, you and I aren’t made for things that are finite things. You and I were made for infinite and everlasting happiness. God made you because He loves you. We were made to be in a loving relationship with God. Every human being desires this relationship, they want to be with Him forever, because that’s what they were made for. Sometimes this is easy for you and me to forget. Some people are never told about the amazing purpose they were made for, so it’s easy for them to think that their happiness belongs to something else in life.

It’s important to know that God wants you to be happy on earth right now. He wants you to have an amazing life, to make great friends, to have fulfilling jobs and hobbies. He wants you to be happy in that way even more than you do. But these happy things aren’t meant to last. The only lasting happiness comes from our relationship with God, and that leads to a joy that nobody can take away from you. The greatest Saints were joyful even when they lost everything or even to the point of dying. They were able to be happy, because they knew that even if they lost their possessions or had to lose their life, something even more amazing and wonderful was waiting for them. God wants you to live with that same joy. He wants you to be happy no matter what because you know that you can be with Him forever in paradise. God wants you to have the happiness of a Saint, He believes that you can do it, and He wants to give you whatever you need to get there.
Questions:

- What are some things in life that make you happy for a little while?
- What can you do or already do to create lasting happiness?
- How do you see God helping you to be happy even in the little things?
- Why are the Saints able to be truly happy?
- Who is called to be a Saint?

Activities:

Have your child do a brief reflection. It can be a written paragraph like a journal entry, a 5-minute voice recording, a video, a picture, a song, a poem, a conversation, or any form of reflection and expression that your child enjoys doing. Have them reflect on a time they were really happy in life and why.

Talk with your child about a Saint who was able to experience great joy even through great trials. Ask them if they think that’s possible for them. Make sure they know it is!

Do something for your child that you know will make them happy. Maybe something you haven’t gotten to do for a long time, or they wouldn’t expect you to do.

Plan something simple to do as a family that you all enjoy!