

Prayers, Practices and Religious Literacy Objectives

For Students, Families and Catechists
St. Alphonsus Parish
Chicago, Illinois



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The foundations for this approach

For centuries the living tradition of the faith was handed on principally through the oral tradition. From the earliest times catechesis has relied on the Creed, the sacraments, the Decalogue, and prayers, especially the Our Father, as primary instruments of transmitting the faith. In order to learn the principal truths of the faith, these instruments were easily committed to memory in lieu of textbooks or other printed materials and could be recalled often as the basis of catechetical instruction. From the National Directory for Catechesis (2005), p. 102

One of my favorite passages from Scripture is from Deuteronomy 6. As the Israelites prepare to cross into the Promised Land, they are read to from the Covenant, the Ten Commandments. Then they are told to pass this on to their children. And a technique is offered (among others): put a small scroll into a capsule and place it on the doorposts of their homes and the gates of the cities. This tradition is called a *mezzuzah*. As one goes in and out, one kisses the fingertips and touches the *mezzuzah*. The idea is that one day a toddler will ask, "Why do we do that?" And this opens up the opportunity to tell the child, "This is what we believe, these are the wonderful things God has done for us and this is how we are to live."

Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are at busy or at rest. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

As the *National Directory for Catechesis* mentions, this is precisely the way that faith has always been passed down. Parents have told children, who have told their children. It works. It is why the Jewish tradition is vibrant today, thousands of years after these words from Deuteronomy were first written down.

The elements contained in this booklet have been part of the curriculum for students in the parish and they are certainly nothing new. What is new is that we plan to systematically test the students to make sure that they have acquired the knowledge that constitutes a **basic religious literacy**. Of course, we have other goals in our curriculum. But they need to know the framework and language for the more complex concepts of our faith.

Each student will be expected to know this material as he/she progresses from level to level. It will be taught and tested in class, but it is the responsibility of families to make sure that children know these elements.

Pope John Paul II made a special point of this in his exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (#68) in 1979:

The family's catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable.... Education in the faith by parents, which should begin from the children's tenderest age, is already being given when the members of a family help each other to grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel.

...Christian parents must strive to follow and repeat, within the setting of family life, the more methodical teaching received elsewhere.

Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis.

We can drill and encourage for eight to ten years in class, but nothing replaces the influence and training that children receive in their families.

Why memorization?

While the content of the faith cannot be reduced to formulas that are repeated without being properly understood, learning by heart has had a special place in catechesis and should continue to have that place in catechesis today. "The blossoms, if we may call them that, of faith and piety do not grow in the desert places of a memory-less catechesis. What is essential is that the texts that are memorized must at the same time be taken in and gradually understood in depth, in order to become a source of Christian life on the personal level and the community level." (Catechesi Tradendae, # 55) It should be introduced through a process that, begun early, continues gradually, flexibly, and never slavishly. In this way certain elements of the Catholic faith, tradition, and practice are learned for a lifetime, form a basis for communication, allow people to pray together in a common language, and contribute to the individual's continued growth in understanding and living the faith. From the National Directory for Catechesis (2005), p. 102

We hope that children advance to higher mathematics, learning theory that undergirds the study of other scientific disciplines. But they need to know the multiplication tables. We hope that children enjoy the world of literature and that they communicate gracefully orally and in writing. But first they need to know the rules of grammar and how to spell.

These elements to memorize are not the faith. Faith is a gift that is lived and deepens as one matures. But they are the 'grammar' of faith. They give us a common language and structure. They also connect us to the foundation of our tradition. These elements have been memorized for centuries and centuries for the same reason that we need to - it is the way that we know what our ancestors discovered about what we believe, how we worship and how we live.

How should families use this resource?

- Become acquainted with what your child is covering in class this year.
- Find out what your child knows already.
- Be sure that your child has memorized the material from earlier grades.
 - While we may review or make connections to this material, if your child does not know necessary information, you are responsible for making sure that he or she comes up to grade level.
 - If your child was here for an earlier grade, the material should not be unfamiliar, but your child may need your help to firmly master the material.
 - If your child has skipped years of religious education or is coming into the program later, he or she will need your help to master the earlier material.

Passing on the faith

As we engage in this project together as a faith community, we are participating in a great endeavor. It began around campfires of nomads who believed in the one God, it continued through the great events of the Exodus and the giving of the Covenant. Jesus learned to memorize some of what is contained here along with all the children of his time and he showed us more of God's love for us and how to celebrate this love. The church was given the commission to "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19) We are just the latest chapter in this long story of faith, passing on this treasure to another generation.

Vision for Catechized Students by the end of eighth grade at St. Alphonsus:

Know the meanings of the following and why they are important concepts:

Faith.
Grace.
Being a Christian.

Know the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds and be able to explain the articles in them.

Will know the Nicene Creed by heart.
Will know that God as the creator of the universe.
Will know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, true God and true man.
Will know Jesus' redemptive action of dying and rising for our salvation from sin and death.
Will know that the Spirit is the gift of the Father and the Son.
Will know that the Spirit dwells in and enlivens the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.
Will know our place in the communion of saints with all believers and Mary, the mother of God.
Will know that our destiny is to be risen with Christ and alive with God forever.
Will know what the church teaches about heaven, hell, purgatory and the last judgment.

Be familiar with the Bible and be able to use it for study and prayer.

Be able to distinguish between the Old and New Testaments.
Be able to locate books of the Bible and specific passages.
Be able to tell briefly about the major stories in the Old Testament:

- Creation
- Call of Abraham and covenant with his descendants
- Story of the tribes of Israel, including the story of Joseph
- Captivity in Egypt and liberation in the Exodus under Moses
- The giving of the Law
- The establishment of the monarchy and the stories of David and Solomon
- The importance of the Temple at Jerusalem
- The events of the Exile and return

Be able to tell briefly the story of Jesus' birth, preaching, healings, death and resurrection.

Be able to recount specific stories from Jesus' ministry (including, but not limited to)

- His baptism by John
- Temptations
- Call of disciples
- Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes
- Preaching the necessity of following him to the cross and resurrection
- Miracle of the loaves and the fishes
- Healing of the blind and lame

Prodigal Son
Lost sheep/ lost coin
Lazarus and the rich man
Parable of the Talents
Last Supper - institution of the Eucharist and the washing of the feet
Agony in the Garden
Trial and conviction
Crucifixion
Resurrection and resurrection appearances
Ascension

Be able to tell specific stories from the Acts of the Apostles and the life of Paul:

Pentecost
Journeys of apostles to tell the news of Jesus
Call of Paul
Paul's journeys to various cities and the writing of his letters

Be able to locate the psalms, know how they are used for prayer in the church and have practice using them.

Know about and feel that s/he is a member of the Roman Catholic church.

Will know that the marks of the church are that it is one, holy, Catholic and apostolic and what each of these mean.

Will know the imagery of the church as the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Bride of Christ, the Body of Christ and the People of God.

Will know that the vocation of every Christian believer is to become holy.

Will be able to describe how the holy Spirit is active in the church.

Will be able to describe the church's role to worship God, to spread the Gospel, to serve the world.

Will be able to describe how one prepares for ministry in the church.

Know the name of the parish and archdiocese s/he belongs to.

Know the name of the pastor of the parish and ordinary of the archdiocese.

Know the name of the Pope.

Will be able to describe the respective roles of the Pope, archbishop, pastor.

Will know that the bishops are the successors to the apostles.

Will be able to name the other members of the pastoral staff of the parish.

Will know how the parish is connected to the larger church.

Will know how a Pope is chosen.

Will know how the Roman Catholic Church is related to

Eastern Rite churches

Orthodox churches

Protestant churches

Judaism

Islam

Other faiths

non-believers

Will know what is meant by the 'communion of saints.'

Will be able to describe his/her participation in the communion of saints.

Will be able to describe Mary's place in the communion of saints.

Will be able to describe the church's faith in each of these doctrines about Mary:

Mother of God

Immaculate Conception

Virginal conception of Jesus

Assumption

Will be able to describe the traditions surrounding the apparitions of Mary at

Guadalupe

Lourdes

Fatima

Will be able to explain how and why we ask for the intercession of the saints, particularly Mary.

Will be able to explain the devotion to Mary as Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

Will be able to briefly tell about who the following saints/heroes in the faith are and their importance:

Abraham and Sarah

Isaac and Rebecca

Jacob, Leah and Rachel

Joseph

Moses

Miriam

Aaron

David

Solomon

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Ezekiel

Elizabeth and Zechariah

Joseph

John the Baptist

Peter

Mary Magdalene

Paul

James

John

Perpetua and Felicity

Martin of Tours

Augustine

Francis and Clare

Dominic

Elizabeth of Hungary

Ignatius of Loyola

Teresa of Avila

Thomas More

Vincent de Paul

Martin de Porres

Isaac Jogues and John Brebeuf

Kateri Tekawitha

Alphonsus Ligouri

Elizabeth Seton

Pierre Toussaint

Katharine Drexel

Therese of Lisieux

Francis Cabrini

Maximilian Kolbe

Pope John XXIII

Dorothy Day

Mother Teresa

Pope John Paul II

Their own patron saints for baptism and confirmation

Be familiar with the liturgy of the church

Know the basic structure of the mass: Gathering rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, Dismissal.

Know the responses, prayers and acclamations for the mass.

Know a basic repertoire of sung responses.

Know the four main seasons of the church year: when they occur, what they celebrate, how they are marked by the church.

Will know how Catholic Christians observe Lent.

Will know the laws about abstinence and fasting.

Know what Ordinary time is.

Know what the lectionary is and that we read the Scriptures in a 3-year cycle.
Be able to name the main 'furniture' in the church: altar, ambo, font, tabernacle, shrines.
Be able to name the vestments worn by the priest and/or deacon.
Knows what the following ministers do during the liturgy:

Cantor

Lector

Server

Minister of Communion

Know the regulations of the church about worship on Sundays and holy days.

Know the holy days of obligation in the United States.

Will be able to describe the sacramental life of the church:

Will be able to list the sacraments from memory.

Will be able to describe the outward sign and the inner grace of each sacrament.

Will be able to describe what it means to be a fully initiated Catholic.

Will be able to list the sacraments of initiation.

Will be able to describe what happens to us in baptism.

Will be able to describe what the church means by Original Sin.

Will know who is able to baptize and how.

Will know the difference between infant baptism and those over the age of seven.

Will be able to describe what we say we believe in order to be baptized or to renew our baptism.

Will be able to describe what happens to us in Confirmation.

Will know who is able to confirm and how.

Will be able to list the gifts of the Holy Spirit and discuss how they are used in everyday life.

Will be able to list the fruits of the Holy Spirit and discuss how they can be seen in everyday life.

Will be able to describe what the church believes about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Will be able to define 'transubstantiation.'

Will know the meaning of the word 'Eucharist.'

Will be able to describe how one worthily receives the Eucharist.

Will be able to describe the effects of the Eucharist in the life of a Christian.

Will be able to describe how we show reverence for the Eucharist.

Will know the position of the Catholic church about intercommunion with non-Catholics.

Will be able to describe why sacramental confession is necessary.

Will be able to describe the steps in celebrating the sacrament of penance.

Will be able to describe how to prepare to celebrate the sacrament of penance.

Will be able to describe other ways that less serious sins can be forgiven.

Will be able to describe the sacrament of the anointing of the sick and when it is celebrated.

Will be able to explain why marriage is a sacrament.

Will know that the couple are the ministers of the sacrament.

Will be able to describe how Catholics marry and the requirements to marry.

Will be able to describe what Catholics believe about the indissolubility of marriage.

Will be able to describe what an annulment is and why it is sometimes granted.

Will be able to describe the three levels of holy orders.

Will be able to describe what a deacon, a priest and a bishop do.

Will be able to describe how one prepares for ordination.

Will be able to describe how one is ordained.

Have an appreciation of and be able to engage in the prayer of the church and traditional devotions.

Will know the following prayers by heart:

Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory Be

Hail, Holy Queen

an Act of Contrition

a prayer to say following communion (either the Anima Christi, Prayer of St. Francis, or Take Lord, Receive)

Magnificat

Benedictus

The prayer to the Holy Spirit

Will know how to engage in the Examen at the end of the day.

Will know how to say the Rosary and be able to list each of the mysteries.

Will know how to pray the Stations of the Cross and will be able to identify each one.

Will know the structure of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer of the church.

Will be able to list five common sacramentals and be able to describe how they aid us in prayer.

Will be able to describe why a Christian prays daily.

Will be able to describe the moral tradition of the church:

Will have memorized the Ten Commandments.

Will have memorized the Beatitudes.

Will have memorized the precepts of the church.

Will have memorized the "Law of Love" and be able to relate this to the Commandments.

Will have memorized the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and can give examples of putting each one into practice.

Will be able to describe the moral life in terms of living as a disciple of Christ.

Will be able to describe the moral life in terms of virtues to be lived, not just evils to be avoided.

Will be able to define a grave (mortal) and venial sin and give examples.

Will be able to describe the role of the Spirit in helping to keep us from sin.

Will be able to define the concept of conscience and discuss how one forms one's conscience.

Will be able to give examples of using one's conscience in moral decision making.

Will be able to discuss the relationship between personal action and one's life in the community.

Will be able to discuss the responsibility of each person for the good of the social order.

Will be able to discuss the first commandment and be able to give examples of 'false idols' in our society.

Will be able to discuss the second commandment and be able to give examples of the misuse of God's or Jesus' name.

Will be able to discuss the third commandment:

Will know what keeping the Sabbath means for Jews.

Will know why Christians worship on Sundays.

Will be able to discuss what it means to keep Sundays holy.

Will be able to discuss the fourth commandment:

What it means to respect one's parents.

What it means to respect other lawful authority, including government.

What the obligations are for each person to care for the physical and emotional needs of family members.

Will be able to discuss the fifth commandment:

Why human life is so valued by God.

Why we have no right to take human life through abortion, euthanasia, suicide or assisted suicide, capital punishment.

Why war is always a failure and due to human sin. Why Christians are called to be peacemakers.

Why Christians are obligated to help reduce violence.

Will be able to discuss the sixth commandment:

Why sexuality is a valuable gift from God.

The ends of sexual expression: procreation of children and intimate giving between spouses.

Why all sexual expression is reserved for marriage.

Why pornography, promiscuity and lack of respect for the sexuality of others damages the human community.

Will be able to discuss the seventh commandment:

Why we respect the possessions of others.

Why we need to pay taxes in order to finance common services in our community and nation.

Why everyone is entitled to work for their living.

Why we need to give adequate support for those who can't care for themselves or are unable to find work.

Why we have an obligation to exercise good stewardship of our own money.

Why we have an obligation to share with the poor.

Why we have an obligation to care for the earth.

Will be able to discuss the eighth commandment:

Why honesty is a virtue and lying is a sin.

Why slander and gossip are injurious to other people.

Why we are obliged to speak the truth, even when others don't want to hear it.

Will be able to discuss the ninth and tenth commandments:

Why envy and greed distort the human spirit.

Why envy and greed cause a distorted sense of what one needs.

The difference between what one needs and what one wants.

Curriculum Outline for Each Grade:

The full curriculum for religion at St. Alphonsus is available, if you would like a copy. What follows is a summary of the goals for each level along with the material which will be included in the baseline testing.

Kindergarten The goals of the Kindergarten program are to help young children discover their membership in a larger family, the church. They are introduced to the stories of our tradition in the Bible, the family of the saints and basic prayers. Families are asked to read with their children at home to help reinforce the concepts presented in class.

First Year The goals of the First Year curriculum are to introduce students to a structured study of their faith. The concentration is on 1) helping them to begin to understand their creation by a loving God; 2) helping them to learn the formal prayers of the church and to begin a life of prayer; 3) helping them to understand their membership in the church.

By the end of first year, students will be expected to know the Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be.

Second Grade The goals of the Second Grade curriculum focus on preparing the students for the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist. In the course of this preparation, they concentrate upon 1) the life and person of Jesus; 2) how the church celebrates the sacraments in its liturgy; 3) how they can draw closer to God in prayer and in the sacraments.

In addition to their text, first communion candidates use *The Gift of the Eucharist* in class and at home with their families.

By the end of second grade, students will be expected to know an Act of Contrition, the basic responses for the mass, and a prayer to say after receiving communion.

Third Grade The Third Grade curriculum concentrates on what it means to belong to the church. Themes taught in first and second grades are repeated in greater depth, as the students are growing in their understanding. They specifically explore 1) how the church functions; 2) what the church believes in the Creed; 3) how the church depends upon Scripture.

By the end of third grade, students will be expected to know the Apostles' Creed and be able to describe basic personnel (priest, bishop, etc.) and basic structures (parish, Vatican, etc.) in the church.

Fourth Grade The focus of the Fourth Grade curriculum is the foundation for morality in the Beatitudes and the Commandments. Students will 1) learn how our moral tradition is rooted in the Old and New Testaments; 2) what the church teaches about how we should live our lives; 3) explore ways that they can "do good and avoid evil" in their everyday lives.

By the end of fourth grade, students will be able to list the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the precepts of the church, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Fifth Grade

The Fifth Grade curriculum concentrates on the sacraments and the liturgy of the church. In addition, they will explore the Scriptures further. Students will 1) learn about each of the sacraments in more depth; 2) have a working familiarity with the liturgy and the liturgical year; 3) explore the life and message of St. Paul.

By the end of fifth grade, students will be able to list, describe and define each sacrament, to list the basic parts of the mass, to be able to describe the principal ministries in the liturgy, the major seasons of the church year and the holy days of obligation. They will also be able to recite the Nicene Creed.

*Sixth Grade
(Confirmation
One)*

The Confirmation One curriculum (for students in grades six and above, as they begin preparation for confirmation) focuses on the Old Testament. Students will 1) develop a working knowledge of the major themes of the Old Testament; 2) explore more about Judaism and the world of the Scriptures; 3) be able to describe the links between the Old Testament and the Christian tradition.

By the end of sixth grade (Confirmation One), students will be able to identify and describe in chronological order the major events in the Old Testament and the major events in life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*Seventh Grade
(Confirmation
Two)*

This year consists of two modules: Christian morality and Jesus and discipleship. The first module will help lay the foundation for a discussion about living a moral life and give the students information about the Church's guidance in moral decision-making. The second module will give a survey of the life of Jesus as it is told to us in the gospels, and also will pose the challenge of discipleship to the students. Is following Jesus, and letting that govern the choices in their lives, a decision that they are ready to make?

*Eighth Grade
(Confirmation
Three)*

The Confirmation Three curriculum consists of three modules: Creed, a review of Catholic teaching and immediate preparation for confirmation. The review of the Creed, what the church believes, provides a foundation to profess that belief in the sacrament of confirmation. The second half of the year focuses on the ways that the Christian life is lived out by those who are fully initiated Christians.

The Goal and Vision Statement is a summary of what those who are to be confirmed should know. The foundations for religious literacy in the earlier grades along with the other elements in the curriculum provide the basis for these outcomes.

Prayers to learn by heart:

These are presented here in English and in Spanish. Even if one is comfortable in one language, as a community of faith, it is good to be able to pray in each other's language. Children need to know these prayers only in one language, but are encouraged to know them in both.

The Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

La Señal de la Cruz

En el nombre del Padre, del Hijo y del Espíritu Santo. Amen.

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us no into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Padre Nuestro

Padre nuestro que estás en el cielo, santificado sea tu Nombre, venga a nosotros tu reino, hágase tu voluntad, en la tierra como en el cielo. Danos hoy nuestro pan de cada día. Perdona nuestras ofensas, como también nosotros perdonamos a los que nos ofenden. No nos dejes caer en tentación y líbranos del mal.

For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

Tuyo es el reino, tuyo es el poder, y la gloria, por siempre, Señor. Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Ave Maria

Dios te salve, Maria; llena eres de gracia; el Señor es contigo; bendita tu eres entre todas las mujeres, y bendito es el fruto de tu vientre, Jesús. Santa Maria, Madre de Dios, ruega por nosotros, pecadores, ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte. Amen.

Glory Be

Glory to the father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Gloria al Padre

Gloria al Padre, y al Hijo, y al Espíritu Santo. Como era en el principio, ahora y siempre, por los siglos de los siglos. Amén.

Act of Contrition

My God,
I am sorry for my sins with my whole heart.
In choosing to do wrong
and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you
who I should love above all things.
I firmly intend with your help,
to do penance,
to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
Our Saviour Jesus Christ suffered and died for
us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

*The following are much loved prayers which are
appropriate to say after receiving communion.*

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will.
All I have and call my own.
Whatever I have or hold, you have given me.
I return it all to you
to be used according to your will.
Give me only your love and grace
and I am rich enough
and ask for nothing more.

St. Ignatius of Loyola

Soul of Christ, make me holy.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, let me drink your wine.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

O good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds, hide me.
Do not let me be separated from you.
From every evil, defend me.

At the hour of my death, call me.
Ask me to come to you,
That I may praise you in the company
of your saints, for all eternity.

Traditional prayer, translated by John Henry Newman

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love,
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled, as to console,
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
In pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Traditionally attributed to St. Francis of Assisi

Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life,
our sweetness, and our hope. To you do we
cry poor banished children of Eve. To you do
we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping
in this valley of tears. Turn then, O most
gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward
us and after this our exile show unto us the
blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. O clement!
O loving! O sweet Virgin Mary! Pray for us, O
Holy Mother of God. That we may be made
worthy of the promises of Christ.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit
and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.

In the same Spirit
help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Daily Prayer

THE MORNING OFFERING

The following is a daily prayer, commending our lives to God, popularized by the Apostleship of Prayer.

You can find the monthly intentions which accompany this prayer at

www.apostleship-prayer.org

Loving Father,
I offer you everything I do this day -
my thoughts, works, joys and sufferings.
I desire to join my heart this day
to the heart of your Son,
who gave himself up totally to your service
and to the service of others.
Give me your Spirit
so that I can live like him.
joined to his offering in the Eucharist.
I pray with Mary and the whole Church
for the Pope's intentions this month.

THE DAILY PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

*There is a long tradition, founded in the spiritual life of the Jewish people, of Christian prayer throughout the day. **The Liturgy of the Hours** is the official 'daily prayer' of the church. You can find this cycle of prayer, with psalms, readings and canticles, online at **www.divineoffice.org***

There are three canticles from Luke's Gospel which are prayed as part of the Liturgy of the Hours. Even if you don't pray all of the Liturgy, it is good to pray these at morning, evening and before bed. These canticles are found in Luke 1 and 2. It is the custom to say the "Glory Be..." after each one of these prayers.

Benedictus

This was prayed by Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist and is prayed in the morning.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
he has come to his people and set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty savior, born of
the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets he promised of old

that he would save us from our enemies, from
the hands of all who hate us.

He promised to show mercy to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath he swore to our father
Abraham: to set us free from the hands of our
enemies, free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of
our life.

You, my child, shall be called the prophet of
the Most High; for you will go before the Lord
to prepare his way, to give his people
knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of
their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God the
dawn from on high shall break upon us, to
shine on those who dwell in darkness and the
shadow of death, and to guide our feet into
the way of peace.

Magnificat

This canticle was prayed by Mary when her cousin Elizabeth recognized that she was pregnant with the Messiah. It is prayed in the evening.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has
looked with favor on his lowly servant. From
this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him in every
generation. He has shown the strength of his
arm, he has scattered the proud in their
conceit. He has cast down the mighty from
their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He
has filled the hungry with good things, and
the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers, to
Abraham and his children for ever.

Nunc Dimittis

This canticle was prayed by Simeon, an old man, when he saw the infant Christ after a long life of waiting. It is the original 'bedtime prayer' in the Christian tradition.

Lord, now you let your servant go in peace;
your word has been fulfilled: my own eyes have
seen the salvation which you have prepared in
the sight of every people: a light to reveal you to
the nations and the glory of your people, Israel.

MORE PRAYERS FOR THE DAY

The Jesus Prayer

Praying throughout the day is part of the Christian call to holiness. One tradition, from Eastern Christianity is to pray quietly one line over and over until it becomes a refrain through one's life. This prayer is a favorite of many.

O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a
sinner!

or

Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us!

Blessings Before and After Meals

This is one blessing for before meals.

Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts, which we are
about to receive from your bounty, through Christ,
our Lord. Amen.

This is the traditional blessing after a meal.

We give thanks for all your benefits, almighty God,
who lives and reigns forever. May the souls of the
faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in
peace. Amen.

The Angelus

*The Angelus is traditionally prayed at dawn, noon
and evening. (Or at 6:00 AM, 12:00 PM and 6:00
PM.) The three versicles and responses are taken
from Luke 1 and John 1.*

The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary:
And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary....

Behold the handmaid of the Lord:
Be it done unto me according to your
word.

Hail Mary....

And the Word was made Flesh:
And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary . . .

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God,
that we may be made worthy of the
promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace
into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation
of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the
message of an angel, may by His Passion and
Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection,
through the same Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

Prayer for those who have died

*This prayer and response is the traditional prayer
for God's mercy on those who have died.*

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.
And let perpetual light shine upon them.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful
departed, through the mercy of God, rest in
peace.

Amen.

The Creeds

Why do we have two Creeds in the first place? *The Apostles' Creed was developed from the questions asked of those to be baptized in the church at Rome. We answer these same questions at our own baptism and renew them when celebrating the sacraments of initiation and during the Easter season.*

The answer to all these questions is "I do."

Do you reject sin, so as to live in the freedom of God's children?

Do you reject the glamor of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin?

Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness?

Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

Later in the church's life, by the fourth century, various controversies had arisen about the nature of who Jesus was. The Creed we recite on Sundays was first developed at the Council of Nicea in 325 and added to slightly at the Council of Constantinople in 381. It was based on the Apostles' Creed, with some additions to clarify that Jesus was truly God and truly human. The changes in the 2011 translations are indicated in bold.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, **and** in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, **who** was conceived **by** the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended **into hell**; on the third day he rose again **from the dead**; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of **God** the Father **almighty**; **from there** he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all **things visible and invisible**.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only **Begotten** Son of God, **born** of the Father **before**

all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, **consubstantial with the Father**; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, **and** by the Holy Spirit **was incarnate** of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he **suffered death** and was buried, **and rose again on the third day in accordance** with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, **who** with the Father and the Son is **adored** and glorified, **who** has spoken through the prophets. **I believe** in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. **I confess** one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and **I look forward to** the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Examen

The **Examen** is a short prayer devised by St. Ignatius of Loyola in which you try to see how God was active during your day. Using this method of prayer can help you become conscious of how God is helping you to grow in holiness. It is a good way to remember that we depend upon God to become holy people. It can be prayed at midday or before going to bed.

The first point is to give thanks to God our Lord for the gifts received.

Ignatius once said that the most abominable sin he could imagine was the sin of ingratitude. He knew that an awareness of God's goodness and generosity is the foundation of our relationship with God. Once we recognize God's goodness, we spontaneously feel gratitude. In this first point, we express gratitude for the experiences and encounters during the day that have been good or pleasant or meaningful, whether they seem trivial or important. We also express gratitude for the larger gifts we have received: our faith and our salvation, our life, our talents and abilities, significant relationships, whatever comes to mind.

For children:

What do you want to thank God for today?

We might sometimes find ourselves in a mood of resentment or depression where a feeling of gratitude is hard to muster. At that time, it is all the more important for us to express thanks to God. Not to pretend to feelings we don't feel, but to acknowledge, at whatever level we can, the truth of God's goodness to us.

The second point is to ask for the grace to know my sins and to root them out.

Ignatius gives his second point a moralistic tone. The particular grace we are seeking here can be expressed more broadly as the light to see our life the way that God sees it, without the illusions and deceptions that we commonly live by.

For children:

What have you done today that you are sorry for? Why do you think you did it?

If we are to ask for this grace wholeheartedly, it is important for us to know how desperately we are in need of it. Psychology has shown that many of our true feelings and motivations are genuinely hidden from us. The unconscious part of ourselves can have a powerful influence on what we feel and how we act. Even apart from this, there is a natural tendency to rationalize our actions and to believe the sort of front we put on for other people. Or we can deny or repress unpleasant or embarrassing things about ourselves. Or we can have attitudes of self-deprecation or contempt that distort our view of ourselves and others. The possibilities for self-deception are endless. To truly know ourselves is not something that we are able to do alone. We need to ask the Holy Spirit for the light that can reveal us to ourselves.

The third point is to demand an account of my soul from the moment of rising to that of the present examination, hour by hour or period by period. The thoughts should be examined first, then the words, and finally the actions.

The third point is the heart of the *Examen*. Our actions, words, thoughts, feelings can come from an internal source of freedom and openness to other people and God. Or they can come from what St. Paul calls the "flesh" or the "law of sin"; that is to say from the self-centredness that inhabits all of us. We examine the events of our day methodically in order to uncover the source and the direction of our life that day.

Ignatius suggests we move from thoughts to words to actions. However, it can be more fruitful to move the other way, to look at words and actions and then reflect on the real motivations, intentions and feelings that underlay them. Actions that are apparently good can be done for bad motives, such as a desire for praise. Such an action might be considered praiseworthy but really springs from self-centredness.

Some people are free from actions that are obviously sinful. But when we go to a deeper level of intention and feeling, we can discover that sin has a larger hold on our life than we suspect, that there are all sorts of subtle ways that we focus on self rather than moving outward, towards others and towards the Other.

The Christian life aims at a purity of intention, where all our actions spring from freedom and grace. At first we achieve this type of freedom only sporadically and often fall short. But we can grow towards it. The examination of our day is not simply earnest introspection, it is prayer. It is going through our day with God, attentive to the inner feelings and desires which is where we experience God's call in the midst of everyday activity.

The fourth point is to ask pardon of God our Lord for my faults.

Once we have reviewed our day, we may have come to a sense of the dynamic of sin and grace that has been operating in our life that day. The fourth point is our response to that awareness.

Insofar as we have discovered grace and freedom operative during the day, our response is gratitude and wonder for the work of God in our soul. Genuine freedom always comes as a surprise to us, because it involves a sort of self-transcendence that we know we don't have in ourselves. When we discover that in our day, we need to praise God for it.

Conversely, when we discover sinfulness and self-centredness, our response is remorse and contrition. Contrition does not mean dwelling in guilt and shame and beating ourselves for not being perfect. It means

For children:

'Rewind' your day like a video. What happened during each part of the day? Go through it with God. Ask God to show you what happened to you and by you during the day. How has God been present to you? When did you remember this and when did you forget this?

For children:

What do you want to ask God's forgiveness for?

recognizing our distance from God, our moving away from God, and asking for and receiving God's forgiveness. The difference between contrition and shame is that contrition is a feeling that moves us out of ourselves and towards God. Shame simply moves us deeper into ourselves.

Like gratitude in the first point, we may not be able to deeply feel the contrition that is the proper response to recognition of our self-centredness. But it is important then to express it, even if it doesn't seem very deep, by asking for pardon.

***The fifth point is to resolve to amend with the help of God's grace.
Close with the Lord's Prayer.***

We end the *Examen* by looking towards tomorrow with the desire and resolve to effect changes in action or attitude that God has called us to today.

Alcoholics Anonymous has a slogan, "One Day at a Time" by which they mean that sobriety is not achieved by big and noble resolutions, but by trying to stay sober for one day. It can be useful to look at our spiritual life in that way. We deal with it one day at a time. In this fifth point we don't look at changing our whole lives, we simply look at what we want to change tomorrow, and ask God's help for it. Our lives are a drama of sin and grace. But this drama is being played out on the rather humble stage of our day to day life. Ignatius adds our need for God's grace, an important point. We are not resolving to perfect ourselves by force of our own will. We are resolving to open ourselves to grace through awareness of where we need it.

For children:

*Ask for God's help and grace to live as a Christian tomorrow.
End with the Our Father.*

Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is given to us in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. God created us to live in holiness and peace. The gifts of the Spirit, if we accept them and use them, lead us to holiness. The fruits of the Spirit are some evidence that we are living according to God's will for us. The list of these fruits is taken from Galatians 5:22-23.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Wisdom
Understanding
Right Judgement (Counsel)
Courage
Knowledge
Reverence (Piety)
Wonder and Awe in God's presence (Fear of the Lord)

The names in parentheses are an older translation and more familiar to some.

Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Charity
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Generosity
Gentleness
Faithfulness
Modesty
Self-control
Chastity

The Mysteries of the Rosary

The Rosary began as a way to meditate on the first lines the 150 Psalms. Over time, this form of meditation began to center on the prayer, Hail Mary. Breaking up these 150 prayers were points of meditation on the life of Christ and the mystery of the redemption. Saying the Rosary always leads us back to these stories from Scripture and through them to the mystery of our salvation through Christ.

How to say the Rosary

We begin by making the sign of the Cross. Then we say the Apostles' Creed, an Our Father, three Hail Marys, and one Glory to the Father (Prayer of Praise) on the small chain.

Then recall the first mystery, say one Our Father, ten Hail Marys, and one Glory to the Father. This completes one decade. All the other decades are said in the same manner with a different mystery meditated upon during each decade.

At the end of the rosary, the prayer Hail, Holy Queen may be recited.

The mysteries of the rosary are scenes from the life of Jesus and Mary. By meditating on these, we come to a better understanding of our faith: the Incarnation of the Lord, Christ's ministry and gifts to us, the Redemption, and the Christian life-present and future.

The Joyful Mysteries

The Annunciation: the Messenger of God announces to Mary that she is to be the Mother of God. *Luke 1:26-38*

The Visitation: Mary visits and helps her cousin Elizabeth. *Luke 1:39-56*

The Nativity: Mary gives birth to Jesus in a stable in Bethlehem. *Luke 2:1-20*

The Presentation: Jesus is presented in the Temple 40 days after his birth. *Luke 2:22-38*

The Finding in the Temple: Jesus is found in the Temple. *Luke 2:41-52*

The Mysteries of Light

The Mysteries of Light (or Luminous Mysteries) were added to the rosary by Pope John Paul II in 2002.

The Baptism in the Jordan. *Matthew 3:13-17*
Jesus' first miracle at the wedding of Cana. *John 2:1-11*

Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God, with his call to conversion. *Matthew, chapters 5,6,7*

The Transfiguration: Jesus' disciples see him transfigured into his risen glory before his death.

Luke 9:28-35

The institution of the Eucharist. *Luke 22:14-20*

The Sorrowful Mysteries

The Agony in the Garden. *Luke 22:39-44*

The Scouring at the Pillar. *Matthew 27:17-26*

The Crowning with Thorns. *Matthew 27:27-30*

The Carrying of the Cross. *Matthew 27:31-32*

The Crucifixion. *Matthew 27:33-56; Mark 15:22-41; Luke 23:33-49; John 19:15-37*

The Glorious Mysteries

The Resurrection. *Luke 24:1-9*

The Ascension: Jesus ascends into heaven 40 days after the Resurrection. *Acts 1:9-11*

The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost. *Acts 2:1-4*

The Assumption. Mary is taken into heaven and reunited with the Lord, as we hope to be. *1 Corinthians 15*

The Coronation of Mary as queen of heaven and earth. *Revelation 19:5-8*

The Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross are a way to meditate on the Passion and death of Christ. They are a kind of 'virtual pilgrimage.' We may not be fortunate enough to walk the streets of Jerusalem, following the path that took Jesus to the Cross. But in our imagination and prayer, we can follow Christ's journey to Calvary and learn from this prayer more about the path of discipleship.

The First Station

Jesus is Condemned to Death

Mark 15:6-15

The Second Station

Jesus Bears His Cross

Matthew 27:31

The Third Station

Jesus Falls the First Time

Isaiah 50:6-7

The Fourth Station

Jesus Meets His Mother

Luke 2:33-35

The Fifth Station

Jesus is Helped by Simon of Cyrene

Matthew 27:32

The Sixth Station

Veronica Helps Jesus

Matthew 25:35-40

The Seventh Station

Jesus Falls the Second Time

Isaiah 53: 3-5

The Eighth Station

Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Luke 23:27-28

The Ninth Station

Jesus Falls the Third Time

Isaiah 53:7-8

The Tenth Station

Jesus is Stripped of His Clothing

John 19:23-24

Eleventh Station

Jesus is Crucified

Luke 23: 32-34

Twelfth Station

Jesus Dies on the Cross

Luke 23:44-46

Thirteenth Station

Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Matthew 27:58-59

Fourteenth Station

Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

John 19: 39-42

Learning about the Bible

The Bible both expresses and nourishes our faith. It tells us of God's great deeds and how our ancestors in faith discovered the action of the God who created us and loves us. It tells of the great redemption in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It gives us a model for our faith and our prayer.

As St. Jerome said, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."

As parents, one of your primary responsibilities in helping your children grow in faith is to introduce them to the Scriptures. You might be saying, "But, I don't know anything about the Bible!" The wonderful thing about this is that you can discover the riches of Scripture along with your children.

In addition to the ways to read the Bible as a family mentioned below, we hear the Scriptures each Sunday as we gather for the Eucharist. We offer Children's Liturgy of the Word / Iglesia Infantil at the 10:30 and 12:15 masses. This program is appropriate for children about the age of three to about fourth or fifth grades. The leaders take the children to the Chapel of the Word below the church and there read and discuss the Scriptures in a way that children can understand. Then they return for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. There is no need to sign up; children can just come up for the blessing. Parents are always welcome to accompany their children downstairs as well.

For children in preschool and kindergarten:

Children love stories and these are some of the most interesting. (They've caught the imagination of children for millennia and yours will love them too.) The easiest way to help your child with a basic knowledge of these stories is to read to them. There are many children's Bible story books on the market. One that we would recommend is *My First Picture Bible Stories: Catholic Edition* by Kenneth N. Taylor, published by Our Sunday Visitor. It is available in stores and also online.

For children in grades one through five:

- **You should have a Bible in your home** that has language children can understand. The translation which we use in the school and religious education program is the Contemporary English Version. You can buy this translation in many different editions from the American Bible Society. (800-32-BIBLE or at www.bibles.com) You should order an edition with the *Deuterocanonicals*. (This means it contains all the books we have in the Catholic Bible. Many of the Bibles available on this site are Protestant editions.)

Another translation with accessible language is the Good News Translation. This is the translation we use for grades six through eight. You can purchase this through the American Bible Society as well. (Select one with the *Deuterocanonicals* and an imprimatur.)

- **Read the Sunday gospel with your children** and discuss it with them. We offer two aids to help you

with this. First, there is a column called “The Gospel at Home” in the *Families in Faith* newsletter which you receive each month. Second, the Religious Education families receive *Amigos de Jesus* each week, a bilingual resource about the Sunday Scripture readings for parents and children. (If you are a school family and would like to receive this, please let me know.)

For children in grades six through secondary school:

- **Help your child make the time to read the Bible.** Make it a part of his/her bedtime ritual. For example, reading a chapter of a Gospel each evening is a wonderful way to end the day.
- **Discuss the Sunday readings and homily with your child.** This can be a casual conversation on the way home. A simple, “What did you think?” can be enough to let your child know that this is important to you, that you value his or her opinion and contribution to the conversation, and that perhaps they should listen!

Scripture resources for adults:

A wonderful edition of the Bible is *The Catholic Study Bible: Personal Study Edition*, published by Oxford. It has a 500-page reading guide at the beginning which gives you outlines, study helps and explanations of each book of the Bible.

If you would like to read and understand a particular book of the Bible, the *Collegeville Bible Commentary* is very good. It was written by excellent scholars, but in a way that non-specialists can easily understand. You can buy the whole thing, but you can also buy it book-by-book. These are in pamphlet form and cost about \$7.95 each.

Outline of the Eucharistic Liturgy

Introductory Rites

Procession

Greeting

Penitential Rite

Gloria (omitted in Advent and Lent)

Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

First reading (On Sundays this is usually from the Hebrew Scriptures - Old Testament.)

Response (Psalm)

Second reading (This is usually from one of the New Testament letters.)

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel Proclamation

Homily

Profession of Faith (Creed or Baptismal promises)

Prayer of the Faithful

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Gifts

Eucharistic Prayer

Preface

Holy

Canon

Amen

Communion Rite

Lord's Prayer

Sign of Peace

Breaking of the Bread (Lamb of God)

Communion

Prayer after Communion

Concluding Rites

Blessing

Dismissal

The Liturgical Year

Seasons and Times

- Advent** The beginning of the year. Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. The colors used are violet and rose (for the third Sunday). The mood is one of hope, joy and expectation.
- Christmas** The celebration of the Incarnation and birth of Jesus. Traditionally it lasts to the Baptism of the Lord (the third Sunday after Christmas). It includes the feast of the Holy Family (the Sunday between Christmas and the New Year), January 1, a feast of Mary and the Epiphany (the Sunday after January 1.) The colors used are white and gold.
- Ordinary Time** Begins after the feast of the Baptism of the Lord and continues until Ash Wednesday. The color used is green, originally chosen as a sign of hope.
- Lent** Begins with Ash Wednesday and continues for six weeks until Easter. In the early Church it was the time of final preparation for those who were about to be baptized. It has continued to be a time for all Christians to pay special attention to renewing their spiritual lives and to prepare for Easter.
- There are a number of traditions connected with Lent, which help us to remember the purpose of the season. These include a greater attention to prayer, acts of penitence, such as fasting and abstinence, and works of charity.
- The color of Lent is purple. It is not the violet of Advent, but a more reddish purple, reminiscent of the *vexilla regis* (banner or flag of the king.) The somber color reminds us that we follow this king to the Cross.
- The last Sunday of Lent is Passion (Palm) Sunday, which begins the observance of Holy Week. Red, the color of the martyrs, is worn.
- Triduum** This word literally means "Three Days" and it is the central point of the Church year. The liturgy begins on Thursday and continues through the celebration of the Easter Vigil.
- On **Holy Thursday**, the Eucharist is celebrated only once, in the evening. It is called the "Mass of the Lord's Supper" and includes the *Mandatum*. According to John's gospel, Jesus' command that we serve each other was symbolized by his washing of his disciples' feet. (*Mandatum* means "command"; this is why some Protestant traditions call this "Maundy Thursday".)

There is no final blessing or recessional on Holy Thursday. Instead, the Eucharist, which has been consecrated to be used on Good Friday is taken to a special chapel for veneration and prayer until midnight.

Good Friday is the one day of the year when the Eucharist is not celebrated. The church is stripped; there is nothing in the tabernacle. There is one liturgy in the evening, the Liturgy of Lord's Passion. At this liturgy the Passion from John's gospel is read, people are invited to venerate the Cross and communion is given.

The **Easter Vigil** is the holiest night of the Church year. It begins anytime after sundown on Saturday until dawn on Sunday morning. The liturgy begins with the lighting of the new fire and the Paschal candle. There is a long series of readings that recalls God's salvation throughout history, culminating in a rousing proclamation of the Easter gospel. Water is blessed and the new members of the church are called forward for baptism and confirmation. The whole community also renews their baptismal promises and joins together in celebrating the Eucharist.

Easter

The Great Vigil is echoed in the liturgies of the Easter season. The Paschal candle burns during the liturgies. The Alleluia is sung with special gusto, the congregation is often blessed with the water from the font. The Easter season is also a time for the community to continue to celebrate new life. Children are welcomed in the celebrations of first communion and confirmation.

It is important to remember that the fasting of Lent is forty days, but the feasting of Easter lasts for fifty. The colors worn are white and gold.

In many parts of the United States, as in other countries, the Ascension is celebrated on the seventh Sunday of Easter.

Pentecost

This feast concludes the Easter season and celebrates the giving of the Spirit to the apostles after Jesus' resurrection. It is the celebration of the beginning of the Church. Red vestments are worn to remind us of the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Ordinary Time

This resumes with the feasts of **Trinity Sunday** and **Corpus Christi** (the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.)

Through the summer and into the fall, the "ordinary part" of the year continues. Note that it gets its name *not* from the idea of being a "common", not-too-special time. "Ordinary Time" comes from the idea that all our time is marked and counted because it is important. (We count by using 'ordinal' numbers.)

Ordinary Time ends with the feast of **Christ the King** on the last Sunday before Advent begins.

Other Feasts

There are a number of special holy days and feasts celebrated throughout the year. Some are traditional "days of obligation" which vary from country to country. In the United States, besides Christmas and New Year's, they include:

December 8, the feast of the ***Immaculate Conception***.

August 15, the feast of the ***Assumption***.

November 1, the feast of ***All Saints***.

There are a number of other special feast days which are not days of obligation but are important celebrations. Among them are:

February 2, the feast of the ***Presentation of the Lord***.

March 25, the feast of the ***Annunciation***.

June 24, the feast of the ***Birth of John the Baptist***.

June 29, the feast of ***Sts. Peter and Paul***.

August 6, the feast of the ***Transfiguration***.

September 14, the feast of the ***Triumph of the Cross***.

November 2, the feast of ***All Souls***.

November 9, the feast of the ***Dedication of St. John Lateran***. (This is the cathedral church in Rome, and so the anniversary of its dedication is celebrated throughout the church.)

There are, of course, many others, including other days that honor Mary, the apostles, other saints and other events in the life of Jesus and in the church.

The Sacraments

The sacraments are divided into three categories. **Sacraments of Initiation** - Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. These make us members of the Catholic church. **Sacraments of Healing** - Penance (Reconciliation) and Anointing of the Sick. These bring us Christ's grace and mercy when we are ill in soul and body. **Sacraments of Vocation** - Marriage and Holy Orders. These are signs of Christ's life in families and the larger community, lived out on a day to day basis.

Sacrament	Outward Sign	Inner Meaning
Baptism	Water is poured while baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit	1) Original Sin and all sins committed up to this point are forgiven; 2) beginning of a new life in Christ; 3) become a member of the church
Confirmation	The bishop lays hands on the candidate and calls down the Holy Spirit; anoints the candidate with chrism	Sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit
Eucharist	We receive the host and from the chalice under the appearances of bread and wine	The bread and wine have become really and truly the Body and Blood of Christ
Reconciliation or Penance	The priest prays the words of absolution	All sins are forgiven by Christ if one is truly sorry
Anointing of the Sick	One is anointed with the Oil of the Sick	1) Healing of one's spirit; 2) Healing of one's body if that is God's will; 3) forgiveness of sins
Marriage	A man and woman promise to love and be faithful to each other for their entire lives	In their love for each other, they grow closer to Christ
Holy Orders	A man becomes a deacon, a priest or a bishop	In a life of service to the church, a man grows closer to Christ

What Students Should Know Before Celebrating Reconciliation and Eucharist

Before celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation, your child should know the following:

- God forgives us, no matter what we do.
- We have the ability to make good and bad choices. We have the ability to sin by making bad choices and by disobeying what God has asked of us.
- There is a difference between a sin and a mistake.
- We can ask for forgiveness from God because God is always willing to forgive us. God never withholds forgiveness.
- The reconciliation we are offered has its roots in the ministry of Jesus - he healed and forgave all who asked. By participating in the sacrament, we experience the same healing and forgiving love.
- There are different ways to be reconciled with God: prayer, including the Our Father, apologizing to those we have hurt, making up for wrongs we have done, celebrating the Eucharist, the sacrament of reconciliation.
- The sacrament of reconciliation is an opportunity not an obligation. It is God's free offer of forgiving grace to us.
- The elements of celebrating the sacrament are contrition (sorrow for our sins), confession, absolution and penance. Students should be able to define each of these.
- Penance is a way to help us on the road to holiness - a kind of "training." That is why we are asked to pray or do good deeds for a penance, not as a punishment.
- There are two ways of celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation - individually and as a group. The students will be able to describe what happens in each kind of celebration.
- They should know what happens during the sacrament of penance.
- They should know an Act of Contrition and how to examine their conscience.

Before receiving the Eucharist, your child should know the following:

- Jesus became human for us, taught us to be disciples, was crucified and rose.
- Because he offered his life as a sacrifice and rose from the dead, Jesus is able to be present to us in the Eucharist, giving us a share of his Body and Blood. It is as if we have a window in time to be with Christ in his death and resurrection.
- We believe that Christ is truly present under the signs of bread and wine. It looks like bread and wine, but it is the Body and Blood of Christ.

- We gather as a church community, because we all became members of the Body of Christ when we were baptized. As members of the church, we do what he commanded, to share a meal in his memory.
- When we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, we are all participants. We are not there to only watch. As participants we
 - **Listen.** We listen to the Word of God in Scripture, which is the presence of Christ speaking to us, showing us how to live as disciples.
 - **Remember.** We remember Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection. We celebrate the Eucharist, as he asked his disciples, "Do this in remembrance of me."
 - **Give Thanks and Praise.** As members of the Body of Christ, we celebrate *Eucharist* which means "thanksgiving" in Greek. We give thanks with Christ to the Father. We give thanks for Christ's life and for ours, and for the victory of life over death. As the priest gives voice to our prayer, we join together in praising God for these wonders.
 - **Receive and Share.** We receive the Body and Blood of Christ, which joins us more completely to Christ and to the community of the church. Nourished by his Body and Blood, we are sent forth to be Christ's presence in the world.

In order to fully participate in the Eucharist, your child should be able to join in with and respond to the prayers at mass.

- Your child should be able to respond to "The Lord be with you." (And also with you.)
- Your child should be able to participate in the "Lord have mercy" and "Lamb of God" litanies.
- Your child should be able to respond to the preface dialogue:
 - The Lord be with you.
 - And also with you.*
 - Lift up your hearts.
 - We lift them up to the Lord.*
 - Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.
 - It is right to give him thanks and praise.*
- Your child should be able to join in singing the *Holy*, the *Memorial Acclamation* and the *Amen*.

Of course, your child may also be able to sing the Gloria, recite the Creed, etc. If he or she cannot yet do so, these are the next steps in learning to be a full participant.

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are found in Exodus 20

- I I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange Gods before me.
- II Do not take the name of the Lord in vain.
- III Remember to keep holy the Sabbath.
- IV Honor your father and your mother.
- V Do not kill.
- VI Do not commit adultery.
- VII Do not steal.
- VIII Do not lie. (Do not bear false witness.)
- IX Do not covet your neighbor's wife or husband.
- X Do not covet your neighbor's goods.

The Precepts of the Church

The precepts of the Church are principles to be followed. They are a rule and guide to what it means to be a Catholic Christian. In a sense they are the bare minimum to be a 'practicing Catholic.' (For example, we are certainly encouraged to go to communion frequently, but the minimum is once a year.)

You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation. You should also rest from unnecessary ('servile') labor on Sunday.

You shall confess your sins at least once a year.

You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.

You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence prescribed by the Church. (The laws of fasting and abstinence are published by each diocese, usually at the beginning of Lent.)

The faithful also have the duty of providing for the material needs of the Church, each according to his or her abilities.

There are two other precepts commonly thought to be necessary as well:

To obey the laws of the church regarding marriage.

To participate in the Church's mission of spreading the Gospel.

The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes are found in Matthew 5:3-12. The Beatitudes are the way of holiness that Jesus preached. (Beatus in Latin means 'blessed' or 'holy'.)

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

The Corporal Works of Mercy have to do with taking care of peoples' bodies (corpus is 'body' in Latin.) The Spiritual Works of Mercy have to do with taking care of people's souls or spirits.

The Corporal Works of Mercy come from Matthew 25, where Jesus reminds us that "Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me." When we take care of the poor, the homeless, the hungry, we are caring for the Body of Christ.

Corporal Works of Mercy

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

Spiritual Works of Mercy

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

Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Why do people shy away from this sacrament?

Most people dislike going to the dentist. (Some so much that they don't go at all!) The exception to this rule is when there is a real dental emergency. When you are in pain and unable to sleep at 3 AM, there is no question about procrastination. You want to get into that dentist's chair as quickly as you can.

There are many parallels between our attitudes toward dentistry and our attitudes toward reconciliation. We will do our best to put off an uncomfortable encounter as long as possible, unless something drastic happens. Then we are willing to try anything that can take the pain away.

Instead of a visit to a dentist, consider getting a massage. There is nothing that makes you feel more like you are pampering yourself. You feel so wonderful, you might even feel a teeny bit guilty, but you figure that it is good for you in the long run. It relaxes you, it stretches your muscles and gets the kinks out, it makes you a happier, healthier person. No one dreads this and hopes for painkillers to dull the experience!

What we need to do, as adults, is to learn to see reconciliation more like a massage and less like a visit to the dentist.

What the sacrament of reconciliation is:

- **It is an encounter of God's grace.** God is present and anxious to heal the wounds in our life due to sin and to help us grow.
- **It is a way to experience the mercy of the living Christ.** We sometimes think it would be different if we could have met and talked to the earthly Jesus. In this sacrament, we have the same chance that those in first century Palestine had. Through the power of the resurrection and Christ's continuing presence in the church, we can hear Christ's words of forgiveness and consolation.
- **We can actually hear words of forgiveness.** Many say, "I can just pray and ask God to forgive me." That is true, on one level. Yet as human beings, we need to have a real and tangible response. This sacrament offers us the words spoken in a human voice, "You are forgiven."
- **Celebrating reconciliation reminds us that we are meant to move in the direction of God's call for us.** We are loved and forgiven. Until the day we die we always have the opportunity to turn to God and hear those words again.

What the sacrament of reconciliation is NOT:

- **It is NOT an appearance before a judge.** We don't come to this sacrament to be convicted and

sentenced. We come to hear of mercy and forgiveness, not to be yelled at. Also, the priest hearing our confession is not immune from sin himself. He knows that he has sinned and been forgiven and shares with us the grace of being a forgiven sinner.

- **It is NOT a punishment for our sins.** Guilt and separation from God are the punishment for our sins. This sacrament is way for us to freed of our guilt and reconciled with God.
- **It is NOT a ‘easy in, easy out’ way to continue in our sins.** This sacrament has also been called the ‘sacrament of conversion.’ Some complain that “You can do what you want and just get forgiven and do it again.” You could, but this is an abuse of the sacrament. We go to this sacrament sorry for what we have done and intending to avoid doing it again. And we ask for God’s help in our resolution. We may (and probably will) sin again, but that is a failure on our part and not in the design of this sacrament. Yet, we can always return for another try, realizing God’s mercy is always available.

How does it work these days?

There are two common ways that the sacrament is celebrated today.

The first form is familiar to most of us. This is individual confession in a conversation between a priest and a penitent. It can take place anonymously or face-to-face.

The second form is called communal reconciliation. People who haven't experienced this sometimes guess that it means that a whole group of people confess to each other. Far from it! What happens is that people gather to pray together. The first part of the liturgy looks like what you would expect at a mass, with readings and a homily. Then, people are invited to come forward and confess privately. Usually people summarize what they have done, or focus on one thing in their life that they especially want to change. Each person is absolved. Then the congregation prays or sings its praise and thanksgiving.

OK, but how do you go to confession?

If you haven't been for awhile, this is a very reasonable question.

The sacrament of reconciliation is celebrated in most parishes on Saturdays. In addition, communal reconciliation services are usually scheduled during Advent and Lent. If these times are inconvenient for you, you can make an appointment to see a priest.

The reconciliation room may be a remodeled confessional or a room built for this purpose. If you cannot find it, feel free to ask someone to point the way.

In most reconciliation rooms, you have an option to either kneel behind a screen or sit in a chair face-to-face with the priest. The form that you use is your choice. The room should be fairly comfortable, and convey the idea that this is a spiritual conversation and an opportunity for God's grace to work, and not surgery without anesthesia.

The priest can take it from there. He will begin by inviting you to make the Sign of the Cross. Many people begin with “Bless me Father, for I have sinned.” It is a formula, but it gives you something to start with.

You can say that you are new to this, or how long it has been since you last confessed. This gives the priest the clue to take the lead.

He may share a short Scripture passage with you, and then invite you to confess your sins.

There may be a short discussion. The priest will invite you to pray a short prayer. You can say the Act of Contrition, or some other prayer. You don’t have to memorize a prayer. You can pray a prayer of sorrow for your sins in your own words. Or you can ask the priest to help you with it.

Then the priest offers absolution and a short concluding prayer.

That's all that there is to it.

Using an Examination of Conscience

Many of us remember long lists, based on the Commandments, which we used to find out if we had sinned. Sin is not always a question of "breaking a rule," but of our attitudes and patterns of behavior.

At the same time, reflecting on our actions in light of the Commandments and the teachings of the church can be helpful in calling us to change our lives and to live more fully as disciples of the Lord.

The following list can be used as a guide. Ideally, we should examine our conscience every day. As you begin to reflect on this list, say a short prayer to the Holy Spirit to help you to remember what you have done and to help you to see it clearly.

Childrens' Version of the Examination of Conscience

1. Do I honor God above everything else? Do I ask God's help in my decisions? Do I pray to God regularly?
2. Have I used the name of God or of Jesus in a disrespectful way?
3. Do I come to celebrate the Eucharist on Sunday?
4. Do I obey the adults who care for me?
5. Do I take care of my own body with good food, rest and exercise?
6. Have I physically hurt anyone, or have I hurt someone's feelings, or have I been so angry that I might have hurt someone?
7. Have I been loyal and faithful to my family and friends?
8. Have I taken what is not mine?
9. Have I told the truth?
10. Have I been jealous of other people or of other things?

11. Have I done what I can to help the poor?
12. Have I done what I can to make the earth a good place to live?
13. Have I done what I can to be part of my church and school communities?
14. Have I shared my possessions and my talents with others?

Adults' Version of the Examination of Conscience

1. Have I honored God above everything else? Have I ignored God's guidance in making my decisions? Have I neglected praying to God regularly?
2. Have I used the name of God or of Jesus in a disrespectful way?
3. Have I come to celebrate the Eucharist on Sundays?
4. Have I cared for my parents and other adults in my family? Have I cared for my children and grandchildren in a responsible way? Have I failed to look at someone lovingly, or have I seen them as a burden or a bother?
5. Have I failed to take good care of my own body with good food, rest and exercise? Have I abused drugs or alcohol?

6. Have I physically hurt anyone, or have I hurt someone's feelings, or have I been so angry that I might have hurt someone?
7. Have I been faithful in my marriage? Have I been loyal and faithful to my family and friends?
8. Have I been responsible in the exercise of my sexuality? Have I respected others in my relationships?
9. Have I taken what is not mine?
10. Have I told the truth?
11. Have I been jealous of other people or of other things?

12. Have I done what I can to help the poor?
13. Have I done what I can to make the earth a good place to live?
14. Have I done what I can to be part of my church and community?
15. Have I shared my possessions and my talents with others?

This list covers most of the major areas of our lives. However, it is not exhaustive. As was stated above, it is important to look for patterns and habits of acting, as well as to look for specific offenses.