RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus gives us the Mass, and in doing so gives us a way to worship the unity of who the Trinity is as we pray during Mass.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
Even though we know God through the Scriptures and Jesus revealing Him to us, we are also able to know God through our own experience in the world, because God has written Himself in our hearts from the beginning.

Instructions for Using "The Way" Program

Follow the simple instructions below:
1. Watch Video on the website:.
2. Review the "relates to..." section to the left. This is helpful to understand what to convey to your child is important about this lesson. It will help make the lesson both an intellectual and a lived lesson.
3. Read through and familiarize yourself with the sample script.
4. Teach your child the lesson, either using your own words or the sample script.
5. Either discuss the questions with your child (best option), or have your child write out answers to the questions.
6. Have your child do the activities and/or do the activities with them.
7. If working with a parish return the appropriate material in the way they have requested.
Sample Script:

God is interwoven and present throughout all of His creation. I think one of the most fascinating parts of the creation stories from Genesis is the care by which God creates. It certainly seems that God, being God, could have instantly snapped His spiritual fingers and boom, everything from the universe down to the smallest cell is created and ready to go. But God doesn’t do that; rather He gives each major category of creation a day so He can carefully and intimately and lovingly design exactly what He wants.

God, thus, can be experienced and seen in the created world around us. Just as a child born to his or her parents will bear the resemblance or mannetisms to their parents or family, so too does creation bear a certain resemblance to God. I think one helpful example here is the certain order that we see in the various forms of creation around us. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west each day, perennial plants grow in the spring and blossom while enjoying summer and wither come fall each year, cows always say “moo” rather than “cluck cluck” or “bark bark”. Our human bodies are made up of trillions of cells that aren’t just floating around but rather know what their specific roles are in order to help us function and operate in the numerous different ways so life can be lived.

What is this all saying? God is the author of all creation and when we look at the beauty and the harmony and the order with all of creation, we come to the conclusion that there has to be someone behind all of this. Or perhaps put another way, a more outstanding way, we could say the following; namely that, if we took away religion and theology and Scripture and any of the things that speak of God, we could still, based on our natural reason alone, posit or come to the existence of God. Creation, the beauty of creation, speaks of the presence of an Author to it all. This is just one general argument (there are many more that exist)!

Knowing that God is operative in and throughout creation, we understand that He desires to be worshiped and praised with the same sense of order and beauty. Our earthly Mass is a foretaste of the Divine Liturgy that we’ll participate in for all eternity. In the Mass we go to worship and give praise to God, who is active in our world and in our own personal lives. We adore Him and give Him thanks for the many gifts that He gives us. We petition Him with our needs and concerns and pray that He will look favorably on what is on our hearts.

The liturgy is recognition of the Trinity present. The Mass, again, is all geared towards worshiping God as Trinity but has a special acknowledge towards the Father, as all the offering of the Mass is directed towards Him. Jesus the Son is present in Word and Sacrament and in the priest, who in the person of Christ is offering Jesus back to the Father, re-presenting the sacrifice of the Cross on Calvary. The Holy Spirit holds a special place as well, sanctifying the worship space with His presence and most explicitly, moving through the priest to bless the gifts of bread and wine at the Epiclesis, readying these to become the Body and Blood of Jesus being offered back to the Father.

The Mass, the earthly Mass, is truly a foretaste of what eternity with God will be like in Heaven. We shall be so blessed to stand before the throne of the Trinitarian God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to see Him as He is, and worship and praise Him for all that He has given us. Being totally in the presence of love, we shall know Him as He knows us, and ultimate fulfillment will be ours forever.

Questions:

- What are some ways that we see God in creation?
- Explain how one can come to knowledge of the existence of God without theology/religion. What is this type of reasoning called?
- Name some ways we see the Trinity present during Mass.
- How does our earthly liturgy/Mass foreshadow the eternal liturgy?
- Why do you think it is important to go to Mass at least every Sunday?

Activities:

Consider the following statement and deduce the existence of God using only natural reasoning (use the example from the above lesson as an example); “It is always good to protect the life of your brother or sister.”

As a family, discuss and share how you have encountered the Trinity at Mass. What special graces or inspirations did you each receive?
God the Father, in His loving care and kindness, desires to be in union with humanity. To assist men and women in achieving this unity, God reveals Himself in many different ways. The ultimate example of His revelation is seen through the Incarnation of His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus reveals to those who have faith the love, the mercy, and the tender compassion of God the Father.

In Matthew 11:27, we hear Jesus say, “All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.” The Father and the Son are so intimately connected. What connects them is a perfect and selfless love that is shared between the two for all eternity. This seamless communication of love pours forth an abundance of that same love that desires to be shared. God the Father, throughout history, reaches out to share this love, ultimately by sending His Son Jesus to show the Father’s love to all through His teachings and miracles. This knowledge of the Father through the Son is for all to come and realize so that life might be had to the full.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
Knowing God as the Father helps us to not only have right relationship with God, but also understand what a parental relationship should look like.
Jesus also reveals the Father’s mercy for us. There is a popular phrase about God that is most hopeful for all of us sinners; namely that His mercy outweighs His judgment. In the story of the woman caught in adultery, which traditionally is thought to be Mary Magdalene, we find Jesus freeing her from her accusers by challenging them to reflect on the state of their own souls first (paraphrasing here, let he without sin cast the first stone). Jesus tells the woman to go and sin no more, forgiving her first for sure but also challenging her to change the course of her life. God’s loving mercy does the same for us, if we just allow Him to. He desires that we each turn from our sin and seek forgiveness. God will mercifully forgive us our sins, rejoicing that one of His loved ones has come back. We need to be willing to reflect this important quality of God in our own lives with our dealings with families and friends and those that we encounter, showing loving mercy to all so that their life might be restored.

Jesus shows us the face of the Father through the tender compassion that He gives to those that He encounters. In the story in which Jesus raises His friend Lazarus from the dead, Jesus is seen weeping at the death of His friend and compassionately listening to Mary and Martha as they grieve the loss of their brother. While this particular story ends with the tender compassion of God raising Lazarus from the dead, this compassion of God is manifested in many different forms throughout our life. An example that is helpful is sometimes we have things in life that our burdensome for days, weeks, months, and even years. Things like a relationship or an illness; these things that are not easily fixed. It is amazing to see the tender compassion of God at work in the soul burdened with such things who continually offer this struggle to God in prayer. Some thing, some grace will occur that eases or even frees the soul from the burden and the light that shines through is none other than the grace of God at work in this person’s life.

Questions:

- Why would Jesus reveal to us that the first person of the Trinity is the Father?
- What does it mean for God to love us like a Father loves His children?
- In today’s world there are many imperfect fathers, how can we still understand the love of God like that of a father even as we have a hard time seeing good fathers today?
- What does it mean for the Father to be merciful, what does it mean that His mercy outweighs His judgement?
- What does a good Father really want for His children?

Activities:

Write out what you think are the best attributes of a good father. Show how God the Father fits all these attributes.

Write a letter to God the Father, speak to Him as a child speaks to a parent, let Him know of your fears, your worries, and the good things in your life; ask Him to guide you in your life.
GOD THE SON
Seventh Grade

Instructions for Using "The Way" Program

RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus embodies the Kingdom of God through His teachings and miracles. He calls us to embody the loving and merciful practices of the Kingdom in our lives as His disciples.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
Being a disciple of Jesus carries with it many graces and blessings and offers a life of walking alongside our Lord. It also calls us to bear burdens patiently and to encourage our fellow men and women to live similar lives.

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Sample Script:
At the prompting of Mary at the Wedding Feast in Cana, Jesus performed His first public miracle and thus inaugurated His ministry. Imagine Jesus, spending roughly the first 30 years of His life, quietly praying and waiting for God the Father to show Him how and when to begin His outreach to the people. Jesus’ preparation paid off, recognizing the voice of God coming through His mother, knowing that this was the time to act.

Jesus spent the next three years preaching to the various groups of people throughout Israel. Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God, a kingdom that was not in the model of any earthly kingdom, but a model that was founded on love, mercy, reconciliation, obedience, and service to the needs of others. It is a Kingdom that speaks to the very nature of God and what He truly wants for His people; namely to live as children of God after His own heart.

The revelation of this Kingdom further showed that God does not deal in exclusion; Jesus came to preach and to heal all people and thus invite every person to be part of this divine offer. Jesus taught the people with words and parables, He cured the sick and injured that saw with the eyes of faith, He cast out demons to free tortured souls from the grips of evil, Jesus even raised the dead and brought life-giving grace to those in need.

These and many other examples show the active presence of God in the life of humanity. God is present up and down through the ages, even to this very day, seeking to encounter you and calling you to receive and proclaim the same Kingdom as handed on by the Son of God.

Questions:
- How do you hear God speaking to you?
- What do you think about Jesus’ life before His public ministry prepared Him to carry out God’s will in His life?
- Describe your favorite attribute of the Kingdom of God.
- Which one or two of Jesus’ teachings/healings speaks most to you? Talk about some of the reasons why.
- How could you be more present to showing others that God is active in your life?

Activities:
Talk to your family about your favorite teaching/healing of Jesus and together, set-up a plan to actively live out a certain aspect to grow closer to Jesus and stronger in your faith.

Talk to your family about how, as a family, you can live some aspect of the Kingdom of God so your neighbors can encounter the Kingdom.
After the His Resurrection from the dead, Jesus sent the next 40 days with the Apostles and the closest disciples, continuing to teach and be in close proximity with them. It is interesting to point out that Jesus didn’t perform any healings or exorcisms (at least we have no record that He did). He wasn’t found preaching to the people or challenging the religious authorities in the synagogues. He was, very quietly and under the radar, spending time with those closest to Him; those that He had chosen to continue His mission in the Church.

It seems that these were Jesus’ final lessons; driving home the main points of the course before the big final exam. We find Jesus calling the Apostles to faith (John 20 with Thomas), to leave behind the things that they were used to (John 21 with Peter), to repent and lean totally on love (John 21 with Peter), and proclaim the Gospel message to all (Matthew 28 with them all). In these passages we find Jesus driving home the main points of discipleship before His ascension and the sending of the powerful Advocate.

Now, there are probably a whole number of reasons why Jesus spent His 40 days before the ascension the way He did, but I would like to offer an idea that seems to stand out for me. Namely, following Jesus as a disciple is no small thing. In fact, it is the most important thing because it is the path to a truly fulfilled life. Living the life of a disciple calls for one to turn his life around, dying to a life of self-centeredness to live a life of loving other-centeredness. The disciple seeks repentance for one’s sins and rectifies the wrongs that he has done so to be free from the previous life and to grow in the life that is before him.
The disciple thus detaches himself from all things that would keep him from fully following in the footsteps of the Master. The example of Peter being found back in his fishing boat after the Resurrection (John 21) gave way in part to the Lord’s question of Peter, “Do you love me more than these (fish)?” You are not a fisherman anymore Peter, you are a fisher of men (Matthew 4:19). “If any one comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26-27). Being a disciple of Jesus demands that He be at the center of our life, guiding us and entrusting all to His loving care.

At the point of detachment the disciple’s faith is free to flower, for the only thing we have to lean on is the love of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is most active here as He provides the grace to leave all things behind and follow Jesus in total trust. The freedom to only possess Jesus Christ opens the disciple’s heart to boldly proclaim the Gospel in authentic truth and love that brings forth life and grace.

So, with Jesus spending His 40 days providing this final instruction, He ascended into Heaven and the Holy Spirit was ready to come down upon the apostles and disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2). The outpouring of grace ignited these hearts on fire for love of the Lord and began a powerful commitment to proclaim Jesus Christ and Him crucified, building His Church throughout the land. The rest of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles tells of the miraculous events the disciples performed in the name of Jesus. This same Holy Spirit, and the incredible acts performed through the disciples, is available to us each this day.

At our baptism, we receive the Holy Spirit, making each recipient a temple of the Holy Spirit that gives each the foundation to be a disciple. By following the example of the Apostles, we are afforded the roadmap of how to be a disciple, to nurture the Holy Spirit that dwells within, and how to utilize the gifts given to proclaim the glory of God. See ourselves as temples of the Holy Spirit allow us to be vigilant over what we think, say, and do, wanting to keep all that would dirty our temple away so that the Holy Spirit can be fully alive within us.

In closing, it is important to remember that the way to discipleship is a journey and often requires a regular schedule of turning from sin and seeking forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, working to detach from anything that would prove to be an obstacle between you and God, learn to trust and have faith in God at each moment of your life and with great consistency, and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ with practice and greater conviction. Your rootedness in prayer is critical, to constantly pray that the Holy Spirit resides in your heart and builds you up in strength, will provide a clear path of discipleship and a life full of grace.

Questions:

- Who did Jesus remain with after the Resurrection?
- What are some of the traits we learn from Jesus regarding being a disciple?
- What about being a disciple seems easy for you? What seems difficult?
- At our baptism, why are we a temple?
- Being a disciple is not always easy. What can we do to assist us on our journey?

Activities:

Read with your family John 20 and 21. Discuss some of the things you notice about Jesus’ time with the Apostles.

Talk about some of the ways that discipleship can be lived together as a family. Make a plan to live out some aspect of discipleship more intentionally.

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Sacred Scripture, or the Bible, is structured as the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament makes up the first part of the Bible and is comprised of 46 books. The New Testament makes up the second part of the Bible and is comprised of 27 books. Each book of the Bible, whether Old or New Testament, consists of chapters and verses that assist us in finding passages that we are looking for. For example, John 3:16 means that this passage is in the book of John, in the third chapter at the sixteenth verse. There are many different translations of the Bible, but everyone should own a New American Bible (NAB); this is a Catholic translation that the Church uses for the readings we hear at Mass.

The Sacred Scriptures are written in many different formats and help us to understand how some of the books of the Bible were written. Some of the formats include historical books (Joshua, 1st or 2nd Book of Samuel, 1st or 2nd Book of Chronicles) that detail some historical moments of Israel and God’s presence among His people during those particular times. The Bible also contains prophetic books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah) that detail messengers who received words or visions from God and spoke words of attention and warning to bring the people back. Some of the letters of the Bible are just that, letters (Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Hebrews). These are written to specific communities dealing with specific questions and issues that offer much for our own communities today.

RELATES TO JESUS:
Just as Jesus connects God to humanity through His Incarnation, Jesus unites the Old Testament and the New Testament by fulfilling the Old and revealing the fullness of truth in the New.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
The all encompassing nature of Revelation as found in the Church’s Scripture and Tradition allows the faithful to confidently walk through life knowing the closeness of God.
The Bible is also made up of passages and stories that are both literal and spiritual in meaning. For example when the Bible says that Abram took his family and left his home for the promised land, it means that he physically did this. However when Jesus says we are the salt of the earth, it means that we give goodness to the world, not that we are actually made of salt. While there are many different examples of both of these meanings, it is important to remember that God uses the Scriptures to give us a point of encounter with Him to let grace or the life of God to be with us. Whether something is scientifically or historically or spiritually true, while important to know these are literally devices throughout the Scriptures, the point to remember is the presence of God speaking to you and me in and throughout each and every page.

Another critical feature of the Bible is the connectivity that exists throughout. Yes, there is an Old and New Testament and they each cover many different things. A popular phrase to explain the connectivity goes something like this; everything in the New Testament is hidden in the Old, and everything in the Old Testament is unveiled in the New. This saying is getting at the point that the Bible is entirely cohesive and united from the first word in Genesis to the last word in Revelation. Jesus Christ is a constant throughout both Testaments, being the Word that speaks and runs hidden in the Old and the Face that reveals all in its fullness in the New. The Old and New Testament tell the story of God’s revelation within human history that speaks a full message of God’s love even to His people today, thousands of years later.

The differences of the Old Testament and the New Testament truly show how the two build upon and support each other. The Old Testament is a record, if you will, of God’s formation of His people and of His covenants with them, showing how God constantly and consistently sought to be united with His people even though we often choose our own direction. The New Testament brings to fulfillment this revelation and covenants and describes the new life with God through His Son Jesus Christ and in His Church guided by the Holy Spirit.

What does this all mean for you and me? Two things stand out: One, Sacred Scripture is a gift from God that proves God’s love for His people, God’s love for you. Even though we fall away due to sin and choose our self above others, He continually calls our name and invites us to join Him again in relationship. Awesome! Second, we can trust Sacred Scripture as a revelation from God in that Jesus Christ and His Church is seen throughout, having endured thousands of years of humanity and our countless sins and failings, the Bible continues to proclaim truth and goodness and love that endures all things. Let us each come to care for, and study more, the Sacred Scriptures as given to us from God.

Questions:

- How many books of the Bible are there?
- What is the difference between the Old and New Testaments?
- What are some of the formats of the Bible?
- What is the difference between a literal and spiritual meaning of a verse?
- How does reading the Bible help us to know and love God better?

Activities:

Find the following verses: John 3:16, John 6:56, Genesis 3:15, Revelation 13:1.

Read Isaiah 53:5 and explain how even though this is the Old Testament it might point to something in the New Testament.
In the beginning, before there was anything, there was only God. God has existed for all eternity as a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as a community of love. This love shown eternally between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is endlessly reciprocated and shared perfectly in the Trinity.

“In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth...” (Genesis 1:1). The Bible begins with earth’s birth. The perfect love of the Trinity brought forth a new creation. The love of God is so powerful that He was able to create ex nihilo, which is to say that God created out of nothing. God didn’t and doesn’t need any material to create; the power of His perfect love was able to bring about the heavens and the earth, and ultimately you and I.

RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus coming as fully God and fully man built the perfect bridge to connect the Almighty God with sinful humanity. Jesus reminds us of our divine call to love and respect God, others, and all of creation while also reminding us of our utter need and dependence on the One who can save us.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
We are called to hold in balance the gifts given to us by God and how we use these gifts to in order to better my life, the lives of my brothers and sisters, and our relationship to God who gives because He loves us freely.

The power of God’s love helps us to understand a couple things about God: first, the ability to create simply by willing creation from His love shows God’s infinite greatness over and above all of His works. When you and I make a batch of brownies, we create, needing to use materials such as eggs and oil and brownie mix; God creates heavens and earth and
humans by simply loving them into existence through His most powerful will. Talk about true power; imagine how easy it is for Him to make brownies! Secondly, the power to create out of nothing via an act of His loving will truly shows how everything is created as important and with a purpose. The order with which God has placed within creation tells forth the love with which all things were created.

So even with the awesome creative power that God has and His infinite greatness above creation, which says that He could absolutely do anything that He wants to do, God freely chooses to do the most radical of things; He chooses to be intimately involved with His creation. God does not create and then leave us to fend for ourselves to live life, experience all that life has to offer, and then only to die. No, God inserts His love into all of creation so that His love can be experienced by all of us. This love is most profoundly evident in humanity, who being made in the image and likeness of God, not only participate in His love like the rest of creation, but can actually receive and give back this love to God and be a living witness to God by expressing His love to one another.

God’s walk with humanity is so intimate that it is often compared to in the Scriptures as a marriage between a man and a woman. God desires to have such a relationship with us that it can only be explained as a total self-giving of one to the other. The love shared in such a relationship yields only love that gives forth life that tends towards fulfillment both during our earthly existence and into our eternal home that is Heaven. As part of this fulfillment, man comes to understand that we have dominion over all of creation, not in some domineering way but in a way that is guided by love and order, just as God created it to be. Man’s loving relationship with God centers Him properly as a child of God while also brings him to understanding his role as steward over all of creation. This stewardship allows for creation to be cared for properly and to be utilized with respect. Being in right relationship with God and His creation is most pleasing to God, as it is here that man fulfills His vocation. God is praised and given great worship by man when he is living a life that upholds God’s plan for creation.

What does this all mean for us? God’s love for us reminds us of our value in God’s eyes and directs us in telling us how to be good leaders over God’s creation. A life lived in this fashion truly fulfills God’s loving plan for us, the pinnacle and height of His creation. We must do all that we can to safeguard this way of life and to grow deeper and deeper each day to be in right relationship with God.

Questions:

- What materials did God create from?
- We say that God created out of __________. (This is the reason He created)
- True or False: God created like a watchmaker, setting creation in motion and then ignoring it.
- We are made in God’s _________ and __________
- How are we called to take care of God’s creation?

Activities:

List some ways that you can help be a steward of God’s creation in your life (start with things in and around your house that you can do then move outward toward the community).

Use clay or other materials to create something in your image. Write about how that is like and how it is different than God creating us.
TAs humans, we are born into a family which is made up of a mother and a father. This family structure can also include our siblings. Our family extends out to include our grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins. The family tree continues to extend out and if one was to trace this out a couple of generations, you can have quite the list of people.

Our Catholic faith does just that, extending our meaning of family to be that of a human family, which in one sense includes all the baptized people in the Church past, present, and future and in another sense includes all people given life, existing as human beings endowed with a body and a soul.

The unity that each person shares as being human automatically places the responsibility of solidarity on you and me. Solidarity is the principle that, with regard to our human family topic, we as human persons have a shared interest together that we should be united on. This idea of solidarity within the human family includes the basic needs and rights that we each should have just because we are human. All humans should have

**RELATES TO JESUS:**
Jesus came so that we might receive the Kingdom of God; a gift that is available to all. Jesus shows us the responsibility required in receiving this gift as His disciple, which calls us to leave everything and follow Him, for the sake of ourselves and for the betterment of our neighbors.

**RELATES TO MY FAITH:**
Relates to my faith: Our Catholic faith reminds us often of the necessity to look after one another in love. We need to be charitable to those that we encounter and allow that charitable selfless love to stretch us in our dealings with one another.

Sample Script:

DIGNITY OF HUMANITY
Seventh Grade

Sample Script:

TAs humans, we are born into a family which is made up of a mother and a father. This family structure can also include our siblings. Our family extends out to include our grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins. The family tree continues to extend out and if one was to trace this out a couple of generations, you can have quite the list of people.

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The unity that each person shares as being human automatically places the responsibility of solidarity on you and me. Solidarity is the principle that, with regard to our human family topic, we as human persons have a shared interest together that we should be united on. This idea of solidarity within the human family includes the basic needs and rights that we each should have just because we are human. All humans should have
life, food, water, shelter, clothing. Humans should not be denied love, kindness, dignity, worth. These are some of the things we as humans should be united on when we talk about solidarity.

Now, this idea of solidarity is not just some general, something that is done by bigger groups in a country far away. No, solidarity is to be practiced with our brothers and sisters in our very lives. Here are several ways that we can look at and approach solidarity in our own personal world:

- **Solidarity with other people:** In our daily interactions with the people around us (our family, friends, neighbors, classmates, etc. any person we interact with during our daily life), we can be people who practice and show our solidarity with the other. An example that exists here is providing care for our injured brother or sister at home after they sustained a fall, caring for their wound and spending time with them while they rest and heal. Another example can be seen in reaching out the lonely kid at school who doesn’t have friends or is picked on. Kindly reaching out to show him or her the value they possess as a fellow human can go a long way in picking up another person’s spirits.

- **Solidarity with our communities:** We exist in many different communities, sometimes without even realizing it. Our school community, our neighborhood community, our extracurricular activity community, our on-line gaming community; humans as social beings tend to be part of some community that has a shared interest that brings a group of people together. We can practice solidarity with our people here, sometimes these are people we haven’t even met by the way, by cleaning up the local neighborhood park so kids can play there without fear of getting injured or working to assist in picking up a family in your community who fell on hard times.

- **Solidarity with our nation:** Living in the United States, we exist with our brothers and sisters who live within our 50 States as one nation. While we are unified by living in the same geographical area, more or less, it can sometimes be difficult to find an area that the entire nation embraces together as one. However, we can rest assured that something that is founded on love and speaks to the betterment of the human person that is authentically true and good can be something that we the people will rally around and exist together to make happen.

All of this talk on solidarity needs to have one foundational component to truly unite and be the “builder up” towards the good that it needs to be; namely charity. The virtue of charity, selflessly loving the other for the sake of the other, because he or she is another, is the true center of solidarity that brings forth life. From our Catholic Christian perspective, the gift that charity is comes first from God and when we actively live in His Charity, and return that love back to Him in worship and living a holy life, we are given the grace to be authentically charitable, and thus in true solidarity, with our brothers and sisters. Here, the needs of others are truly met and all people are brought to the place of dignity and worth that is intended for you and I and all humans.
Questions:

- Apart from being human, what, as our faith tells us, unites to people around us?
- Solidarity speaks of shared interests between people. Name some points of solidarity that we can agree upon.
- Consider the various communities that you are a part of. How can you better support the dignity of the people you participate in within these communities?
- What in our national community do you find difficult to embrace? What are some ways that you can work for change with others that shines forth the light of Jesus Christ?
- Why is charity important in the authentic living out of the principle of solidarity?

Activities:

With your family, discuss the various needs that you each have. In considering solidarity, find ways that you can support one another in charitably serving each other's needs.

Using the Catechism of the Catholic Church, compare the Church's definitions of charity and sin. Then, using this principle of solidarity, describe the effects of charity and sin upon others around us.
SIN
Seventh Grade

Sample Script:

Sin, as defined by the Catechism of the Catholic Church, is “an offense against God as well as a fault against reason, truth, and right conscience. Sin is a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the eternal law of God.” Sin is the fruit of the Evil One, Satan, who introduced sin to Adam and Eve in the Garden by tempting them to disobey God. Because of this Original Sin, sin has been and always will be a plague against man.

The first sin of Adam and Eve helps us to understand sin as we experience it today. Sin is a disobedient action against God and humanity’s parents first sin was no exception here. This first disobedience against God affected a number of things against humanity which is created by His love and for His love. Immediately, created in original holiness, the disobedience of Adam and Eve caused them to fall from the grace given by this holiness, separating them from the love of God and eliminating the friendship they had experienced.

RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus’ mission involves saving us from our sins, so that we can be free to be the children of God in this life and to experience eternal bliss with God forever in Heaven.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
The importance of living lives of holiness, lives that seek to be as free from sin as much as possible, brings with it the grace of peace and joy found necessary to be a Saint in Heaven.
The harmony that existed between God and Adam and Eve, thanks to what is called original justice, was thrown into disorder. No longer were Adam and Eve guided by virtue and balance; rather their body and soul were no longer in-sync, giving rise to their appetites and passions taking control over and above their reason. The peaceful union that existed between woman and man was now disjointed, with sin now allowing the two sexes to view one another with lust and a spirit of domination, deceit, infidelity, and mutual abuse (cf. CCC 400).

Further, harmony between man and creation became broken, with both sides warring against one another. Creation or nature is now hostile to humanity while humanity seeks to control and dominate nature in destructive ways. Man’s desire is no longer primarily for union with God, others, and creation; rather he became attracted to the disordered desire to seek that which is less good and sinful, which is called concupiscence.

Finally, the fruit of disobedience for Adam and Eve, and for the entire human race, is death. By denying the life and love of God, the only consequence of their actions was death. Pride, perhaps the root cause of the disobedience against God, turns one in on one’s self and does not allow for you to lovingly look out towards God and towards the other.

This final fruit of sin is most devastating. While the temporal consequences are terrible enough, the eternal consequences are far greater and without the hope of reunion with God, can bring us to a point of deepest misery. Sin equals death. We die a physical death, yes, but we also endure a spiritual death. This spiritual death separates us from our relationship with God, severing the grace and love afforded to us by the Creator of the world. God is love and only love can exist with God and when we actively and deliberately disobey God we reject that love, causing our own separation and giving us exactly what we choose. Because of this spiritual death, we are also closed off to the reward of Heaven, which gives us eternal separation from love, from God. Sin truly destroys everything.

Original Sin certainly threw everything off from what was intended for you and me from the beginning. Today, we see the effects of Original Sin through our own personal sins. Our desire for that which is less good, for that which is sinful, keeps us locked in a search for something that doesn’t fulfill and leaves us ultimately empty. We miss the mark and fall short and feel the same shame as Adam and Eve realizing that our lives are not what they are supposed to be.

Our personal sins are made up of intentional thoughts, words, deeds, and omissions (not doing the good that we are called to do). There are many different sins, but all sins can find their foundation in the 10 Commandments. We should come to know the Commandments, understand the sins that we struggle with, and ask God for the grace to return to and properly love God and love neighbor as God desires for you and I.

Questions:

- What guide have we been given by God to follow so we are free from sin?
- How do virtues help us to find a balanced life?
- What is one of the root causes of sins against God?
- What are personal sins made up of?
- What is Original Justice?

Activities:

Make a list of the Ten Commandments and choose 5 to focus on for a week. What you can you change in your daily life to live the Commandments more effectively as Jesus gave them to us?

Write out the virtues. Which virtues are easy for you to live by and which are more difficult?
CALL TO HOLINESS
Seventh Grade

Sample Script:

The foundation of all things that are created find their beginning in God. This is true also for the virtues. The theological virtues of faith, hope, and love are gifts from God that He offers for the betterment of humanity. Upon receiving these virtues, the Christian is afforded these supernatural gifts so that he or she can experience closeness in relationship with the Trinity. The moral life inspired by the virtues causes the presence of God to be active in the world. The theological virtues afford a direct encounter with God that brings others closer to Him in relationship.

The theological virtues are supernatural as these are truly gifts given to the individual to experience the accompaniment of the Trinity. God’s desire is to be with His people and avail Himself to them, walking with men and women as they journey through this life. The individual in turn is called to receive these and practice these daily in his life. We should pray for the grace to be inspired by these virtues and live our life with the theological virtues guiding us daily.

RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus is the source from which all virtue flows. Striving for and practicing the theological virtues help us to live the divine life of grace that Jesus desires us to have.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
Our faith details in both Scripture and Tradition the importance of virtue. Intentionally seeking faith, hope, and love keeps on the path to finding happiness and peace in our life.
The theological virtue of faith tells us that there is a God and that we can place our belief in Him. Throughout revelation, God has communicated His love and truth to us, showing His commitment to unity with humanity. As stated in general with the virtues, the virtue of faith demands a response on our part. When we come to realize that God is, and that He is hoping for a deep relationship with us, our response back to our Creator is one of belief in the truth presented before us. Further, this gift of faith is not to be kept just for ourselves but rather lived and proclaimed so other might come to the faith. To not share the gift of faith that has been given us is to be misusing the responsibility entrusted to us and ultimately shows a lack of depth in our faith. "So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

The theological virtue of hope shows us our desire for everlasting happiness and fulfillment resides in the ultimate goal of bringing forth the Kingdom of God. Hope relies not on our own strength but on the grace of the Holy Spirit to place our will secondary to that of the will of God. The virtue of hope helps to order our activities and place things in the proper perspective (boy, that football game was great but I can’t wait to worship God at Mass tomorrow). Hope is important as the virtue offers refuge during times of doubt and discouragement. The virtue of hope affords the soul a reminder of its ultimate purpose and provides a light even when the darkness of life seems to surround everything. Hope is something that we should always implore and reach out for throughout our life.

The theological virtue of charity shows that we love God above all things and that we love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Charity allows us to act just as God acts, for in our charitable service towards others we show people a glimpse of the living God, who loves His own and loves them until the end (cf. John 13:1). The virtue of charity gives God His proper due, returning the love God has shown us freely. It is the greatest of all the virtues, fulfilling all the law and all the commandments. It allows us to live out the Beatitudes and live as an authentic witness as a disciple of Jesus Christ and His Church. Charity is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that leads to peace, joy, and mercy, which invites others into relationship with God by enlivening the lives of those that charity touches. Finally, charity is the one virtue that will endure for all eternity. Being a sampling in this life, charity resides in its fullness with God, who is charity through and through.

**Questions:**
- Where do the theological virtues come from?
- What are two or three things you can name about these theological virtues?
- Describe the virtue of faith.
- Describe the virtue of hope.
- Describe the virtue of charity.

**Activities:**
Have a discussion with your family about faith, hope, and love. What is something you each learned about these virtues?

On a sheet of paper, write out what each virtue tells you about God. How do you, in your practice of these virtues, allow others to see God in you when you relate to them?
There is a common misconception within some Catholic and Christian circles that would lead one to think that living life as a disciple of Jesus Christ is easy. While it is true that a great many blessings and graces flow and are present daily in the life of a Catholic Christian, not to mention tremendous happiness and fulfillment, life can still be tough. Pain and suffering will come in this life, whether you are Christian or not. Yet another grace of being a Christian in the Catholic Church is we are given great assurance that our suffering and struggles can carry with them a great many blessings. Jesus Christ is our great witness here, as He to save us from our sins, showed us the power of His salvific or saving grace by willingly offering Himself along with our sins and suffering to the Father He saved us and opened wide the doors to our redemption. Faith in our Savior is thus the beginning step in finding authentic meaning in this life and to finding fulfillment as a disciple.

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RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus shows us the value and meaning of suffering. By staying close to Jesus Christ, allowing Him to walk with us in our suffering, we find grace for ourselves and for others.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
The grace of the Crucifixion is available through the Catholic Church, given to the faithful through the Sacraments so that we might experience the divine life of God which leads us to salvation.
must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me”. If we are to model our lives after Jesus’, we are called to take up our cross. The salvation that God offers from the Cross is the divine life of grace that allows us to do just as Jesus does, only in our own particular situation. Our cross are those burdens, struggles, and sins that way us down and make the journey towards holiness and life with God difficult. However, it is even in our struggles and sufferings that, in choosing to follow Jesus Christ, that we feel His arm wrap around our shoulders and walk with us in carrying these burdens. That provides us with a tremendous sense of hope and encouragement that nothing in this life is wasted. Jesus truly wants to be a part of your life, including your sins and pain and temptations; God wants it all! He died for you so that you might have life and have life to the full, so carrying our cross with Jesus continues our model of becoming a disciple after the Son of God.

So you might be thinking that it is nice to model our self after Jesus by carrying our cross and to say things like “lift it up”, but what does this uniting our sufferings with Jesus really look like? When we encounter suffering in our life, our first reaction should be to turn to Jesus in prayer and talk to Him about it. What is this about? Why me? What could this mean for my future? These and many more questions will arise, but bringing these to Jesus and offering these to Him in prayer gives us a chance to release what is on heart to the One who can do something about it. While we might not get answers or the results that we expect, with patience and perseverance, we can offer all that we carry to God just as Jesus did on the Cross for ourselves and others, so that what we endure with Jesus by our side might win grace to another in need of life and hope.

Our life as disciples of Jesus Christ is truly best seen in us when we seek to be one with Jesus by offering our sufferings for the sake of others. When the work of salvation is evident in our life, we proclaim to one another the reality of grace that reminds us to offer our lives to our Savior. Jesus does this for us freely and when we take on this role of offering, we become priest and mediator; not in any self-centered way but as the disciple who is carrying out the work of discipleship so that the name of Jesus Christ may be praised and that the people of the world who do not know Him yet may come to believe that He is the Messiah.

What does this all mean for us? The way of the disciple of Jesus Christ consists of truly the full range of experiences that life has to offer; good times, bad times, and every time in between. The difference is for the Catholic Christian is that we have the grace of God actively available to us through the Sacraments and through our daily life of prayer and service, to name just a couple examples. This grace keeps us and helps us to maintain the Christian way of life as a disciple seeking to be holy and remain in friendship with God. Even when life gets tough, and we get burdened with struggles and perhaps even get burdened with our sins, we know Jesus never leaves us alone. We can offer our struggles and sins to Jesus and He walks with us to offer these to the Father. By offering our sufferings for our self or those that we know are in need, we witness to the saving action of Jesus on the Cross and show the reality that not one moment of our life is wasted in the work of His salvation. God’s grace desires to be a part of our life, and the life of discipleship affords such opportunities for souls to encounter this gift.
Questions:

- What are some of the things in your life that make it so hard to live the life of a disciple of Christ?
- List at least four things that you can do to help you become a better disciple of Christ so that you can show greater love to others.
- Does God always give us the answer we pray for?
- How does God’s grace show up in our life?
- Where do we start to find meaning in life?

Activities:

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ looks a certain way and includes a prayer life, participation in the Sacraments, serving others through charitable works of mercy, etc. On a sheet of paper, write down how you practice being a disciple. What do you do well? What could you work on?

Devise a plan with your family to keep the practice of discipleship centralized within your life together. For example, consider one thing that you and your family can do together daily for a month in order to keep Jesus intentionally centered in your life and the life of your family. Each month, choose something different in order to both practice and grow in your discipleship.
Mary is the mother of all in Heaven and all on earth. While this is true in the general sense, there are important specifics to draw out that help us understand why Mary is given this title of "Mother" and how this also helps us to better understand Jesus. In understanding the various roles of Mary as Mother, we also come to understand how God might be calling us in our own particular life.

Mary has well over a hundred titles. Many of these titles speak to her many roles, such as "Health of the Sick" or "Refuge of Sinners", but some are more important than others. Her most important and basic role and, therefore, the most common title for us in the Church is to first know Mary as Mother of God, or "Theotokos", which is Greek for, "God-bearer". When the Church teaches that Mary is "Mother of God" she does not mean that God is created in her womb, but rather that she carried God in her womb and brought him into the world through the person of Jesus Christ who is both fully God and fully man. Since the Annunciation, that is, the moment when the angel

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RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus is the Son of God and the son of Mary, He is fully God and fully man. Jesus shows us the face of God while showing us what it means to be completely human.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
Mary is mother to all of us in the Church. Her care and concern for us who love her Son gives us a heavenly mother who prays for and protects us.
Gabriel visited Mary, telling her that she was the favored one of God and that through her consent would receive the grace of the Holy Spirit which brought about the blessing of the child Jesus in Mary's womb, Mary agreed to a life with God that was to be like no other. Mary would truly be the Mother of God by being the mother of Jesus, the second person of the Trinity and the Son of God, which would be a most critical step in bringing forth God's saving plan to all of humanity.

Another title that properly describes Mary is Mother of the Church. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church and we, the baptized faithful, make up His body in the Church. We, the Church, are united to Jesus to be the arms and legs that carry out and help to bring forth His mission into the world. Operating as the Body of Christ, the faithful model themselves after Mary, the pure disciple of the Lord who was the first to say yes to God, bringing about the physical presence of God, in the person of Jesus Christ, to all of humanity. Mary continues to guide the Church as Mother through her holy intercession, praying for the Church to stay close to the will of the Father by following the leadership of Jesus Christ.

While Mary carries the exalted title, Queen of Heaven and Earth, we must remember that she is also our humble mother. If we met Mary on earth, we would probably think, "She's such a normal person!" As Mother of God and Mother of the Church, she loves us and directs us to be one with her Son by encountering Him in the Sacraments of the Church. As all grace flows from God through the Church, Mary as a mother serves as the Mediatrix, or channel through whom all graces flow. Here, we see Mary's role as cooperating with the will of God and assisting the children of God by guiding all towards life with Jesus. Mary's mediation is not to be viewed as a more powerful or replacement mediation of Jesus between God and man as these two mediations are different. Jesus' mediation is one of bridging the infinite gap caused by the sin of Adam and Eve that separated us from God, which we call, "redemption". Mary's mediation helps us in our salvation by bringing us closer to Jesus. Her alignment with her Son in bringing about the presence of God into the world through her united will and perfect obedience is a model for us and assists us in reaching our fulfillment by cooperating with the grace of God.

For our part, we need to reach out to our Mother Mary and pray for the grace to be more like her. Mary was quiet, listening to and being docile towards the voice of God, contemplating all that she had received and letting the Holy Spirit direct her through these words. Her prayer and actions of her life truly completely pointed to God, setting the example for you and me to do the same and keep our eyes, mind, and heart focused and fixed on Jesus Christ, allowing Him to be Lord of our life.
Questions:

- What is Mary's most basic title and why is that the most important of her roles?
- What is the difference between Mary’s mediation and Jesus’ mediation?
- What is the example that Mary set for us in our relationship with Jesus?
- What does Theotokos mean?
- What does it mean that Mary is the Mother of the Church?

Activities:

Titles tell us a little bit about some of the things we do. Consider what titles you might have. Write this out, list some of characteristics that each of these titles have, and then name what these titles tell you about God (I am a swimmer, and am athletic and well-trained, and God calls us to be in good spiritual shape so that we live lives of virtue and thus imitate Him, for example).

Talk to your godparents about their favorite Marian devotion. You could ask them questions as follows: What is it that they like about this particular devotion? What does this devotion say about Mary? How has this devotion been beneficial for you?
After Jesus suffered and died, he was placed in a brand new tomb. Our Nicene Creed, professed and recited at each Sunday Mass during Ordinary Time and on Holy Days of Obligation, states that Jesus descended to the dead. What does this mean? Jesus went to preach the Gospel and free the just souls who had gone before Him, fulfilling His saving mission that is available to all in any age (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church 633-634).

On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead, removing the burial clothes and exiting the tomb. He spent the next 40 days with the disciples continuing to teach them and to prepare them for the gift of the Holy Spirit (see John 20 and 21). The Apostles and the disciples were still very much afraid and confused about the whole situation. When Jesus ascended into Heaven, He promised to send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit who would be with and guide the Apostles and the new Church to be with us until the end of time. The Holy Spirit’s presence in the Church is to comfort us and give us courage that we are never alone and need not fear with God at our side. Further, through our participation in the Church as baptized sons and
daughters we ourselves are in fact temples of the Holy Spirit and called to share His presence with us to all those that we encounter through acts of love and kindness.

The end of Jesus’ earthly time with us commonly sparks questions regarding one of the Church’s most interesting topics, namely the four last things, which are death, judgment, heaven, and hell. And there is little mystery as to why these topics are so interesting. We simply don’t know a ton about these but each of us gets to experience 3 of the 4 to close out our earthly life. Let’s talk about each of these topics a bit to explore these further:

• Death - Each of us, at the end of our earthly life, will experience death. While one of the certainties in life, it is also a great mystery, and yet one of the most difficult to consider. Few of us even want to think about it. Yet, the Saints say we should always act in such a way that death is always before so that we might act as Jesus would want us to in every situation. While it is clear from the beginning of the Book of Genesis that God did not desire that death ever enter the world. Our choice to be disobedient to God beginning with the sin of Adam and Eve brought it into the world until the end of time. Death is the final stop before our body shuts down and our soul travels on. As Christians, we believe that because of Jesus’ saving action on the Cross, death has been transformed from something to fear to the transition of the beginning of our life eternal with God--IF we do his will in all things, which Jesus tells us is possible if we place our trust in Him, the thousands of Saints have shown us it is, but it is "the road less traveled". Jesus calls it, "the narrow and difficult path and few there are who find it" (Mt 7:13), and warns the road that leads to Hell is broad and wide, and many there are who travel it (Mt 7:13), so choose the narrow path.

• Judgment - At the moment of death, when the soul separates from the body, our soul goes immediately to the particular judgment. Here, we will be individually judged by Jesus Christ based on how we either loved God/loved neighbor or how we didn’t (see Matthew 25:31-46). Judgment will result in either eternal bliss in Heaven, a temporary, but uncomfortable stop in Purgatory to be purified before entering Heaven, or eternal separation in Hell. The key difference between Purgatory and Heaven and Hell is that Heaven and Hell are permanent, while purgatory is temporary, and all the souls in purgatory are saved, meaning they will all eventually go to Heaven. Also, At the Second Coming of Jesus, as discussed in the Book of Revelation, the general judgment will occur in which all the nations of humanity of every time and place will see the presence and work of God. Here, the holy souls and their bodies, including all those in purgatory, will be resurrected and reunited with their souls to reside in eternity. Tragically, those souls who remained obstinate in their disobedience to God will be "cast into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels' (Mt 25:41).

• Heaven – The Beatific Vision, in which the Saints and Angels will behold the face of God to offer adoration, praise, and worship in the Divine Liturgy for all eternity. The souls in Heaven are perfected (the Church Triumphant), without any sin before the All-Holy God and these intercede before His Heavenly throne for us here on earth (the Church Militant) journeying toward our Heavenly homeland. Souls of the deceased that still have venial or some attachment to sin are sent to Purgatory (the Church Suffering) to endure their final purification before entering their heavenly homeland. Our prayers here on earth for the souls in purgatory offer relief and assistance for those who are assured of the bliss of Heaven.

• Hell – The eternal separation from God and from love, Hell is the place for souls who persistently and intentionally choose themselves and sin (mortal sin), over and above God and their neighbor.
Hell is the domain of Satan and the fallen angels or demons. The souls in Hell are the goats in the Matthew 25 verse above that did not look out for their fellow man. In Dante’s Inferno, the souls in Hell are eternally frozen, stuck in on themselves to spend eternity in isolation. Souls in Hell lose all their free will. However, the greatest punishment in Hell is the final and eternal realization that a soul has chosen to be apart from God in his or her life, and that they will live in regret of their decisions for all eternity. It is very important to understand that Hell is our choice. God won’t force us to love him if we don’t want to. However, Jesus warns us that it is the only choice available to those who do not want God in their lives. Many people who do not believe in God live with a false understanding that they simply die and that will be the end or have some other not-so-bad, maybe-even-better-than-this-life fate, but Jesus warns us of only two possibilities: life with God in Heaven or death in a state of permanent separation from God in Hell.

Questions:

- What are the four last things?
- What is the key difference between Purgatory vs. Heaven and Hell?
- True of False: The Church teaches that Purgatory is a place where souls can continue to choose whether they want to go to Heaven or Hell.
- What is the Holy Spirit’s presence in the Church supposed to show us?
- What is particular judgment vs. general judgment?

Activities:

Since the Holy Spirit is an active participant in our life, discuss together as a family a difficult moment or two that you each experienced and how you recognized the presence God in those moments. Close with a prayer to the Holy Spirit to always be readily recognizable throughout your life.

As a family, plan a trip to the cemetery to pray for your deceased loved ones. This Work of Mercy unites us to another and reminds us that we each, whether alive or dead, are loved by God and that He desires all to be with Him now and then.
The Sacraments are truly a gift from God. It is the will of God to have these Sacraments available in the Church so that each of us, children of God who belong to the Catholic Church, can receive the divine life of grace from these in our own lives. While the Sacraments are available in the Church, there are a certain set of stipulations that need to be followed in order for the Sacrament to be brought forth in its fullness.

When Jesus instituted the Sacraments, and as the Church developed her understanding of these, the words and matter and form for each of these instruments of grace are meant to convey the reality which these point to. For example, the water used in baptism is meant to remind us of how God washed away the sin of the Israelites in the Red Sea, pointing to the cleansing of our souls by the Holy Spirit. The bread used in the Eucharist reminds us of the Last Supper, in which Jesus Christ began His priesthood and offered Himself up for ourselves, pointing to our participation in Him as a priestly people who are called to sacrifice our lives so that Jesus might live through us.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
Jesus calls you and I to turn away from anything in our life that would keep us from Him. Being free from obstacles we open ourselves to receive fully what Jesus has for us so that we are free to walk with Him as His disciple.

RELATES TO JESUS:
When we approach a Sacrament, except for Reconciliation and Baptism, we should approach with a clean heart. The grace given in the Sacrament is from the saving action of Jesus on the Cross who died for our sins so it follows that we seek the help to be made like Him as we prepare to encounter Him in the Sacraments.

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The laying on of hands used in the Anointing of the Sick reminds us of the personal touch Jesus shows His people during their times they are most in need and how this comfort is present during sickness and near to death.

So, it is with this understanding of Jesus’ gift of the Sacraments that we see the importance of having strict matter, or materials used to experience the Sacrament, and form, or words and prayers used to speak the truth of the Sacrament. Having a set matter and form for each Sacrament prevents two possible errors from arising. First, the error to think that one could just make a Sacrament happen by themselves or that the minister of the Sacraments could just say “Bam, here’s your forgiveness”. Having form and matter to the Sacrament, apart from following the law of the Lord and His Church, shows a certain intentionality by the minister and truly the Church to give Jesus Christ authentically to those in need.

Second, the error to think that by simply reciting the words over the material elements and doing what the book says will magically create the Sacrament all by itself. The grace of the Sacrament is confected or made by the saving work of Jesus Christ and His love for humanity as God. No amount of holiness or effort or magic on the part of the minister can bring forth a Sacrament; only the work of God as He prescribes in His Church can bring about the heavenly gift of the Sacraments so that we can experience the divine life of grace working in and among us. In fact, even if a minister is in a state of sin and he tries to confer a Sacrament using the correct matter and form, we trust in the grace of God, with Jesus Christ already having done the work of winning these graces for us, that this particular Sacrament is valid and gives the grace of God to the recipient.

Now, from our perspective, you and me as recipients of the Sacraments, it is most important that we take care to make sure we are in the best possible state to receive the heavenly gift we are presenting ourselves to receive. We need to have what is called the proper disposition, or make sure that you and I are in the best possible state to receive the Sacrament, so that we can ensure our Lord Jesus Christ will be landing in the best possible place in our heart and soul. When we prepare and properly dispose ourselves to receive Jesus, we open up for ourselves the opportunity to fruitfully receive all that the Sacrament wishes to grace us with. What does this proper disposition look like? Well, we need to make sure that we are free from mortal sin by going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation first. We need to make sure we are going to weekly Sunday Mass, saying our daily prayers, learning about God by reading the Bible and studying the Catechism, engaging in spiritual reading and learning the lives of the saints, doing works of Mercy, etc.
Questions:

- Why is it so important that the Church offers Sacraments to the people?
- What is the significance of using water in baptism or bread in the Eucharist?
- Why is the Church so strict on having a set matter and form for each Sacrament?
- What does it mean to have the proper disposition to receive a Sacrament?
- How do we remain close to Jesus Christ when we are not receiving a sacrament?

Activities:

The Sacraments communicate to us the presence of Jesus Christ to the recipient. Reflect on the experiences you have had with the Sacraments. How have you experienced Jesus in and through these experiences? Make an intentional plan, as you go to Mass to receive the Eucharist or as you receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, to pay close attention to how you experience Jesus’ presence and how you hear His voice speaking in and through your life.

With your friends, who may or may not be Catholic, start a challenge to be the best that you can be. Challenge each other to go out of your way to help one person you normally wouldn’t a week, to be helpful to your family in a way that you aren’t asked to during the week, and to post a message of positivity and kindness on your social media page at least once during the week. At the end of the week, with your friends, discuss how the presence of Christ was experienced during these activities.
Baptism is the gateway sacrament, which means it opens the doors to receiving many gifts and sacraments which will give us everything we need to live courageously as Christians. One of these gifts is sanctifying grace, which is similar to a superpower—it can never be taken away and it allows us the capacity to act with the level of love like Jesus did. That is no small thing, especially when we look at the heroic actions of the saints!

Grace is a gift that God gives to us so that we can respond to him and become all that we are made to be. Think of a mighty king who bestows on his knight the gift of a great sword. The knight needs a sword, but the king gives him a sword to suit his height, the right weight, balance—he is given exactly what he needs to carry out his calling. The gift of grace that God gives to us is like this, it disposes us to love others by wanting what is best for them and disposes our soul to receive this love from God.

**Sample Script:**

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**RELATES TO JESUS:**

Jesus’ ascension to the Father brought forth the Holy Spirit, who comes upon each individual who is baptized. The Holy Spirit inspires and strengthens us to seek and practice the virtues so that we might each live like Christ.

**RELATES TO MY FAITH:**

We are each called to be saints and to be holy. While we are right in practicing the virtues in our daily life, the virtues are a gift first of the Holy Spirit that we need to ask for and to be open to receiving from God.
There is something left, once a person is Baptized and receives this kind of gift from God. The grace in us will not act by itself, we must act on it! God does give us what we need, but we must choose whether or not we will use that gift to carry out our calling to live as a Christian, imitating Christ! If we do not practice in the day to day of living with our family and going to school and sports the virtues such as courage, patience, and love, it would be as if the knight put his sword in his closet after it was given to him. By our Baptism we are given new life in Christ, so it would be strange to live and act as if we didn’t have it.

We have good examples of those who accepted the gifts of their Baptism to become who they are meant to be--the saints! Our Church recognizes those who lived courageously as Christians to stand as role models for us. Not just people to look at and admire, but to be inspired by! Each saint lived in different circumstances and different times, but each trusted in the gifts God had given them to help them become the saint they were meant to be. We never want to forget what God has already given us by our Baptism!

**Questions:**
- What is grace, and what is the special kind of grace that we receive at Baptism?
- What does grace dispose us to?
- What virtues do you already have that show the new life you have with Christ?
- What is a virtue that you would like to practice?
- What does it mean that Baptism is a gateway sacrament?

**Activities:**
Briefly read or research the life of a saint who heroically demonstrated the gifts we receive in baptism to remind you of the life you are capable of! Some great examples are St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Joan of Arc, St. Isaac Jogues, St. Therese of Lisieux.

Think of the virtues; pick one and focus on that for the week and see what is different in your life when you live focused on that virtue.
Sample Script:

We learned that when we receive the sacrament of Baptism, we receive sanctifying grace which we can act on. It allows us to better imitate Jesus by our actions throughout our whole life. When striving to imitate him, we are going to encounter some challenges. How Jesus treated others with love and respect when he lived was a shock to many, and though society changes with the times, the way that Jesus lived is still difficult for some to understand. People may ask you why you are Catholic or judge you even when you treat others well, or perhaps you will have to choose whether or not you will go along with your friends when they want to do something that you know isn’t right. These things take a lot of courage, and God knows that. He gave us the sacrament of Confirmation just so that we have what we need to face these challenges.

Confirmation literally confirms our Baptism; it strengthens the graces we received in Baptism. In Confirmation we also receive an indelible mark, similar to the mark we receive in Baptism, yet by this second mark Jesus seals us with the Spirit, “clothing you with power from on high” (CCC 1304). This is what that...
power gives you: It roots you more deeply as an adopted son or daughter of Christ, meaning that familial bond between you and God is deeper. It unites you more firmly to Christ and increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in you (which are wisdom, understanding, knowledge, fortitude/courage, piety, counsel, and awe of God), and gives you strength from the Holy Spirit himself to defend the faith, and share it with others.

With this sacrament, the Church also gives us important ways of exercising the Gifts that we receive from the Holy Spirit called the spiritual works of mercy, and the corporal works of mercy. The spiritual works of mercy involve giving non-tangible gifts to others, and they are:

- Teaching the ignorant
- Counsel the doubtful
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Admonish the sinner
- Bear wrongs patiently
- Forgive all injuries
- Pray for the living and the dead

The corporal works of mercy, which involve giving physical necessities to others, are:

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Visit the sick
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bury the Dead

While these are gifts we can give to others, we need these ways of giving to help ourselves become holy. They teach us to love better and understand Jesus’ love for people. Though these may seem intimidating and are certainly challenging, we have all the tools to accomplish these works by Confirmation with the power that Jesus clothes us with.

**Questions:**

- Which sacrament is specifically meant to help us face the challenges we encounter when we strive to imitate Jesus?
- What does the sacrament of Confirmation strengthen?
- What are all of the things we receive in Confirmation, including who we receive?
- What are the corporal and spiritual works of mercy? Why do we need to take these actions?
- Why do you think the corporal works of mercy are just as important as the spiritual ones?

**Activities:**

Ask your parents and godparents to tell you about their confirmation and have them describe to you how they live out the graces received from this Sacrament.

Reflect on the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. Choose two of these (one Spiritual and one Corporal) that are challenging to you and make a real effort to do these Works of Mercy.
We all know someone who has suffered, it might be what we have experienced in the past or present. Everyone suffers at one time or another, and some suffer more than others and some less. God did not create a suffering, nor did he ever want man to suffer. He created man, Adam and Eve, in Paradise in the Garden of Eden. With the sin of Adam and Eve came disharmony, death, temptation and suffering. Sin brought suffering into the world.

God is not the cause of sin but he allowed it to be brought into the world because he wanted people to have free will where we could decide to love God or turn from him. In the same way God does not cause suffering but he allows it. Why would God allow suffering?

God would never allow an evil such as suffering if he could not bring about an even greater good from it. An example is that suffering can sometimes be a teaching tool to us, a reminder that we cannot rely on ourselves.
but that we have God to rely on. Experiencing suffering has been an opportunity for many people to open their heart to God, to trust him or even to begin believing in him. God wants heaven for all people, so he brings them closer to himself so that he can lead them there and the disruption of suffering can be a person's first step in his direction.

Beyond that Jesus made it possible that we might have a kind of power in suffering. Jesus suffered and died for the sake of others taking the sins of everyone onto himself. When we suffer, if we choose to accept it, not to fight it or ignore it but bear it patiently, we can unite our suffering to Jesus suffering on the cross. We say," Jesus, I know you understand suffering because you did it for me, so now I choose to offer mine to you." This is incredibly powerful and it gives meaning to our suffering because we can merit the grace Jesus earned for us. We can offer our suffering to Jesus for ourselves or even for another person's sake to help them reach heaven.

For this reason Pope Saint John the Great said. "Don't waste your suffering!" It can be a gift that unites us to Christ and helps others, if we let it. This can be very hard sometimes, but Jesus accepts even the littlest offerings that we can make. And they can still make a big difference.

Questions:
- Is God the cause of suffering?
- What does God do in regards to suffering?
- Why would God allow suffering?
- What did Jesus make possible for us when it comes to suffering that we experience?
- How can suffering be a gift?

Activities:
Suffering can be a difficult thing to talk about, but I encourage you to talk with your parents, or to journal if you have experienced any kind of suffering. If you have experienced it in the past, tell God about how it affected you, and pray that you can soon see the good that will come from it. If you are suffering now, tell him what you would want to offer it up for. If you cannot give it all to him now, begin by offering to him what you can.

Think if there is someone you know, a friend or family member who is suffering now. God grants that our prayers or little sacrifices can be of help to those we offer them for. Think if there is a prayer, perhaps the rosary or a chaplet that you would want to pray for that person, or a little sacrifice like giving up your favorite dessert this week as an offering to God on their behalf.
At the Last Supper, when Jesus shared a meal with his apostles before he was put to death, he took the bread of their meal and said, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Eucharist. The Eucharist is Jesus himself, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. When he says, “Do this in remembrance of me”, he is not only asking us to remember him and what he did. He commands, “Do this..” telling his apostles to celebrate this memorial of his life, death, and Resurrection. From the beginning the Church has remained faithful to his command. In the book of Acts in the New Testament it is described, “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

Just as the command was given to the apostles—the first bishops—only a validly ordained bishop or priest (by permission from the bishop) can validly consecrate the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus at Mass. By the sacrament of Holy
Orders the priest or bishop can act “in persona Christi” which means “in the person of Christ” offering the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Jesus instituted the Eucharist so that he could remain close to us, and remain fully present to us even though he no longer lives on earth like we do. He wants to be intimately united with us, so the power of the words and the action of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, makes present under the appearance of bread and wine Christ’s body and blood, his sacrifice offered on the cross.

It was on the first day of the week, Sunday, that Christians came together and broke bread (Acts 20:7), because the sacrifice of Jesus and the gift of the Eucharist was a fulfillment of Passover—a feast celebrated by the Jewish people remembering when all of the firstborn sons were saved from the final plague that struck Egypt and the Pharaoh, when the Spirit literally passed over their homes. The Spirit did not enter the homes of the Israelites who took an unblemished lamb, killed it and spread the blood on their doorposts, and then the family ate the whole lamb together; thus the sons were saved. This was a BIG DEAL to the Israelites, that they were saved and then freed from Egypt under slavery of the Pharoah by God’s power, and they continued to celebrate this feast of Passover even unto when Jesus lived. Jesus is the new passover lamb—unblemished because he never sinned, his blood poured out on the cross like the lamb’s blood on the door post, and the family ate the whole lamb together, just like we receive all of Jesus when we consume the Eucharist. And by the lamb’s blood and eating the lamb the sons were saved—just as we receive salvation by Jesus’ blood and flesh. This great fulfillment of the Passover is what we celebrate at Easter! Everything that Jesus did in the Paschal Mystery—his suffering, death, and Resurrection. This is why Easter is the greatest feast that we celebrate!

Questions:

- What did Jesus institute at the Last Supper?
- What is the Eucharist?
- How is Jesus’ sacrifice and the institution of the Eucharist a fulfillment of the feast of Passover?
- What Sacrament allows others to act “in persona Christi”?
- What do we do to prepare for receiving the Eucharist at Mass?

Activities:

To jog your memory, read about the Israelites in Egypt when they have almost been freed from slavery and witness the final plague. Find the elements that correlate with Jesus as the new lamb. Exodus 12:1-36.

Even though we cannot see Jesus as he is until we reach heaven, he is nevertheless fully present in the Eucharist, veiled under the appearance of bread and wine. Take a little time to reflect and journal about the fact that you receive Jesus during Mass. What is a way you could be more fully present during Mass (paying better attention, participating in the prayers or even some personal prayer time before or after Mass) while he is fully present to you?
We profess that the one God is a unity of three persons we call the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We can distinguish the actions of each person of the Trinity in the Mass, but it is important to remember that God is one, and when one person of the Trinity acts, he does so in union with the other two. For example, Jesus never acts without the Father and Holy Spirit. As we look at the Mass, let’s take some time to identify how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are at work.

The Father is the source of all blessings. The nature and extent of God’s blessings upon humanity and all of creation is revealed in the liturgy of the Church. We give praise and adoration to God the Father and acknowledge Him as the origin of all the divine, life giving actions throughout human history (the events of salvation history). We refer to God’s divine action as blessings, because they strengthen our spiritual life. In Jesus, His incarnate Son, the Father fills us with blessings. Through Jesus the Father pours upon us the gift of the Holy Spirit. The prayers of the Mass are addressed to the Father, who receives both the prayer and the sacrifice.

Sample Script:

RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus offers the sacrifice of Himself in the Eucharist so that He might be intimately close to each soul who worthily receives Him at Mass.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
The Catholic Church does well to safeguard the doctrine of the Eucharist through the Apostolic Succession of her bishops who are charged with the holy duty of maintaining right teaching to all the faithful.
Jesus is our High Priest and one true mediator. He unites our prayer to his as he offers himself as our sacrifice. Jesus instituted the Sacraments and acts through them. The Sacraments aren’t just prayer rituals. Jesus is at work in each one, his words making each rite effect or cause what they celebrate. For instance, in baptism we celebrate cleansing from original sin and entrance into the Church as a unique member of the Body of Christ, and what actually happens during the Sacramental rite is that the person is cleansed from sin and become a member of the Church. Christ acts to bestow his grace upon us.

The Holy Spirit is the gift the Father and Jesus bestow upon the Church. In the Creed we proclaim that the Holy Spirit is the giver of life. That phrase expresses our understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the liturgy, preparing our hearts and minds to encounter God in Word and Sacrament, unifying us and forming us into a community. As members of the Body of Christ, the Holy Spirit works to bring us into an ever deepening relationship with Jesus, and unites us to his mission. The Holy Spirit sanctifies. During the Eucharistic Prayer in a prayer called the Epiclesis, the priest asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine to transform them into the Body and Blood of Christ, and to make holy all who will receive them. The Holy Spirit is the memory of the Church, and it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that the Paschal mystery is made present to us in the Mass.

What about our role in the Mass? Every person in the assembly, whether lay person or clergy has a role. The priest leads the prayer “in persona Christi”, in the person of Christ. This is a unique function of the grace of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The priest intercedes on our behalf before the Father, offering our prayers as part of the sacrifice for the people. Only a priest who is validly ordained can confect the Eucharist, changing the bread and wine into the body and Blood of Jesus. Anyone can say those words, but only by the grace of ordination do the words have effect because it is Jesus himself who speaks the words of consecration speaking though the ordained priest. Valid ordination means that the Sacrament was conferred by a Bishop, a successor of the apostles. (Apostolic succession).

Often lay people fulfill a specific role at Mass, perhaps as an altar server, a lector or a Eucharistic Minister. But every person present has a role, and that is to be a fully present as possible, speaking the prayers, performing the gestures (e.g. genuflecting, kneeling, the Sign of the Cross), opening our minds and hearts to the presence of God in Word and Sacrament, and giving to God all that we are, the totality of our being. The Catechism calls that full, conscious, active participation. Passivity is not a correct response to the presence and gift of God! Our participation in Mass or the earthly liturgy is truly a preparation and participation in the eternal heavenly liturgy with God, Mary, the saints, and the angels. Because of our communion with God, Who transcends time and space, we are ever connected to the Church Triumphant (those in Heaven) and all souls worshiping God through the Mass on earth (the Church Militant).

Here, we find the Eucharist as the source and summit of our faith. Jesus, as we know from the Gospel stories, demands a choice to either follow him or not. If we follow him, we choose unity by seeking to grow in our relationship with him and the Church, keeping Jesus present in the Eucharist as our center and from which everything else flows. This is why we need to frequently go to Mass and receive the Eucharist as much as possible, especially at Easter to celebrate his resurrection. The Eucharist is where we find our closeness with God. Being in union with our Eucharistic Lord allows us to encounter God more fully in our lives, find our vocation as his son or daughter, and work to build-up his Kingdom here on earth by living the life that he has for us. It is comforting to know that when we do this intentionally, we have all of Heaven cheering us on!
Questions:

- How is God the Father seen in the liturgy?
- How is Jesus seen in the liturgy?
- How is the Holy Spirit seen in the liturgy?
- What role do you have in the liturgy?
- In what ways does the Eucharist inspire you to grow in and live your faith?

Activities:

Describe how you see the work of each member of the Trinity during Mass. Compare and contrast these workings on a sheet of paper and look for the individual work of each Person of the Trinity when you go to Mass.

At Mass, watch the different roles of the various people with "a part" in the Mass. What are these roles and what do you notice about them? Place yourself in each of these roles. What could you see yourself doing in serving the Church and God?
What is most important to you in your life? Maybe your first few thoughts go to your sports, your favorite hobbies, your school, or your friends and family. Looking into how you invest your time is a good indicator of what’s important to you. When you put a lot of time into something, it’s probably because you consider it very important. When we care about something, we put our time and energy into it, because we care about it, perhaps even more than we care about ourselves. We want this endeavor to express a quality that leads to growth and to our personal fulfillment. One example might be a businessman who really cares about his business. He puts time and energy into managing his staff to make sure that they are taken care of and that they work hard so that the business can succeed and can benefit people. If you care about your pet, you make sure to take him out for exercise and that he’s well fed. If you care about your relationship with a friend you make sure that you spend time together, because you enjoy being with this person and you want the relationship to grow. It’s important to set aside time for the things we care about.

Sample Script:

RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus modeled perfectly the need to be in strong relationship with God; being God Himself He didn’t do things on His own but regularly reached out in prayer for guidance and strength.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
Saints in the tradition of the Church are the holy disciples who show all what a foundation in God means and that when we surrender our life to Him, we are a living witness of the living God to all that we encounter.
Our relationship with God is the most important part of our lives. When we put that first before anything else, God is able to help us put everything into its proper place. When we place God at the center of our lives and hearts, we are able to be the best version of ourselves in everything we do and everything we do has the right direction. Imagine you were going on a big trip but you didn’t know the way or where you were trying to go. You go up to someone and ask “Hey can you help me get where I need to go?” They would probably ask, “Well where do you need to go?” If you’re asking for directions, you probably want to know where you’re going. If you don’t know that, you just end up wandering around without a real aim or purpose. Once we know where we’re going, we can figure out all the other steps. In our case, we are all made for God. God made us out of pure love so that we can be with Him and experience the wonders of His goodness for eternity. Our destination is Heaven. God knows the way, He is the way, and He wants to give us all the help we need to get there. By fostering our relationship with God, He guides us to become the incredible men and women He made us to be, and He guides us to our Heavenly home.

So we know that when something is important to us, we invest more time into it because we care about it, and we know that the goal of our whole life is foster our relationship with God so that we can reach Heaven. We need to make sure that we’re prioritizing our time with God, giving it the importance, it deserves in our lives. That way, all the other elements of our life can fall into place. Jesus knows how hard of a task this is. He experienced all of life’s hardships and struggles when He lived His life on earth. God knows what you need and the desires of your heart more intimately than anyone else, even more than you do. That’s why He made sure we would never have to walk this path alone. He made human beings to be together, to love one another, to work together, to be in community. Jesus established the Church, so that we would have all the teaching, guidance, fellowship, and nourishment that we could ever possibly need. We encounter Jesus in all the Sacraments. Attending these frequently allows us to build a growing relationship with Christ. Just as we frequently nourish ourselves with good food to build up our strength, we frequently partake of the gifts God offers us in the Sacraments so that He can heal our wounds and build up our spiritual strength. The more we visit our friends and relatives and the more we open ourselves up to them, the stronger that relationship becomes. In the same way, attending the Sacraments of the Church fervently and frequently allows us to strengthen our relationship with Christ. That is why the Church directs us to attend Mass at least once a week on Sunday, because the Church knows we need it. Filled with the power of the Sacraments, we seek to love and support each other, in order to lift one another up when we fall down.

The members of the Church take time for personal prayer. Each of us is called to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. God made each of us entirely unique and God loves each of us uniquely. Spending time in prayer with God allows us to sort through our lives, to see ourselves as God sees us, to seek His guidance, wisdom, and comfort. Prayer is our constant aid throughout any tribulation or struggle and an ever-open door to give God thanks for His many blessings. We also come together as a community, as a Church family. Just as we are meant to build one another up in our work, we also bolster each other through communal prayer. Even in prayer, we are not meant to be alone. God has given us as a gift to one another. He has given you as a gift to the people around you, and the people around you are meant to be a gift to you. Each member of the Church forms the body of Christ, with Jesus as the head that guides us. We as His hands and feet that do His work in the world. As a Church, we reach out to those in need through works of mercy. We constantly turn to God in prayer to make sure we are on the right path, following His will, and ask for His grace to strengthen us.
These simple acts of great love are what make Christians stand out in the world. We live in the joy of the Good News, knowing that even though we are sinners in need of repentance, God has won the war for us so that we can enter Heaven. We accept His forgiveness, His mercy, His grace, so that little by little He can shape us into the Saints we were made to be. All we need to go is keep giving God the time. We need to keep making Him the most important part of our lives, because He is. When we accept the gifts that Jesus has given us through the Church: the Sacraments, the grace of prayer, our brothers and sisters in Christ, we open ourselves to do His work in the world and we find ourselves walking the straight path to Heaven.

**Questions:**

- What is the indicator of what is important in our lives?
- Why is it important to know what our destination is?
- What is our destination?
- How do we reach our destination?
- What does the life of the Christian look like?

**Activities:**

Spend some time taking a look at how you spend your time during the day and during the week. What does this tell you about what you consider important? What areas of your life do you see yourself doing well in your journey with Christ? What are some areas where you need to make more room for Him to join you?

Reflect on how you’ve been participating in the Sacraments and the life of the Church. If you find you’ve been doing well, keep doing what you’re doing and be on the lookout for ways you can grow! If you find you’ve fallen down in some areas, see if you can ask for help to get back up and work on taking little steps to rebuild that area of your relationship with God whether it’s returning to a Sacrament after an absence, making time for personal prayer, or participating actively in communal prayer.
God has made you with amazing talents and gifts. He has given you a unique purpose in the world that no one else has. He wants you to use your talents to live up to your purpose and make the world a better place. It might take a long time to find our purpose in life, some people don’t figure out what they’re supposed to do until they are much older than you or me. What we can do in the meantime is focus on growing in our understanding of how to live a good life based on the right moral choices.

How do we make sure we are making the right choices and forming good habits? The first thing we need to do is make sure we have a well-formed conscience. God speaks to us through our conscience to help guide us and keep us on the right path. Depending on the choices we make, we can have a well-formed conscience or a mal-formed conscience which can make it easier or harder to hear God’s voice. When something hasn’t been used for a long time or if something has been used in the wrong way, eventually it doesn’t work like it’s supposed to. If you are trying to use a stick like a hammer, eventually it will probably get broken. If you leave food out too long without eating it, eventually it goes bad and it’s not good to eat anymore.

RELATES TO JESUS:
Jesus knows well the reality of temptation and sin and how repeated sin can lead to vice. He comes to set us free from the chains of sin through His saving grace. In humble prayer, we are to call out to Jesus to send His Holy Spirit upon us to protect and guide us. This is a prayer that does not go unheard!

RELATES TO MY FAITH:
The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a gift from the Church who knows her children well and that in our life we will make mistakes. Like any good parent, God loves a repentant heart and does not hesitate to run out to might him.
A mal-formed conscience happens when we don’t use our conscience, or we don’t use it like we’re supposed to. This makes it easy to sin, or we can even start thinking that the wrong choices are actually good for us. When we repeat sin and make a habit of it, it becomes the opposite of a virtue, which is called a vice. A vice is like a part of us that becomes twisted and misshapen. The good parts of us that God created become deformed and aren’t used like they are supposed to be. Vices lead us to commit what are called the seven deadly sins. These seven sins are: pride, greed, lust, wrath, gluttony, envy, and sloth. These sins are called deadly, because they destroy the goodness of our human nature and those around us. They lead us to living lives that are below the amazing purpose God made us with. This is why a mal-formed conscience is so dangerous.

Just like exercising our body and eating healthy foods, we need to make sure we exercise our conscience to help it to grow and that we feed it good spiritual foods so that it can stay strong. We can exercise our conscience by practicing virtue and making the right choices repeatedly. We can feed our conscience good spiritual foods by making sure we are praying often and learning about good things that feed our soul like reading from the Bible, taking in good media that teaches us about truth, or anything that helps you to learn how to be a better follower of Christ.

The moral teaching of the truth is based on truth, specifically the truth that God made each and every one of us with dignity and purpose. Because of this truth, the Church harshly condemns acts that do not honor the dignity of the people around us. It condones acts such as murder, inappropriate sexual acts, abortion, undue violence, and consuming harmful substances from drugs to tv or movies that are based on false or inappropriate messages. The Church does not teach on these subjects for no reason, or because it wants to make life difficult, or even because it does not want you to be happy. Everything the Church teaches is meant to elevate the dignity of the human person. The Church wants you to be truly happy based on things that fulfill you and lead to eternal happiness with God in Heaven. We need to constantly remind ourselves of God’s great love for us, remembering that He made you and me as incredible beings with amazing purpose. Once we realize that, it is easier to apply this to the other people in our lives, realizing that they are made with the same love and purpose with which God created us. In this context, the teachings of the Church make more sense and form a cohesive, whole message lifting up the dignity of the human person. We need to continuously learn and educate ourselves, devoting our thoughts to the issues of our time, so that we can know what is truly good and supportive of the dignity of God’s creation.

Our personal moral education is the responsibility of every human being. We have the capacity to learn right from wrong and if we neglect to do so, we are choosing to live up to the amazing purpose God created us with. We stop ourselves from being able to truly make the world a better place, because we are not educated on what the right thing to do is. There are times when we act in ignorance which can excuse us from the moral responsibility of our action. If I throw a ball, not knowing somebody is about to turn the corner and walk right in the path of what I am throwing, it doesn’t make sense to condemn me for hitting that person with a ball. I truly did not know that I would hurt somebody. This is called invincible ignorance, where you are not at fault. However, if you choose not to check and see if people are in the way of where you are throwing, you are neglecting to do something that you can and should be doing in order to make the right decision of whether or not to throw the ball. In that case, I would be at fault, because I could have prevented anyone from being hurt by looking first. This is called vincible ignorance, when you can and should know something important to a moral act, but you choose to neglect to know it.

We are all on a journey of learning about truth, morality, and how to be the best version of ourselves.
We need to keep asking for advice from wise counselors and teachers. Whenever we have a question, we can and should always seek the answer by devoting time, thought, and research into finding the answer. Jesus gave us the Church as a gift so we would always have been to learn from and support us, as well as a wellspring of knowledge to draw from. Christ is always there to help us with His grace. He wants us to grow in virtue and wisdom so we can live up to the amazing purpose He created us with.

Questions:

- What is a well-formed versus a mal-formed conscience? How do we form our consciences well?
- What is vice? What are the seven deadly sins?
- What is the moral teaching of the Church based on?
- What is vincible and invincible ignorance?
- Why is it important to continuously educate ourselves on moral matters?

Activities:

Write out a list of questions you have always had about the Catholic Church. Pick one or two that stick out to you as the ones you are most excited to figure out. Take time this week to research the answers by asking people you trust and looking into resources of the Church (documents, the Catechism, the YouCat, Scripture, etc).

Research the seven deadly sins. What do each of them mean? How do they keep you from being the best version of yourself?
Living the Christian life is no easy task. We are blessed to have a number of things on our side: we are created to be with God, to desire Him and be in His image and likeness, know we are dignified and worthy and that He Himself wants to walk alongside us through each and every moment of our life. We have Jesus Christ who is the supreme example of how to follow the will of God and how to love our neighbor as ourselves. We have the Holy Spirit who offers us the grace to adhere to the Trinity through the Sacramental life of the Church. We have a whole host of teachings and holy men and women who show us how to live holiness, even overcoming great sins and trials to do so. Yet the Christian way of life is not easy. Why?

We live in a world that is, and truly has always been, poised against Christianity. Our world, since the dawn of humanity, has had to deal with the wickedness of sin, which distorts and throws everything off of center. Christianity calls for a radical center of operation being first in God and then in the other, these being placed ahead of the self. The world is all out of sorts, calling for a center in the prideful self with the other being in there if convenient and God often tucked away in a pocket, to be brought out only when needed at best. When we live in this world and see a fair number, if not a majority, of peers and friends and even family

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**RELATES TO JESUS:**

Jesus is our example of a Christian, who lived a life totally focused on God and carrying out His will that sought to bring forth the best in others by loving them in thought, word, and deed.

**RELATES TO MY FAITH:**

We are called to model our life after our Lord by being people of worship, prayer, and service, coming to know and love God and offering His love and mercy to all that we meet.
members living the worldly life, Christianity becomes very hard to live. But, we know, we are called to live this Christian way of life. It is what we are baptized into. It is what we know that brings about fulfillment in this life. It is not impossible to live, many have done it and many have even excelled at it, reaching holiness and becoming Saints. So, if Christianity is so hard to live, how do we be like those holy men and women and live this Christian life in a world that is opposed to it?

The Christian must be a person of prayer. Prayer is that critical communication piece with the Divine that opens one’s heart and mind to listen to the voice of God in our life and invites God to know about all that is going on in one’s life. Prayer begins as simply as waking up in the morning and saying, in a heartfelt way, “Thank you God for another day”. And just like a new relationship, we need to seek to pray often, many times and as often as possible, to come to know God and what He has in store for us. Most especially, regular attendance at Sunday Mass opens ourselves to worship the Divine Other and not ourselves, while also intimately receiving Jesus Christ and His very Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

The Christian must be a good steward. Giving our time, talent, and treasure in service to the Church for her well-being and building-up is a pivotal point of selflessness that continues the mission of the Church and keeps the selfish ego at bay. Answering the call to be a good steward often comes from one’s devotion to Mass and prayer, recognizing that you yourself are a member of a living Body, a member of the Church, that in order to live needs to have the gifts and talents of yourself in order to continue on and inspire the faith of others.

The Christian is active in the works of mercy. The Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy point to the reality that loving God and loving God through the love we show our neighbor is at the center and helps to keep the selfish “I” in its proper place. Encountering others in their need and doing what one can through the works of mercy to assist our brothers and sisters shows the love God has for His people, especially the downtrodden and those most in need.

The Christian is an evangelizer. Being an evangelizer, or sharing the Gospel message of God’s love for us, is an important part of being a Christian in the world. We can probably all create a list of family and friends who are in need of hearing the message of the Gospel. In order to keep the mission of the Church alive, we must proclaim Jesus and Him Crucified to all by how we live and by what we say. The light that is Jesus penetrates into the darkness found in the self-absorbed world, bringing hope and fulfillment to a place in which none existed.

By learning, engaging, and practicing these hallmarks of the Christian life, we live a life
Questions:

- How does the Trinity walk with us in living our Christian life?
- Why is the world opposed to what we believe in as Christians?
- How do you remain Christian in a world where the news, friends, and even family live against the beliefs of the faith?
- Why is prayer so important in living a Christian life?
- How do the Works of Mercy keep us focused on Jesus Christ in our life?

Activities:

Find 15 minutes of quiet prayer and consider what a Christian looks like or what a Christian does to be a Christian. What characteristics does he/she have? What practices does he/she perform? Write these out and find what characteristics that you have. What characteristics are you strong in? What do you do well? What could you grow in?

Part of our Christian call is to spread the Gospel as an evangelizer, sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ by how we live our lives. Make a plan that includes how you can be a witness to Christ by your life when you are at home, at school, at your extracurricular involvements, etc. Write down and plan to practice how you speak, how you act, how you relate to others and pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help you carry this plan out in love of God and love of neighbor.

that is a witness to the reality that is Jesus Christ. And while it is true that the Christian life is not easy, we are assured that our efforts will be graced by the One who conquers all things and brings them, including your life, into fulfillment.
We know that our faith in God is a gift. It’s something God gives us that we choose to accept and try to help others to accept as well. This gift of believing as well as trusting in God spurs and sustains our prayer life. We truly know God is real through both faith and reason. We also believe that He is a loving God who cares for us and hears our prayers. With this confidence, we are given the courage to reach out to God in prayer, to speak with Him, ask for His help, and listen to how He wants to guide us in our lives.

Prayer also strengthens our faith. The more we come to experience God’s goodness through His presence in our prayer lives, the less we are tempted to doubt Him or how much He loves us. The more we open ourselves to Him, the more He is able to give to us, and so the deeper we go in prayer, letting Him into more of our lives, the more He can fill us with faith, hope, and love.

Our faith is also confirmed and strengthened by the community of the Church. The witness of the Saints and people God has placed into our lives help to confirm God’s work in mankind. Perhaps someone speaks just the right words to you when you need them most or show up when you least expect them. Perhaps seeing someone sacrifices their own time and energy for a good cause inspires you because you know good people are out there trying to follow God’s will. Maybe just seeing other people attend Mass on Sunday reminds you that you are not alone in your journey to grow closer to God. Praying together as a community helps us to build each other up, to express our love for

**RELATES TO MY FAITH:**

Our active presence in the Church, particularly in our regular participation with the Sacraments, builds us up spiritually and so enhances our prayer life to hear God’s voice.

**RELATES TO JESUS:**

Jesus taught that prayer is central to the life of the disciples as this strengthens our faith and reliance on the Father to help us overcome all things.

**Sample Script:**

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one another, and to increase the faith of the whole world.

Every single person is made with incredible purpose! Maybe they are not made to change the whole world, but every one is capable of changing the lives of the people around them by using the gifts that God made them with. Every person is called to holiness: that means they are “set apart” from the evil and base things of the world. They choose the right path even when it is God. They choose to stand with God instead of the things of the world that only bring passing pleasures. Choosing to be holy is never easy. All of the Saints who lived holy lives had to struggle and ask for help from God and from their neighbors.

This struggle against the temptations of the world is often called “spiritual warfare.” It’s the battle that takes place in our hearts and in the hearts of the people around us. It’s a battle against our own temptations and the forces that would try to lure us away from God and our heavenly home. This can seem like an overwhelming task that maybe we don’t always feel like we can accomplish. The good news is: everyone can be holy, and that means you too! God does not call us to anything that we cannot handle or that He can not help us to do, and He has called everyone to holiness, including you. That means you just need to accept His help, follow Him, and do what He asks you to do. When you do this and ask for His help, He will always help you.

God will never abandon you or let you down. That is what a life of prayer means. It means spending time with God, asking for His help, and trusting that He will hear and answer your prayers. It just starts with doing one good deed a day with God’s help. Little by little those good acts of love and mercy start to change our lives and the lives of the people around us, overcoming any evil in our hearts, and bringing us closer to the Kingdom of God.

Questions:
- How does prayer come from faith?
- How does prayer strengthen our faith?
- How does communal prayer help our faith?
- What is spiritual warfare?
- What does a life of prayer look like? How does it lead us to holiness?

Activities:
Spend a little bit of time in prayer today and ask God for one good deed you can do to show love to someone around you, then go and do it! The next time someone inspires you with something they say or do, make sure to point it out to them and thank them. Say a prayer of thanksgiving to our Lord as well for working through that person.

Whenever you feel a temptation or a moment of spiritual warfare coming up against you this week, say a simple prayer like the “Hail Mary” the “St. Michael Prayer” or simply repeat “Jesus, I trust in you” until you feel the temptation subsides. Find something good to do in place of this temptation, even if it’s just returning to your schoolwork, hugging a family member, writing a nice note to a friend, or saying a prayer of thanks to God. If you happen to fail, don’t beat yourself up. Getting back up and trying again is what holiness is made of!
Of the seven sacraments Christ instituted for the good of Church two are classified as the sacraments of service (or vocation). These are the sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders. They are called “service” because they exist to be of service to the Church and to society.

Just as God has created each person unique with specific gifts and talents, God calls each person to a specific state in life, a vocation, to which their gifts and talents are ordered toward. We can choose our state in life, but God calls us to the state where he knows we will be happiest and fulfilled. Each vocation serves our number one calling in life to holiness, in that our vocation helps us to become who we are created to be.

The most common calling is to a vocation of married life, and when lived well beautifully represents the love of Trinity. Marriage is a covenant, a binding promise between man and woman where they become each other’s family. This covenant is lifelong – permanent until death – where in the man and woman help each other through life and grow in holiness. Marriage exists for the good of the spouses and the procreation of children who they raise and teach. The love between the Mom, Dad and child mirrors the love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

RELATES TO MY FAITH:

The Catholic Church teaches that our participation in these Sacraments are an emptying of ourselves so that the other might be loved and served throughout our life.

RELATES TO JESUS:

Jesus intends to never leave His people, and so it follows that our commitment to lovingly serve the other in these Sacraments, which are fueled by the grace Jesus won on the Cross, is meant to be lived all of our life long.
A heroic vocation that God calls some men to is the priesthood. This role is vital for the Church – without priests, we would not have access to the Sacraments! A priest’s main role is giving the Sacraments acting “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. Only a priest or Bishop can do this, and it is because they receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Like a wedding cake, there are 3 tiers of Holy Orders: 1. Bishop 2. Priest and 3. Deacon. Only the Bishop holds the fullness of the priesthood. A priest who is not a bishop receives the invisible character (or imprint) of “priest” on his soul, but his powers to function as a priest rest with his Bishop who grants his priests “faculties” or permissions to publicly celebrate Mass, hear confessions, preach, serve as an exorcist or in some additional capacity. While the Deacon assists the priest in the liturgy and preaches. Each of these roles is necessary and a blessing for the Church and the person who receives this Sacrament.

Another state of life that God calls some too is religious life. This is open to both men and women, and it allows a person to put greater focus on their relationship with God on earth. Instead of making vows to another person (as in marriage) the religious makes vows to God directly and uses their gifts and talents to build God’s kingdom in whatever unique way they are called. It is a severe life of service, often free of many worldly distractions.

The vocation to priesthood or religious life, though less common, also serves as a means to holiness for those called to them and often a very joyful life as well.

Questions:

- What does each vocation serve to help us do?
- What is the marriage covenant? What does the family beautifully represent?
- What does "in persona Christi" mean?
- What are the 3 tiers of Holy Orders?
- What state in life makes vows to God, not to another person?

Activities:

Make a chart of the 3 tiers of Holy Orders, writing what each involves.

Research the lives of either St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Teresa of Calcutta, or another famous religious that you know to learn more about that state of life.
The Church is one wholly united body of Christ. This body does not only encompass those of us who are still here on earth, but it also extends even to those who have passed away, are in Heaven enjoying eternal joy with God and to those who are finishing their journey to Heaven in purgatory. These three “states” of the Church are called the Church Militant (for those still on earth), the Church Suffering (for those in purgatory), and the Church Triumphant (for those who have reached heaven). Just as in life, all of us are at different stages of our journey towards heaven, but we remain united in our love for God and for one another. In the same way, when someone dies in the grace of Christ, they do not become separated from us, but remain a member of the body of Christ.

The Church Militant are called “pilgrims” and “wayfarers” because we are still on our journey towards our heavenly home. Even though we live on earth for this time, you and I were made to be in heaven with our God and our loved ones, enjoying eternal happiness. While we’re still here on earth, we are called to spiritual warfare against an imperfect world that has been corrupted by sin and death. Even though evil and suffering are grave realities we face every day, Christians live in the joy of knowing the war has already been won by Christ. We have the peace and hope in
knowing that even when we suffer the ultimate loss, that is the loss of our lives when we die, that Jesus has merited and promised us eternal life with Him in heaven.

Christians spend our earthly lives preparing to accept this promise by modeling ourselves after Jesus, spreading the Good News of what He has done for us, as well as seeking to make this world more and more like the Kingdom of God. By doing these things, through the Sacramental and missionary life of the Church, we live in the sure hope of becoming Saints when we die.

Some of us when we die still carry sin with us that we haven’t been able to make atonement for. Even though we have died with these “lesser faults” and imperfections, God’s mercy allows for us to still be purified so that we can enter heaven. This state of the Church is called the Church Suffering because they are so close to the glory of heaven, but still have sins and faults that they hold onto. The process of letting go of these sins can be painful, but it is also filled with the hope, peace, and even joy of knowing that these souls are guaranteed to enter heaven after their time of being purified.

The Church’s teaching about purgatory stems from reading Scripture (see 1 Cor 3:15 and 1 Pt 1:7) and from the Tradition given to us from Scripture that teaches us to pray for the dead. We can help the Church Suffering but making sacrifices and praying for them to be able to enter heaven. The Church believes and teaches that we can alleviate their suffering and smooth their way into eternal heavenly joy. Some of us may one day be eternally grateful for receiving these prayers from the Church Militant, and it will be a wonderful day when we can see the souls we have been able to help and who may have helped us.

The Church Triumphant is made of the souls who have reached their final goal of enteral, everlasting bliss in Heaven! As St. Paul says, they have “finished the race” and get to enjoy the fruits Jesus has won for them and of their own hard work done in their lives. Even though the Church might not have declared them capitol “S” Saints, every member of the Church Triumphant is a saint. They “spend their heaven” praying for us and bolstering the holiness of the Church on earth. The Church Triumphant helps us to pray and since they are so close to our Heavenly Father, it is meritorious to ask them for their prayers on our behalf.

Even though the Church is called by different names and can be categorized into three different states, death does not separate us from one another. We all still are able to live and love together by being united under Christ as the head of the mystical body that is the Church. One day we all hope to be together in heaven as the Church Triumphant. Until then, we pray for one another and continue to serve one another as each of us finishes our own race to enjoy happiness with our God forever.
Questions:

- What are the three states of the Church called?
- What do they each represent?
- How do each of the three states help one another?
- How are the three states of the Church united?
- What is Church Suffering?

Activities:

Take some time to write and reflect about what might be keeping you from living a saintly life and entering heaven. Surrender these things to God, knowing He is bigger than any of your sins and faults. Ask Him what He would like you to do to be better. Ask a certain Saint to pray for the help you need.

Think of something that you normally don’t look forward to or enjoy doing like part of your homework, chores, or whatever it may be. Do your best to consciously offer up this activity for the soul in purgatory who needs it most.

Spend some time praying for someone who has passed away, asking that they make it to heaven and join the Church Triumphant! It could be someone you know or someone who has passed away in your parish.